

MANY VOICES

WORDS OF HOPE FOR PEOPLE RECOVERING FROM TRAUMA & DISSOCIATION

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Healthy Celebrations Creative Expressions

...and much more!



Healing Spell

Flitting through the woodlands
in my deep blue 'fairy' dress
swinging my long hair
skipping through dappled light
stopping to adore
heavenly scented flowers
marvellous bees
and incredible trees

Talking to myself
feeling spirits all around me
alone and innumerable
healing the wounded selves inside me
eye to eye with birds
floating with scudding clouds
in warm sun or dripping rain
I can shelter, watch and learn.

Letting the tides
roll each of my quartz crystals
washing them in salt water
scouring them with stones
hearing the aching seagull cries
wailing in my soul
scattering storms into the ocean

Opening my volcano
to melt down my boiling anger
pouring out lava
which cools to form
fertile new earth.
Let the fires I kindle
be full of souls
to set free

By Kirsty Winterbourne

MV

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Creative Expressions Among Us

By E. Pluribus Unum

Jenny does fine needlework. Boxes of floss, yarns, patterns, and canvases lie in boxes in the craft area of my basement. In the grand organization of my inner town, needlework does not rate high. So Jenny does not often get to ply her craft.

So many inside me write: poetry, children's stories, nonfiction, plays, this very article. Two computers, shelves of manuscripts computerized, typed, handwritten, notes by the thousands for writing projects, some fifty years old, fill shelves in the studio space upstairs in my house and spill over into briefcases and notebooks in various areas of home, vehicle, and work. Whose project should we work on first? How do we hold attention for that one when all the others are clamoring for their turn?

So many inside me do music: singers, songwriters, players of many instruments. Half of my studio space upstairs at home is cluttered with guitars, harps, recorders, dulcimers, keyboards, tin whistles, Native American flutes, kalimbas, drums, amps, books and boxes of sheet music, books on music, cases of my own songs and song ideas. Whose work should get the prime time spot?

So many inside me are artists and craftspeople. My basement craft space is filled with a jewelry workshop, a sewing machine, fabric, Fimo with all its accoutrements, paints, colored pencils, markers, found objects, and

books and notes for hundreds of projects. Whose project do we spend our time on?

My, many who encounter me say to me, you are so versatile. How do you do so many art forms? I want to say, I am a small town, and everyone in this town is creative, has his or her own art talents and desires. And at 58 years old, I am running out of time to fulfill those dreams and talents for everyone. I have had some success with my writing, my music and performing, my craftworks at local bazaars. But no area of my town's creativity has hit its peak, fulfilled its highest ability. At some point, perhaps I will be fiscally in a position to retire, and thus eliminate the hours of my week devoted to my busy and demanding job. But even then, it is not possible timewise to satisfy everyone, to give full expression to everyone's creativity. How do I choose whose work is most important, most worthy of the most precious gift of active time?

For now, everything is in fits and starts. I try to give everyone a chance, in some rotation. I try to focus on the strongest talents, which seem to be my writing, some of my music, and my jewelry work. But whatever project I attempt to focus on, someone within will burst through and have a creative idea he or she wants to do NOW.

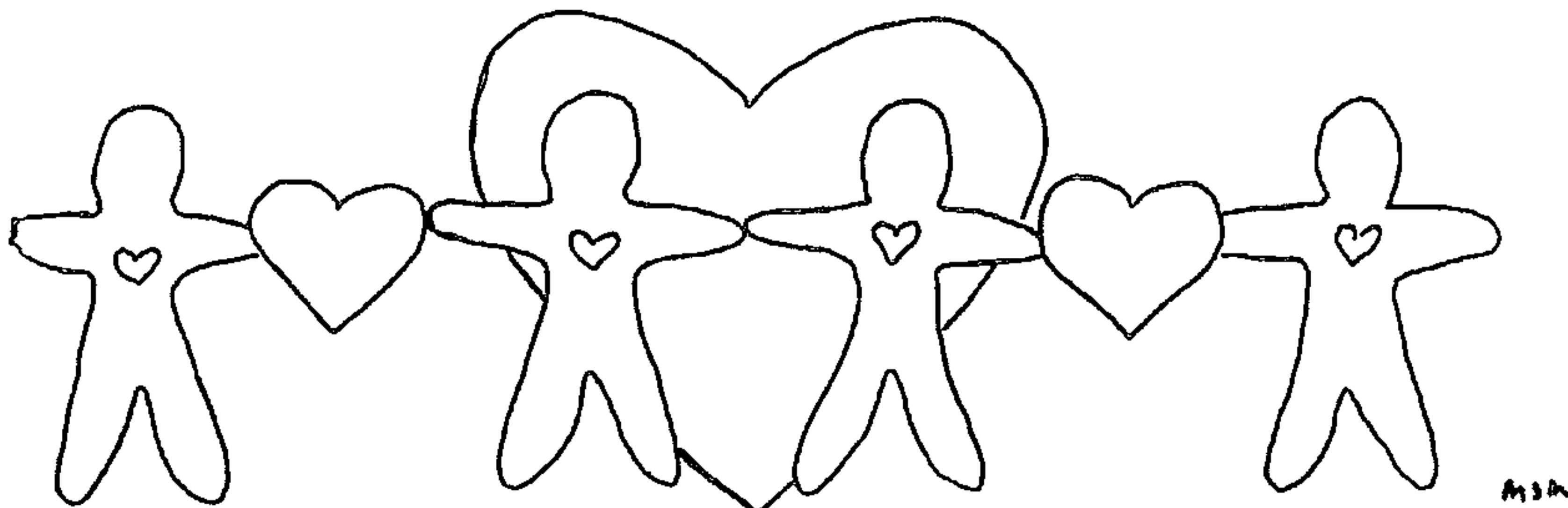
Even when I concentrate on one art form, everything is still in flux. I do

not design one single piece of jewelry at a time. I lay out four or five designs at once, working on the first, then, when the switch happens, move to the next, and round robin until all are complete. My, the people who encounter me say, how different all your jewelry is – how many styles.

It is a busy full life for everyone, but even more so for a multiple. There is a constant effort towards balance and fulfillment. I am often criticized by concerned friends and family for being too busy, trying to do too much. I am merely trying to give everyone a chance, to stifle no one, to find a way for this whole crazy town inside me to be creatively free and fulfilled. In the end, there will be much left undone. All I have is the same 24 hours per day as anyone else. I just have dozens of people trying to live those 24 hours at the same time. Busy doesn't even begin to describe it.

But at least I am here to try. My horrid abuses of my youth did not kill me. Yes, I am quite neurotic, a bit ragged around the edges. But I am alive. My abusers did not kill my creativity. They did not kill my spirit. I will work every day of my life to enjoy the blessing of my life, and to explore and express all the creativity my inner selves possess. As the old adage says, living well is the best revenge.

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Thank You ALL!

Your response to MV's first-ever fundraising appeal was astounding!

MV's Board (and especially Lynn W.) thank ALL of you for your encouragement, donations, and great fundraising ideas!

We also thank you for continuing to share your hopes, dreams, writing and art that makes *Many Voices* a superior publication for those recovering from a history of trauma and abuse. Together we will help each other heal for a long, long time.

Check the supplement and/or separate page enclosed for a much more detailed report.

Gratefully... --Lynn W.

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Support

I built a wall brick by brick
until it was strong and very thick.
Time went by and the wall did grow
how it got so big I do not know.

One day a crack appeared
just as I had feared.
'But that's ok' I said,
'It's too small for me to dread!'

Through the crack came a vine
around me it did twine.
I pushed it back with all my might,
but it kept strong, holding me tight.
Years flew by and the vine
stayed strong,
It didn't go away when something
went wrong.

There it stayed, twined around,
holding me tall,
even when pain crept through
the wall.

I now cherish that vine,
so steady and true
Little did I realize that vine was You.

I love ya, Frank.

By Dawn A.

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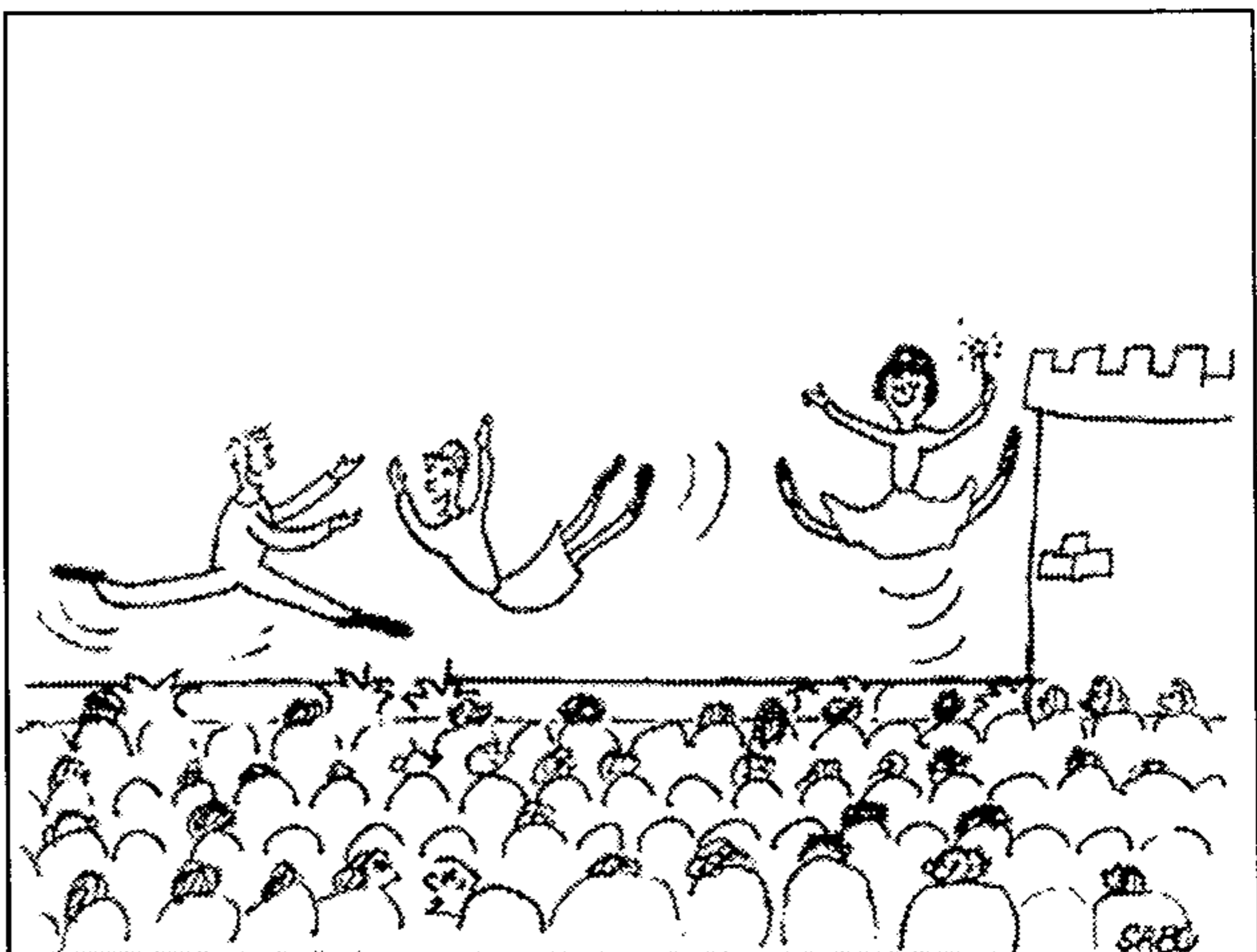
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"I don't care how happy those ballet dancers look - using trampolines is cheating!"

Feeling Free to Celebrate

By M. Scott

As I write this I am trying to put into practice what the title says. I am an SRA survivor and today is Oct 31, 2008. I have tried to keep busy all day, to not find a focus to the past and the PTSD problems we usually find on this anniversary. I think I have decided that just because this is a time once full of so much terror, that I don't need to allow it to crowd into my mind and my time. Right now we are very busy in our daily life with some really exciting things, things I have worked on from childhood. It's hard to publicly say "I am an artist," but this is the time when people started to recognize my skills and talents. When voc rehab has decided to help me start my own bizz. When I / we will be taking risks and are a bit scared, to say the least.

I was dreading this one day of the year when we get too much PTSD and crisis. But today was a lot different. I never expected the things I discovered today. I have been trying to find out a specific thing needed about computers. There are no classes here or anyone to help. A simple click on a bookmark site and there it was—the info we need. This will expedite starting up my bizz plan.

Today was just another day when we woke up, and some honest dread. Now midway through it, we are celebrating our grand find, and soon we will be busy studying this article.

We have been through most of our needed therapy. We have awesome support from the local clinic and have a good home, good husband, and all of our needs seem to get met. This alone is a daily celebration for hubby and me. We spent a couple of years homeless. Then we had a ... lot of "when ????" "what ??????" and "Will we have a meal today ...????"

This changed some things in our heart and mind. We now understand more about being thankful for the small stuff, and how these things are a time to celebrate.

There needs to be no real reason to celebrate. It can be as simple as "next

Tuesday we are going to go and do this simply to celebrate it's been a good week." It's making how the celebration is experienced, how we each create it as a reason to just allow room for happiness and peacefulness to reside within, to think "huh! why allow that old thing to reclaim one more Oct 31 in my life as an expected 'bad day'. What can I / we do to change it?"

We never used to give candy. We felt it was somehow wrong. This year we have decided to give treats... give children a reason to smile and have fun.

We really don't celebrate holidays on the right date. Nope, if we want an early or late Valentine's day, we go for it. If one of us is out and sees something the other would like we get it, if we can afford it. Both of us have D.I.D., and we have had 'way more than our share of bad times and bad memories. We agree we really should do our best to create happy times in the present. We don't celebrate 12 days of Christmas, but 31... each day to remind ourselves of just how fortunate we are.

Yes, there are the bad times and the memories that return much uninvited. But they are all part of life. We know they can come at any moment, so it's best to enjoy the times when we are free from them. We also find ways to try to shorten the times when there is no way to stop the memories that cause such pain. Life has times of trouble for everyone, not simply trauma survivors. We celebrate that we did survive, and we have what is for us a happy and enjoyable life most of the time. We are happy that there is life and no one can push us around anymore. We celebrate that we have learned to say "No, you can't do that," then walk away.

I understand that each person who reads this is in a different stage of the healing journey. Some may question some of what is written here. That's good. It starts a thought process where someone inside says "It stinks!" and "This is bull!" or "Wow, I wonder if, after more therapy, we can find some of this."

I remember reading MV years ago and thinking "Yah... right. Never happen." But we kept reading and



doing our therapy. We kept thinking about "will this ever end?" "When does being happy start?"

It started for us when we could see that we had to work to find this thing called "happy times." MV was the only forum when I started getting it. Computers were for science fiction and not a desktop tool to communicate and educate with. It wasn't how many computers in the home and what different kinds. It was books, TV, magazines...and for us, Many Voices was an integral and very important aspect in my recovery. So the day MV came was the best day in two months.

Anything can be celebrated. But the best celebrations for us are the unexpected bonus days. I was afraid for 6 weeks that today would tumble down and cause us to crash. But I was open to it's not being that kind of day too.

"Healthy" means, doing things that will cause no harm or guilt, that will improve your moods and mental health, that won't cause any kind of physical problem other than eating too much, and what you ate was so yummy the memories are still full of "Oh that was just so good!"

"Healthy" is starting to say "Hey! Why does this have to be a bad time anymore? Why?" and the biggest element will be, "How can we change this from bad to tolerable?" And then move up—upgrade it to "Hey! This ain't so bad!" to "Gee, I think I might like this?" to "Hey, why not do something really fun just because I can!" for no other reason than it looks like it would be fun. Then go for it!

Celebrate by giving yourselves permission to start letting go of the past. This takes a lot of time, work and courage. Making any kind of change is scary. For many of us being happy is new, and new things can be very frightening. We had to practice risking to allow happiness to be welcome in the list of emotions we experienced. We are really glad we took the risk.

It's another thing to celebrate. Sure, we have bad times, bad moods. But we find we can move out of them laughing. By allowing the happy times, our life is even more precious and valuable.

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Christmas as a Multiple

Twas the night before Christmas
And we still weren't asleep
The kids were excited
The adults were too
They were all doing well
No problems to solve
They were definitely focused
On getting a gift
A fairy book for Debby
She's just six years old
chip is eight
He wants a book too
Ginger is ten
And full of herself
She wants a new game
She can play by herself
Micah is thirteen
He loves animals so much
I'm thinking a book
Full of stories galore
Billy is sixteen
He likes music you see
A CD for him
With angry songs on it
Now for my adults
They get a gift too
Chandra wants earrings
In purple for sure
Dominic is dark
He likes to read too
A crime book for him
Will put a smile on his face

Jetta's my hippie
I know what she wants
A kit to make tie dye
She'll be busy for hours
Betty's my queen
She loves to look good
She'll get some new make-up
And happy she'll be
We won't leave out Jack
He's my right hand man
A Willie Nelson CD
He will listen for hours
And last but not least
Is my special girl Audrey
She's autistic you see
She wants paper to write
She is my twin
But she doesn't use speech
Only I know her thoughts
It's going to be great
A fun time for all
Something special for each
And lots of love too
I love each one
In their own special way
They are going to be happy
There's no doubt about that
They send Christmas wishes
To each one of you.

By Deb Clark

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Forgiveness

Forgiveness has provided one of the biggest outlets of my healing. It doesn't mean I wasn't angry, nor that I didn't have to forgive again, it was a process...it still is. It is a choice I make for me. I figure I have got enough poison inside, a war that has done its best to defeat me. In that war, I saw choices and still do. One of them was to hold on to the poison of bitterness, or release it into forgiveness for my own sanity and for the loving of myself enough to not allow the unforgiveness to play a part of destroying me. Forgiveness, I realize, is pardoning the person (persons) that hurt me, but it is also a pardoning of the prison that I have been in for so many years. It is truly a double-edged sword, but one that cuts the ropes that have bound my own soul.

Forgiveness doesn't mean, however, that I put myself into the same situation with people, or that I have to have a relationship with those who hurt me. It frees me to love, to live, to laugh and in doing so, to learn to trust.

By Victoria

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Therapists' Page

By Vicki Polin, MA, NCC, LCPC, ATR-BC

Vicki Polin is Executive Director of The Awareness Center, Inc., The Jewish Coalition Against Sexual Abuse and Assault (JCASA) at www.theawarenesscenter.org. It provides support and resources for Jewish survivors of sexual abuse. This material was originally presented at a News Media Event, calling for State and National laws lifting the Statute of Limitations of Survivor Lawsuits, at Benjamin N Cardozo School of Law, Yeshiva University, Sept. 25, 2007. It is copyrighted by Ms. Polin and is reprinted here by permission.

When You're An Incest Survivor, and the Window Legislation

Estimates of the number of incest survivors vary. These discrepancies can be attributed to the fact that incest remains an extremely under-reported crime. According to statistics on the National Center for Victims of Crime web page, 46% of children who are sexually violated are victimized by a family member.

["Window Legislation" is a term used to describe various legal efforts, currently at the state level, to alter the statute of limitations for civil claims against perpetrators of sexual assault. Different states have approached this problem in different ways. Delaware has passed such legislation, and at present, proposals are pending in New York, Maryland, and Wisconsin--possibly elsewhere. -- ED]

To explain why the window legislation is so important, I would like to share my story with you. My story is not that much different from many other incest survivors.

To the outside world I grew up in a typical upper middle class, loving, suburban family. A family in which both of my parents were seen as honorable and respected. My father worked long hours and my mother was very active volunteering time at the local PTA and in Girl Scouts.

My parents always wanted the best for their children. There was always enough food on our table, we lived in a safe home and neighborhood, we were well clothed and went on many wonderful family vacations. We were a family that did things together. When we were sick either my mother or father would hold us in their arms—and if need be, stay up with us all night long.

Unfortunately, there was another side to my childhood—one which was

supposed to be kept secret. I was taught from a very early age that it was important to be "loyal to the family." Meaning what went on at home was supposed to be kept secret.

No one would have ever guessed that my mother was being battered or that my father had an explosive temper. Like many other children who grow up in an abusive environment, my siblings and I believed it was much better for us to use our tiny little bodies as shields to protect our mother from being hurt.

There was another secret that I kept for many years. I was being sexually abused at home. I don't know how old I was when the sexual abuse began. When I was young I just thought that was one of the many ways a parent would express love to a child. The abuse was done with tender loving care. As I got older I started feeling funny about what was happening. By the time I was in high school I began to refuse to be touched sexually. Unfortunately, doing so made the physical abuse get worse. I didn't know what to do to make the emotional, physical, and sexual abuse stop.

During my high school years my guidance counselor was aware that something was wrong at home. He was aware that I was overwhelmed and often wrote passes for me so I could just hang out in his office instead of going to classes. I didn't have the vocabulary to tell him what was going on. I would just say "my father was being mean again." Eventually I trusted him enough to show him the bruises on my arms. At one point he brought me to the school nurse who told me my bruises wouldn't photograph well enough, and

there was nothing they could do.

When I was sixteen I attempted suicide for the first time. I remember my school counselor asking me if I was being sexually abused at home. My response to him was "no". I figured what could would it do to say yes. He wasn't able to help me with the physical abuse. I was also too embarrassed to say yes. Both the physical and sexual abuse ended when I was in my early twenties. Unfortunately, on many levels, the emotional abuse continues to this day.

Over the years as I've been on my own personal healing journey I've thought about filing a civil suit against my parents, yet I could never bring myself to do that. My parents were not always mean or cruel. They were often very loving and kind. I always wanted to believe that they loved me, that they really cared about me. I often made excuses for them, that they just didn't know any better.

When I was twenty I confronted my mother for the first time about both the physical and sexual abuse. Her reaction was to tell my father what I said. At first both of my parents disclosed to me that they were also sexually abused as children. The strange thing is that they both denied being abusive towards me. Because I refused to recant my story, I was basically cut out of the family. There were a few brief respites of my exile, yet from that point on I basically no longer had parents, aunts, uncles, cousins, or siblings. I was no longer invited to family functions. I was not allowed to watch my nieces and nephews grow up. I was no longer seen as part of my family. I became nobody's child.

Through the years I felt both anger and sadness for what happened to

me. I yearned to be part of my family. I would often ask myself, how does one sue their parents? How does one emotionally put themselves into a place to do such a thing?

The first time I disclosed to an adult that I was being physically abused was when I was in sixth grade.

The first time I disclosed to an adult that I was being sexually abused was when I was twenty.

Last year at the age of 47 I reconnected with one of my relatives who I hadn't seen in about twenty-five years. It was after that interaction I began to seriously consider filing a civil suit against my parents. What had stopped me in the past was that I had fantasized that a miracle would happen and there would be some sort of reconciliation. If I filed a civil suit, all bets would be off for my fantasy to become reality.

During one of the conversations I had with my relative, she disclosed that she was ordered not to communicate with me until the statute of limitations for filing a civil suit had expired. Once that date passed, she had no idea how to find me.

After the conversation I had with my relative, I couldn't stop crying. It finally hit me how much I've lost. I finally found the courage to seek out an attorney to file a civil suit against my offenders. The problem was that in the eyes of the law, it has taken me too long to come to this point.

I am not alone. Many adult survivors of child sexual abuse are also facing the same stumbling block that I did. Without the "window legislation" that would either change or abolish the statute of limitations for filing a civil suit, my offenders and the offenders of other survivors can never be held accountable for their actions.

Here are a few things incest survivors want you to remember when it comes to legislation abolishing both civil and criminal statutes of limitations and the "window legislation"

When you are an incest survivor:

1. You don't have parents who are first and foremost concerned with your safety.

2. You don't have your parents to

fight to protect your rights.

3. At times you have to deny your own reality in order to survive.

4. At times suicide seems like the only way out.

5. You walk around with a burden of tremendous confusion, guilt and rage.

6. At times it feels like there is no one you can go to for help, or if you tell anyone, they won't believe you or do anything about it.

7. You can heal, but you will always carry scars.

8. You don't have parents who will support you through the arduous path of suing perpetrators who are often still scary to you, and in a legal system that can be insensitive to the toll such suit can have on you.

9. Choosing to sue often means giving up the only thread of hope for the family you never had. It is one of the hardest things to do, and one that often takes years to be able to do. Perpetrators often rely on that loss to guard their interests and protect their secrets.

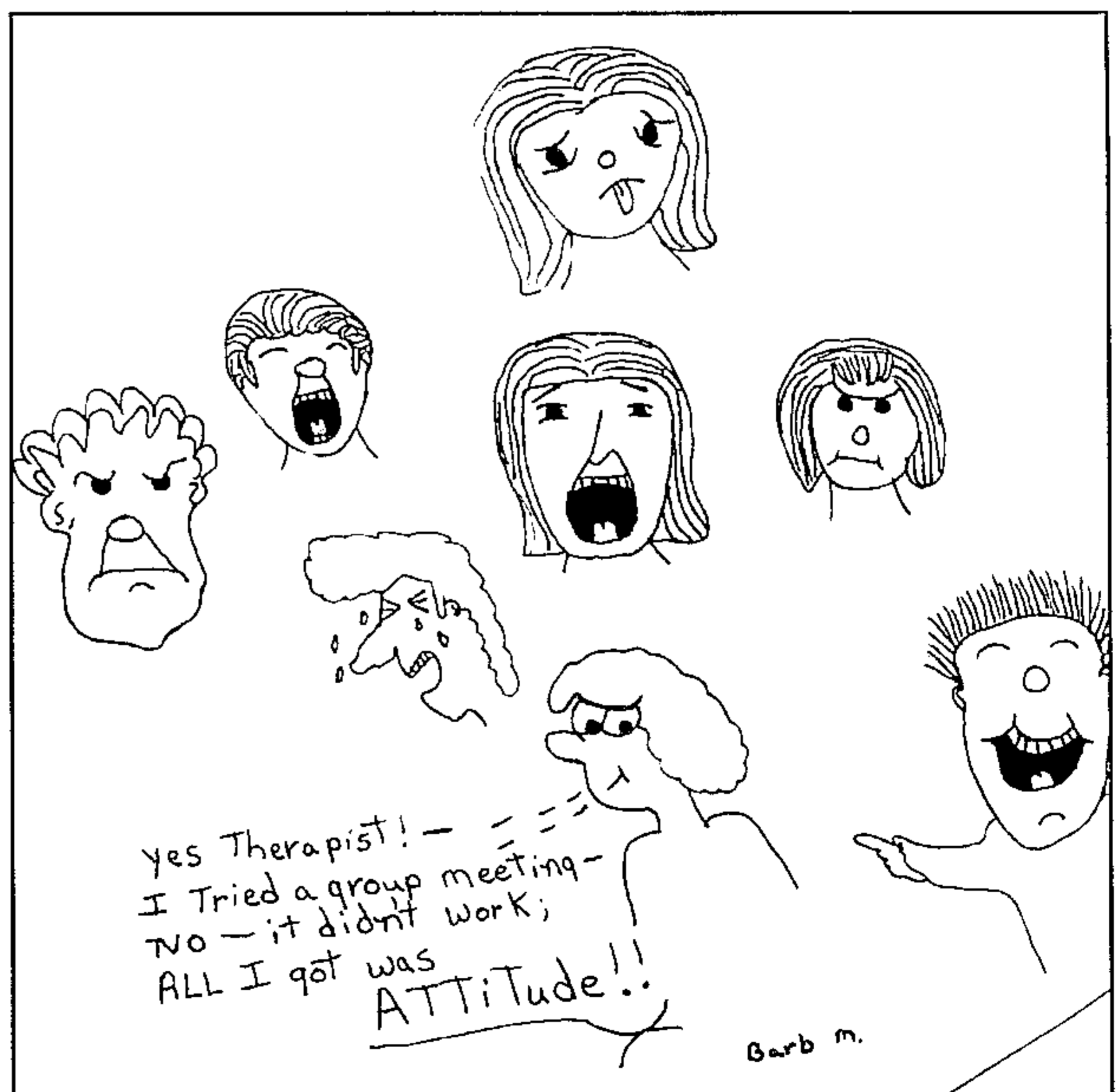
Untitled

So unused to support of any kind, this older bodymind craves it Older as in stops to rest a lot leans against anything speaks and doesn't care what comes out seeing more years behind than to come impatient with waiting while feeling the weight of experience pulling flesh toward earth Older is body while collage mind speaks in many voices of different ages Others only see greying hair and stooping body To them it becomes the wandering ramblings of an old person in a place where elder means slow and useless and something to be feared Wind in the hair speaks of other places, realms while time folds and calls itself what humans forget to remember We watch while waning moon lights the sky with ancient, dreamy shadows

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Parenting During Recovery from Abuse

By Jenn J.

Even before becoming a parent I knew what kind of parent I wanted to be. I wanted to parent with loving kindness and not the criticism I grew up with. I wanted to parent my children in a way that they knew without a doubt that they were loved. I wanted to parent them in a way that would prevent them from being abused. I wanted to be sure they had high self esteem.

Before I had my kids I thought that I was going to train them to behave like Pavlov's dogs. My family laughed at this, but I insisted it would work. If we were out in public I'd clap my hands once and they would behave.

I would pair the clap with negative consequences and they would stop the behavior. Not surprisingly, it didn't work. I just didn't want to be the mom in the supermarket yelling at her kids because they wanted something she wouldn't give them.

Basically, I believe I have been a good parent. I have told my children daily as they grew that I loved them, I was lucky to be their mom, that they were really neat kids and it was fun to watch them grow. They turned out to have great self esteem and were outgoing. When my husband started putting my daughter down, I fought with him and eventually divorced him. I had to wait for the divorce until the kids were at an age that they could provide their own basic needs – dressing, bathing, getting a snack, etc.

They learned as they grew up that "Mommy was tired." I slept a lot due to my depression, even before my divorce. The bottom line was basically that I couldn't help them. Looking back at this fact makes me cry. Even though I know I was a good parent, I recently came to the realization that they have grown up with scars from my illness. It's not passing down abuse, but more passing down the difficult recovery and ups and downs that go along with it. Hopefully, at some point they will

remember more of me getting well and overcoming adversity than they will of me being sick.

I knew my daughter was going to eventually need therapy because I became severely depressed when she was about 5. I was hospitalized involuntarily and ended up moving to Texas with my parents shortly thereafter. When I went into the hospital, I told my husband to please not turn to her for affection, ie sex, while I was gone. He thought that very strange as that idea would have never entered his thoughts. As she grew older, I tried to protect her from my husband's emotional abuse, but I couldn't always do so. His favorite attack was "Why don't you love me?" to my preadolescent daughter. I also overdosed and she had to get me home from Mexico when she was 10 years old. I sobbed when I was able to see this from her perspective 10 years later.

I didn't realize the impact my illness had on my son until very recently. He told me that I wasn't there for five years and he had become independent and he doesn't need to abide by my rules. He said that I can't enforce my rules I have for him. I told him the only leverage I had was the car. He said if I restricted him from the car he would just leave and not come home. I was saddened by his comments and his naiveté.

I told my son later that I never wanted to be the type of parent that doles out punishments. I'd rather we cooperate with each other and work for the common good of the household. It's just him and me now. He said okay to my request and it was even in a nice tone of voice. I apologized for not being there for him. Looking back I see that he was very stressed when he was younger. He had shingles when he was six and we couldn't remember that he had chicken pox when he was three.

I am fortunate that he is really a good kid. He doesn't drink or smoke

or use drugs. He is respectful of his girlfriends and helpful to his friends. He has a good heart and I know I helped shape that. I only wish he would be interested in having a clean house! Cleaning is the last thing on his 16-year-old hormonal brain.

I feel guilty that I wasn't able to be a more active parent with my kids as they grew. I'm falling into that trap that society has provided suggesting "mental illness is not really an 'illness'." You should be able to overcome it and do what you need to do for your family." Intellectually, I know that isn't true. If I had had cancer I probably wouldn't have done any better at parenting. However, I do know without a doubt that my kids knew they were loved and treasured. I believe I was vulnerable because of uncertainty about that. I had a lot of friction with my parents like most teenagers. I interpreted this as evidence that they didn't love me. I know teenage views are often skewed, but I felt like I had to "measure up" to get their love and approval.

Both my kids are headstrong, confident, and independent thinkers. I am sure that my efforts to let them know how precious they are to me were not in vain. My encouragement raised their self esteem and empowered them. My daughter believes she can do anything, which is an attitude I have cultivated. At 19, she's a senior at a prestigious college and just returned from India where she was studying the Hindi language for 3 months.

My son has his first job in the fast food industry and is consistently present and on time as scheduled. He pays for his own car insurance. He is planning on saving half of each pay check and expects to have enough money for a vehicle next summer. He has a strong work ethic as well as a good comprehension of how to handle money.

So all in all I should be pleased with what I've communicated to my

kids as a parent and honestly I can say I am. I had just hoped that I could give them everything that I didn't get. I guess most parents feel that way. It follows, in truth, that none of us are perfect parents, despite our level of health. We all need to remember that we did the best we could given the circumstances. We didn't abuse our kids. We simply loved them and gave them the dignity of self worth. Also, let us not forget that we survived and are healing when the odds of doing so were not in our favor. We have made it through to become loving parents who don't pass on the cycle of abuse.

From our experiences we have come to appreciate the importance of love, truth and kindness. Despite being sick we have modeled for our children that it is a good thing to seek help when needed. After all is said and done, maybe we weren't such bad parents after all. Hopefully, our kids will take the good things we did as parents and add their own good parenting skills to them. I believe with this in mind our children will continue the healing cycle.

MV

A Poem to My Beloved Ken

When you were dying life became
strange
Time slowed
God's grace held me in a bubble
His power flowed thru me

And then you were gone
Life crashed
Hope drowned in a heartbeat
April's face showed what a
hundred words could not say
Pain of losing you ripped thru
my soul
Trance of mourning was my garment
as time passed

Life will forever be different
I carry you in my heart
Our love lives on forever
Because of you I am a life that
was changed

*By Liz P*MV

Grace

By Julie

I watch her sleep. So peaceful and serene. She talks to angels, I know. She is a light when all seems dark, "I'll help you mommy".

The angels have been talking to me, helping me through this time of questioning and hurt. Most of all...she is my angel. When she was born, she was my saving "Grace."

I sit and think...*this is what life is all about.* Living, growing, figuring, hoping, fixing, loving, knowing, grieving. There are many days I just don't understand people and their motives. I don't understand why people can be so mean. I don't understand why people look at me and say horrible things. But there she is... "Mommy, you are beautiful. I love you." My saving Grace. I've been talking to the angels a lot in the past few days. Hoping they watch over all my friends here.

There is so much to say and such little time to say it, to all my friends. As I travel down this road less travelled I find myself questioning why people hurt me and what I did wrong. Tho I am not sure I did anything wrong...maybe it was them. I just don't know. I don't really trust the people out here in my life. They give me lots of reasons not to. There are two...my little angel, and Angie (my counselor). She gets it...she understands. She accepts me where I am and helps me to figure out how to move thru the crud that is still hanging on.

Why is it so hard for me to trust people? Why is it that I can talk to people I have never seen, here, and not to the people out here in my life? My insiders chatter about who to trust and who not to trust and mostly come to the conclusion that nobody is really honorable to trust. I think I am scared. Sometimes scared of life...of living. What happens if I make too many mistakes? What will happen then?

My heart is aching for Carol (my friend that has cancer and is about to pass on) and my other friends that have gone. For my dad. For the life I want but am unable to reach.

My angel keeps me grounded most days. She looks at me with those eyes of wonder and always says to me "I like you mommy, but I love you more."

MV*Creation**By Debby Boggs*

Why I Disappeared (from MV)

By The Fisherman

This emailed letter recently came to MV from a long-time reader. It appears here because I think it's important for people to share what they receive from MV, and what they feel is lacking. As MV continues to grow and develop as a non-profit, it is critical for me, and our future leadership, to receive feedback like this from readers. We can't promise to print every communication, of course. But we do promise to read, and seriously consider, every criticism, and do our best address problems. Naturally, we deeply appreciate hearing good things about MV, too! - Lynn W., Editor

When I don't really want to tell the truth I use financial distress reasons for getting out of something. I guess it is always convenient because essentially, except for a few years, it is a valid excuse. Anyway, that said, I feel like I would like to tell the truth as it is today, considering MPD truths can be the story of the blind men and the elephant.

I used to feel anything MPD was a link to my kind, then I got a little more discreet, considering that I could actually re-enact my abuse history. It seems I tend to do that a lot, in order to remember stuff. I once had a friend who was "multiple" and they said, "Trust your system." Harder said than done, and I don't know if this is true, but I have had a long and passionate desire to be "normal." I have known people with other mental health issues, and I see it in them as well, or perhaps I see my own desire reflected back at me, a little like the mirror in Harry Potter's Philosopher's Stone.

I have gone on one self-improvement bender after another to become "normal" and have only succeeded in coming face to face with MPD. When I got sober, over 16 years ago, I thought that would do it, and as I watched people in my meetings change and grow, I saw amazing changes in them and their lives; their lives expanded and became full of purpose and excitement. My life got smaller and smaller. At first I thought I must not be doing this sober stuff right. When I first got sober, I spoke about multiplicity but had not been diagnosed, even though I had been in therapy since my 21st birthday.

Here I was at 45, going on 46, I get sober, and three years later, in my third year of sobriety, the year you find out who you are, I get diagnosed. That was a good thing, because I got

a therapist who specialized in MPD/DID, and she did home visits. Where I live, it's a bit rural and isolated. I went to an MPD group on AOL that was private; it was in a time when the Internet was a lot safer than it is today. I got your newsletter and I felt happy because I could read about and talk to people like me.

The thing that really struck me was the diversity of MPD systems. I don't think "infinity" is too strong an identification here, and in terms of my own system, it feels unknowable. Just when I figure something out, it's gone - and not necessarily so.

Anyway, I don't have to explain MPD to you, and from 1993 to maybe 2003 with a small gap in between, I got *Many Voices*. There was always something I could identify with and would give me pause to think. I don't know how you are able to do this, publish this newsletter and keep *Many Voices* going. It's a good day if I can remember to eat at least three meals a day and show up for my daily life. I suppose I'm not a high functioning "multiple," and when I have been passionate about something, art for example, I do get things done.

What happened was that I saw a lot of articles about people living normal lives and not so much that they are cured, but they are coping in ways I am unable to cope. Of course I started to think, "I'm not doing this right, either."

Let's say here this is not about you or the newsletter. I'm assuming that you already know that but assumptions are dangerous, so let me be clear. This is about all that is me/us, whatever.

I told my friend (more a big sister than a friend) I use the singular or whole-person speak because people always get made when I use "us" or "we". Singular speak has interfered

with my acceptance of multiplicity.

Then around 2003, in my 11th year of sobriety, something started chasing me and I couldn't figure out what it was. I was shooting in the dark at anything that went bump in the night. I was pretty isolated at this point, and lived away from the busyness of the town I was in at that time. And I was in the money, too, so to speak. My dad had left me a bit of money. So I ordered all these Dr. Seuss books and Harry Potter and just a lot of books about growing up from baby time. I almost drank during this year. Even on my 11th anniversary I was headed to a bar and instead went to a meeting with the idea of going to the bar later.

I never went to the bar. I stayed sober and I came face to face with the thing that had been chasing me around for a year. Shame—not really a surprise now, but then it was a lightning bolt from the storm that seemed to be me/us. I was a man and I was born a man and it wasn't my fault.

Transsexuals dissociate as a coping mechanism to dealing with the brain sex/body sex conflict. I think a lot of middle-sex people do too, and it is a middle-sex issue here, a biological problem with a medical solution and counseling. This is when my life once again changed dramatically, this time physically and mentally. Because I was to see the face I had before I was born. Of course I took it further, to where I always take it: *"I will be fixed."*

A lot of strange things happened. Some of them were amazing and magical, but a lot of what happened was really bad. My support group turned on me, I ran out of money, and had to move to senior/disabled housing. And I lost some stuff I wasn't planning on losing because that kind

of housing is nice, but small, and not everything fits.

If you asked people in my town what happened, they would say it was me who turned on them. Aside from the idea that we are both right, it is sufficient to say that what was a time of great hope and passion turned into a PTSD/MPD meltdown of almost two years. I remember writing to you about "father-hunger" and how I was searching for a father, and I never found him. I got a mother and a big sister, but no father in the real world.

This is when *Many Voices* newsletter got irrelevant for me. And not that it was...but because it had so much female stuff I couldn't relate. It's funny, because before it was about identifying with folks who had MPD, and now it was about gender differences. I felt like a 13 year old boy in a family of girls, and since a transition is biological and physical, one does go through puberty again, starting at 12 and going on year after year. I learned a lot about the first time I went through adolescence during this process.

Back to the Newsletter: So here I was feeling like a fair-weather friend. After so many years of holding my hand in the land of MPD, I was shaking it off. Once in awhile an article would show up and I'd feel like old times. Then, when the meltdown happened, and I would read the old newsletters, and all I could see was these people getting better, and I was getting worse. Yes, the transition to become the man I had been born was absolutely the right thing to do, but once again, I had not been led into wholeness, but into another level of MPD.

When I transitioned, a new person became the new ship to sail us on, and the old vessel had sunk; this, I believe, was the reason for my support group chasing me out of town. I told them I was a multiple, but now here it was—in vibrant living color and undeniable. I realized I have lost friends this way as well; the implosion of the relationship. That's what happened to my group on AOL.

I wanted to write to you and send you stuff for the newsletter, but I guess I got scared. After all, I told my

Al-Anon group and my AA, what I was going to do, and for once I was planning to take them on the voyage with me. Well, so much for life happening while you are busy making other plans.

I wanted to start up with the newsletter again, I think about it a lot. However, I feel like I/we are just too dark, in a sense. That it's not about healing or "integrating" for me/us, it's about surviving and getting through a day with a few small victories. I feel like the things I have to say are disruptive and not in the spirit of the newsletter.

I have to say there was an article I found really helpful. It was from a man whose wife is MPD and how isolated she is. I think he said something that rings true for me—that MPD is very isolating.

Anyway- I was supposed to write about the father thing, and I thought - I can't. Because in my universe, the father thing is in the world that's real for me/us, and it's when the fisherman's (me) father shows up, it's a revelation of who we really are, a little boy sitting in a cage, making up his life for entertainment and escape. This is the father hunger, the desire to know who I really am, and where I came from, and with this—how do I become a man?

MV



Guided Imagery

The music makes my little ones dance in my head.
Between my shallow functioning;
first they would skip and frolic, then they would slow down.
Now we are drifting down a slow, shallow riverbed.
My functioning is shallow today;
slipping in and out.
Sweet violin plays softly while I relax
We are traveling
on a giant leaf with the edges curled up. The music is translucent.
There are dragonflies the size of birds; their wings catch the sunlight as they flutter about the river's edge.
There is a canopy of treetops, where the birds perch to make their own music. From these treetops I see musical notes, a treble clef and more music. The bird and violin speak to me, hushing my concerns.
We float past cattails and bearded iris, past fallen branches that barely pierce the river's surface. Around open meadows of grassy greens that are well-manicured by cows from their pastureland.
Their large size does not concern me since they only want to taste the water that carries me further and deeper into my subconscious.
As the leaf flows around a shallow curve we are swept up onto the river's edge. Here there are woodland flowers, anemones, like a carpet of pinks, purples and white. The whites are trilliums, and there are lady slippers, and occasionally a jack-in-the-pulpit. The flowers are all the size of butterflies; their fragrance is intoxicating. I crawl from the curled edge of the leaf into the bed of soft petals. My breathing is very shallow now and I am quite comfortable.

What? At the count of ten I can what? *Awaken, and feel refreshed.* Okay. I am given the option to stay, and I do. I choose to stay in the comfort of the woodland flowers. I will stay as long as I like in this shallow state of being.

By Donna H.

MV

One Day Only

By Pat M.

Every night I fall into bed, exhausted from my busy day. It starts very early because my husband goes to work at five a.m. and I can't seem to fall back to sleep. My cat, Lucy, also thinks it's time for me to get up. She sits by my head and smacks me with her paw. She starts purring and showers me with kisses. Every day begins the same, I think.

I lay in bed staring into blackness and think about what I did that particular day. Did I help anyone? Did I do anything positive? Did I ask God for help and give thanks for my gifts at the same time? I'm pretty sure I live each day to the fullest but I never really know from one day to the next. I have traumatic amnesia but have overcome being dissociative. I believe symptoms will persist throughout my lifetime. I'm not sure my lack of memory is from either of these or simply from stress. My body has felt stress and reacted to it. I am left with interesting changes that I have to learn to deal with. I try not to let any of these bother me, but at times, it gets frustrating.

The sun shines most days here in the Midwest. It glares through my car window each morning and I watch the clouds float by as I drive. The sky is a beautiful blue and from inside my car, the world is quiet. I take this time to pray. This calms me before I get to work and brings me to a peaceful place. This place is where my life has restarted. I fell life for the first time. I have been in a dark hole most of my years and I didn't even realize it until recently. I have gone through so many changes which were painful and stressful. After all the work, I am happy I went through the suffering to get to this calm place where I find myself each and every day.

I work at a Christian school with many loving people. These people gave me a safe place to heal from being sexually abused. I don't know if anyone can understand what I've gone through except others like me. I don't know anyone like me, so I find this a

rather lonely existence, in some respects. I have found that talking about abuse makes everyone put up walls and they try to change the subject quickly. I think if I can speak of it, everyone else should be comfortable with the topic. This isn't true. I don't know what baggage my friends are carrying themselves, but the addition of mine is too much for most of them.

I blend in for the most part. I will do anything to blend in. I have a huge need for those important people in my life to tell me they understand my journey. No one will understand it totally but I need to hear them say, "It wasn't your fault." There seems to be a quiet that is difficult to take sometimes. I try to listen to what others need from me because the last two years have been all about me. It is unfair to continue this way. I ask my family and friends to treat me like everyone else. No one knows how to treat me due to the mental illness I have suffered from since the beginning of my awakening. My childhood was too hard for me to deal with when I was seven, and it was too hard for me to deal with now. I'm not afraid of the mental illness side of this. It makes perfectly good sense to me that I have a reaction to the abuse. I take medicine and I am OK with this. It took everyone in my life to hold me together and help me heal. I am still lonely at times when I don't think anyone understands what this has done to me.

The change in me is a great change. I would go through all the agony again if I knew this "place" was on the other side. I am joyful, happy, faithful and whole. The most important thing I learned about myself is I am strong and I am still standing. I didn't do this alone, but I did all the work by myself. It was too much to share with family and friends. I guess my pain was their pain. I had to learn to keep it to myself. I have asked many therapists for a number for group therapy so I could get to know

others who were abused as children and can talk about it. I have found nothing. I know I am not the only grownup with a horrible childhood and that childhood still haunts them. I personally just learned of the abuse two years ago, so it is new to me.

I sit here on my computer trying to make sense of it all. I have let go of many things. I cannot change what happened to me. I want to live my life my way and in order to do this, I have to be free to be me. No matter what I am at any given moment, I must strive to be myself without any outside influence. I may feel fifty or I may feel ten, emotionally. It doesn't matter because I love myself just like I am.

After each day has gone by, and I am tucked away in my bed, I fall asleep only to awaken the next day with no memory of the previous day. I begin new each and every day. I don't know what I ate, how I dressed, what anyone said to me—nothing. I have an overall picture of my life but nothing solid to grab hold of. When this started I was truly frightened because of my lack of memory. It was scary. I now have confidence in myself to handle this and whatever may come my way. I am strong. I am whole. I am not lost anymore.

I get up each day with hopes of remembering something. I put my feet on the ground and as I go about my morning routine, I pray, "Thank you God for this one day." I only get one day at a time. I choose to go to work, do my best, and when I return home, wait for the memories to fade. I don't have to do anything special. They fade on their own. By nightfall, I am at peace.

What will tomorrow bring? I can't think that far in advance. Maybe one day all the days will flow together and make my life seem like everyone else's. Until then, I am happy to have just one day.

My Big Dream!

By The Kster9 System

Ever since I was a little kid I have had the dream of leaving Virginia and moving to the west. For many reasons through the years this has not happened for me. Things like not having enough money, to the mental health problems and alcoholism my partner has had to face, to dealing with my own mental illnesses. It has been a long and challenging road to not lose track of my dream, a dream that seemed impossible to complete but that I so desperately wanted.

In 2001, my parents moved to the west and in 2002 my sister and her family followed my parents out west. However I was unable to move with them. For one thing, finding a secure job that paid well and has full benefits, has proven very difficult. The other obstacle in the 2001-2004 time frame was that my partner (also a trauma survivor but not D.I.D.) had become sicker and sicker. So we could not move because there were 'way too many issues and neither one of us was mentally well enough to move.

My partner began to fall apart after our son was born in 1998 and she did not start really healing until about 2003. In 2004 I finally decided that my partner was well enough to care for our son and I voluntarily admitted myself into a mental hospital and it was there that I was diagnosed with D.I.D., severe depression with suicidal ideation, anxiety disorder and PTSD. What landed me in the hospital (besides just the let down as my partner was getting better) was the fact that I began to remember the severe abuse I had suffered as a child. Parts began to come out and they were trying to take over and one particular part, a strong protector, teenage part was very suicidal (lots of perpetrator programming). I so badly needed my family and they were so far away and then, more than ever, I had wished I was living out west with them.

Now four *long* years after getting

out of the hospital and spending every week, twice a week with my wonderfully, awesome, D.I.D. specialist therapist I have finally moved to the west!!! It took so long for my dream to come true, I had almost given up hope that I would ever move near my family and the mountains that I love so much.

There have been so many obstacles that had kept me from my dream and I never thought it possible to ever get out of the trap I felt I was in. Everything felt dark and impossible but with a lot of hard work and keeping inside of me an ounce of hope finally my dream has come true.

Don't get me wrong, I still have a long way to go in my healing process and moving across country has not been easy. Having to find a new, wonderfully, awesome, D.I.D. therapist has not been easy, trusting my new therapist has proven more difficult than what I thought (though she is seeming wonderful and awesome but we have sooo many trust issues), having to tell my story for the first time to another human being other than my Virginia therapist has not been a walk in the park.

My system has in the last 4 months felt very unstable and suicidal. My partner hasn't gotten a job and I fear losing our wonderful, new, single family home. My son is also having a difficult time transitioning. But the one thing that I can hold onto is that I *did it!* I had a dream and I didn't abandon that dream. Despite the fact that everything has felt against me I worked really hard to position myself to be able to follow through with my dream and once my dream was in motion I didn't run away in fear, I didn't hide like I wanted to, I took each day as it came and I have kept moving forward even if all I could do in a day was take the tiniest of steps.

Some talk about integration and how you need integration to be whole. My system hates the term "integration" and feels very threatened

at the idea of it (see we are still a work in progress). But what my system does and what I think you readers who are still D.I.D. can try, is that we work together as a team and we believe that working together is better than each working alone.... that together we can move mountains and apart we are a mess.

We know this because we worked apart for awhile during our first few sessions with the new therapist—we know now for sure that together is better.

I don't get the idea that this is "integration" and we don't know if this is how we will be for the rest of life, but together we made our dream come true. And you, my friends, can move mountains as well; this is my hope for you! Believe in the power of your system, try self care—it really does help (never thought I'd say that out loud—ahhh!), be kind and gentle to all parts because *every* part, even the one's that seem "bad", have protected the body and you and they have a role in your survival and they should be honored.

YOU CAN BELIEVE IN YOUR DREAMS and YOU CAN MAKE THEM COME TRUE! You ARE strong and you ARE good enough and YOU can make it!

Have hope and follow your dreams and don't let anyone tell you (inside or out) that you can't make your dreams come true just because you have D.I.D!

MV

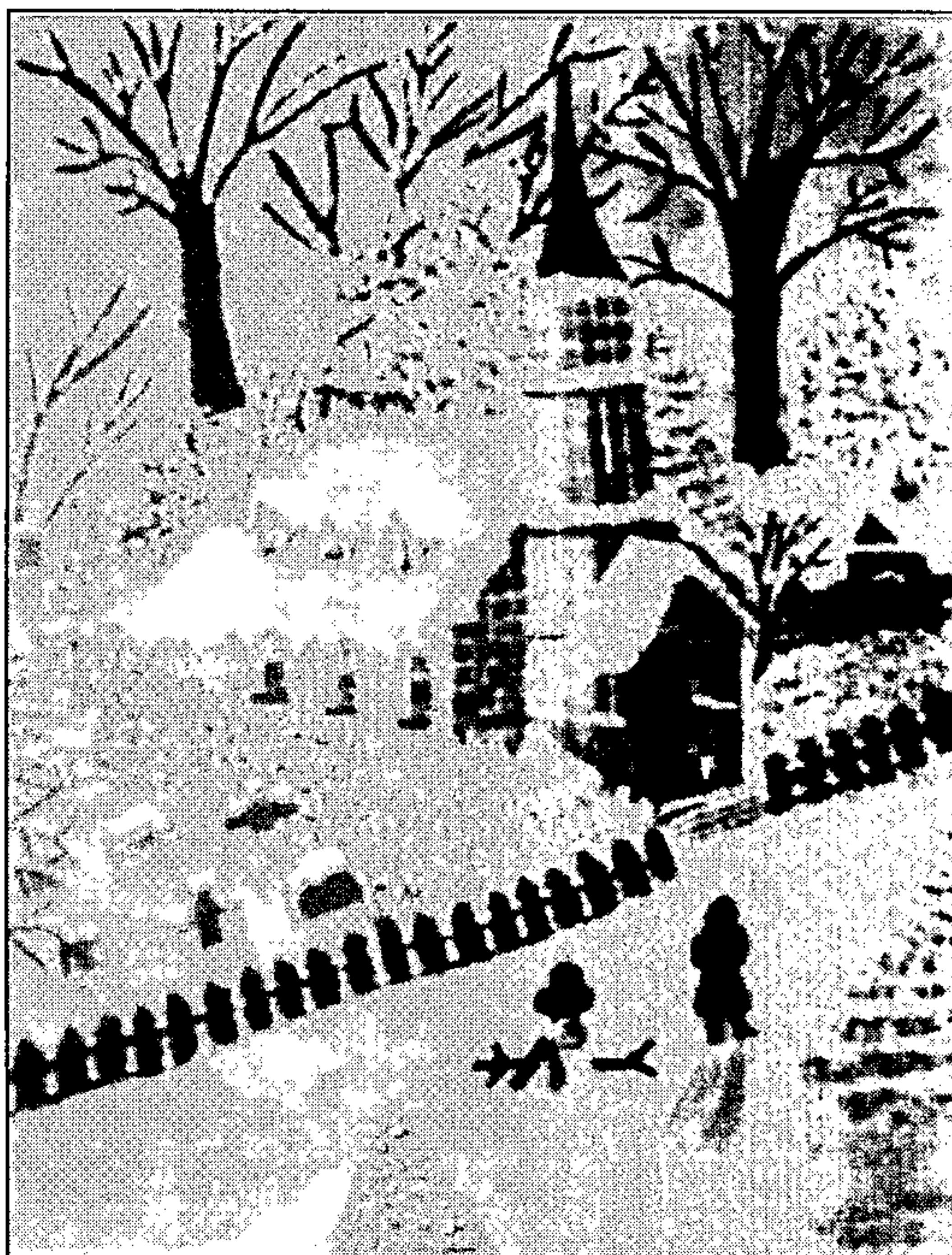


A Picture is Worth a Thousand Words

By Lydia for Keepers (www.keeperskorner.com)

It was in the early 1980's when we first received the diagnosis of MPD. Our healing journey over the last twenty some odd years has taken many twists and turns. Partially, this is because Keepers needed a full spectrum healing for our system to ever live happy healthy lives. By full spectrum, I mean that Keepers had to heal physically and emotionally but, also, mentally and spiritually. It took our system a long time to understand but healing through therapy would do us little good if our spiritual life was being neglected. By the same token, it would never help our system much to deal with our emotions and work on our traumatic memories if our system neglected to do a lot of work on changing the way we think about things

Keepers sit here and try to look back over the last many years. We are looking for the one constant that kept our system going—even in our darkest of days. For us, it is, actually, quite easy to find the one coping technique that has kept Keepers keeping on—no matter what happened in our lives. That one coping technique which was always able to help us happens to be falling back on our creative flow in an effort to free ourselves of burdens that felt too heavy for us to bear. Sometimes, our written word was enough creativity to bring relief to Keepers when we most needed it. But, there were so many times when our system, truly, felt as if we had no words to share with anybody about what was going on inside of us. It was at those times when Keepers would fall back on our art work and put into a picture whatever needed to be said. Keepers often tell others to keep talking in an effort to keep going on. But, when talking just does not work, taking pencil to paper or crayons to paper or even paints to a canvas can bring much greater relief than one would ever believe possible. At least, that is the way it has always worked for



A Walk in Snow

By Keepers

abilities to survive have always been, very closely, linked to express ourselves in whatever creative way seems right at the moment.

They say that "one picture is worth a thousand words". Keepers find that interesting because our true journal of our healing journey is not in the written word at all. Anyone who truly wants to know what Keepers have gone through and how very much we have grown can do so simply by following our art work from the beginning of our journey. For Keepers, we have put millions and millions of words into the pictures we have drawn and painted. The one constant that there has always been for us is allowing our creative flow to take us wherever Keepers needed to

go at any give moment in time.

Early on in our healing, a therapist told Keepers that we would always be ok—as long as we stayed able to paint and draw. Back then, Keepers looked at that therapist and thought she had taken leave of her senses. We just knew that something as simple as drawing a picture could never really be Keeper's salvation. But, that therapist was so very right because time and time again over the span of twenty some odd years, Keepers have pulled ourselves through the most painful of times simply by sitting down at our easel and allowing whatever needed to come out to flow freely. That has been our constant salvation on our own personal healing journey.

Words

Be careful of words.
 Even the miraculous ones.
 For the miraculous ones we do our best.
 Sometimes they swarm like bees
 and leave not a sting but a kiss.
 They can be as good as a warm blanket.
 But they can be both flowers and bruises.
 Yet I am in love with words
 They are like the twinkling stars in the night sky.
 They are like the trees and budding flowers in spring
 and the sun with its warm smiling face.
 Yet, they often fail me.
 I have so much I want and need to say,
 so many dreams, images, flashbacks I need to express.
 But my words aren't good enough.
 The wrong ones kiss me.
 Sometimes I fly like an eagle,
 but with the wings of a crow.
 But I try to take care,
 and be gentle to them.
 Words, like eggs, must be handled with care.
 Once broken, they are impossible to repair.

By Jeanmarie R.

MV



BOOKS

Thank You Greenham

By Kate Evans © 2008 Published by Laughing Moon Press
 laughingmoonpress@binternet.com, PO Box 55261, London N22 9FD, UK. £7 100 pgs. Softback. (email for US pricing & delivery info. Approx. \$15. May be available in stores or on Amazon, too.)

In the Autumn of 1981, 36 Welsh women, members of a group known as Women for Life on Earth organized a sit-in at an American nuclear airbase located at Greenham Common, not too distant from London. Kate Evans was one of the initial organizers and her intelligent memoir of the events that cumulated in a mass sit-in of 30,000 anti-nuclear female protesters a year later is both an honest and tender account. The women were not a "herd" of anti-establishment feminists, but for the most part housewives, mothers, day-workers, who believed strongly that the future of their children should not be imperiled by the threat of nuclear annihilation.

What makes Ms Evans' memoir unique among writings of this nature is her honest assessment of her own fears and feelings of isolation as she faces the consequences wrought upon by the authorities, media and pro-nuclear public. That she was arrested, dismissed from her administrative duties, and shunned by a brother, did not deter her. She confesses that at times, she needed to escape from protest activities in order to maintain some measure of normalcy, and did so by baby-sitting and writing an occasional piece for publication. As she admits she was never tough enough to stay to the very end, but there is very little doubt that she made an enormous contribution to the cause of world peace.

Thank You Greenham is a knock-out memoir highly recommended to those who seek the inspiration to stand up for their own beliefs. Way to go, Ms. Evans! For your own copy, contact the publisher at laughingmoonpress@binternet.com.

(The reviewer notes that demonstrations at Greenham

Common continued for 19 years, and officially ended in 2000. Greenham Common was dismantled as a nuclear storage base and is now the site of a Peace Park commemorating the movement of these courageous women.)

By Dora Schield

The Brain that Changes Itself

By Norman Doidge, MD
 ©2007 Published by Viking Penguin, New York, NY. us.penguin.com \$16.00 427 pgs. including index. Softback.

This book is all about neuroplasticity and is really amazing. The author backs up his ideas with solid research in the areas of language and culture and stroke recovery, OCD, aging, retardation, brain organization, decision making, perception, imagination, psychology. It is quite fascinating. It makes the point that our brains are not like computers. They adapt to the situation at hand and are changed with different experiences. The brain has the ability to change even in old age.

Reading the section on culture and how it shapes the brain, the author states that the difference between Eastern culture and Western culture is that here we tend to break things into parts instead of looking at the whole. In the East, the whole is more important. It makes sense that we dissociate into parts as a coping mechanism.

One of the key points of the book is that "neurons that fire together, wire together." Also that "neurons that fire apart, wire apart." These ideas are central to healing from trauma. It is the survivor's task to "unlearn" abusive teachings. To me, this explains why therapy is such a long process.

I highly recommend this book to anyone interested in how our brain is shaped by our experiences and how to reshape our brains to more healthy states.

By Jenn J.

MV

THANK YOU for your wonderful contributions of art, poetry and prose. Your sharing helps everyone in MV's community move forward in recovery and hope. Send topics that fit the themes below--or anything else that is important to you. We love variety!

COMING UP SOON...

February 2009

Addiction Recovery: drugs, alcohol, sex, gambling, spending etc.

12-step or ??? What works for you.

ART: Healing Friendships

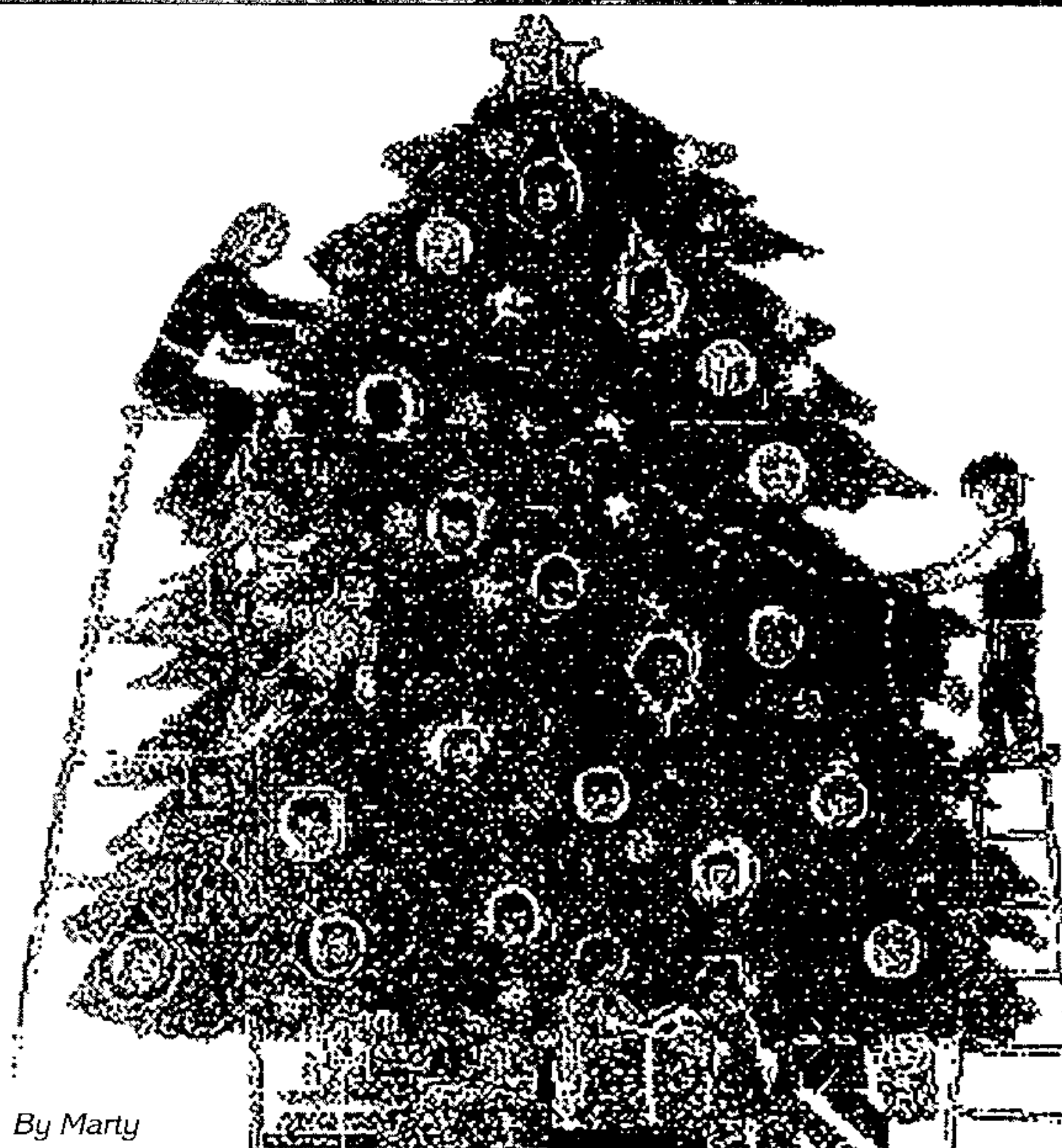
DEADLINE: December 1, 2008

April 2009

Safety First! Leaving abusers. Creating safety inside & out.

ART: Your Safe Place

DEADLINE: February 1, 2009



By Marty

Share with us!

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

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

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