

MANY VOICES

WORDS OF HOPE FOR PEOPLE RECOVERING FROM TRAUMA & DISSOCIATION

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Addiction Recovery:

What works for YOU!

Special feature: **Managing Flashbacks**
...and more!

It Was Not Always This Familiar

I listen for their voices, each
one a part of me.

It was not always this familiar.

Remembering waves of rigid
angry cries;
wanting to die or fly away.

Forever feeling their aches more
wild than belief.

There were some folks who
knew us long before
I knew my selves.

They have taken the place of
body memories and
flashbacks.

They embrace a hunger as if
opening a door
between trust and self.

Place a blank canvas before us.

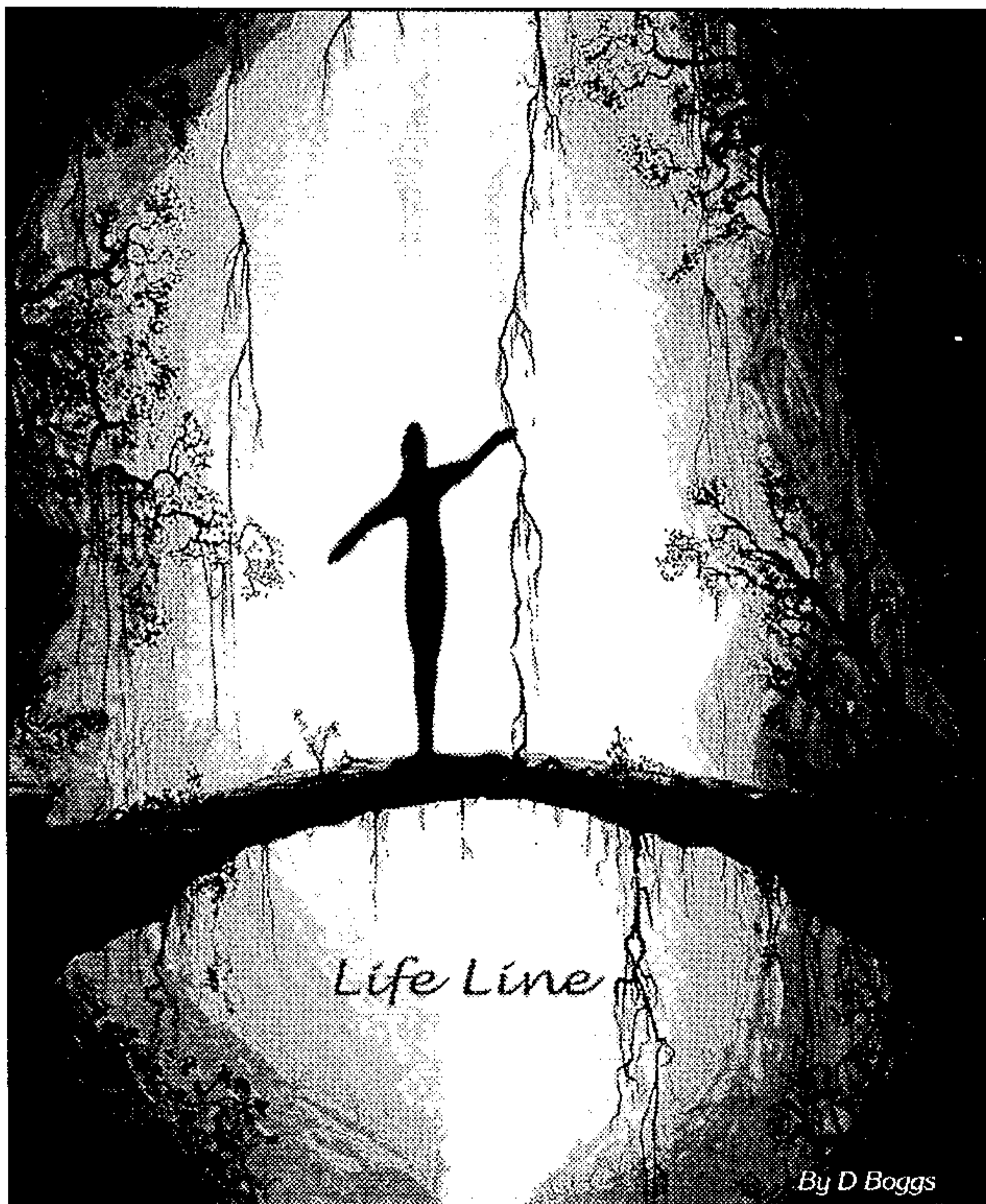
Bold colors, jagged shapes,
imagine whispers and
secrets told.

Let us out of the dark.

The canvas splashes of me.

By Donna Holzem

MV



By D Boggs

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To Tell . . . or Not to Tell

By Midge

Most people with DID yearn for the understanding and support of their friends and family. Yet many are afraid to disclose their diagnosis, for fear that the ones they depend on will misunderstand or reject them. Making the decision to tell someone you have a dissociative disorder certainly takes courage. But it also takes a little bit of wisdom and discernment, in order to be sure that disclosure is, in fact, the best choice.

First, take a look at your reasons for telling. Are you looking for support? Understanding? Do you want someone to help you when you're suffering after therapy sessions or flashbacks? Or are you weary of making up excuses for the gaps in your memory and trying to hide when you've switched? If you only want to tell because you're bored, or tired of keeping secrets, take the time to consider carefully. After all, once you divulge your diagnosis, there's no going back! Most importantly, make sure that the person you're thinking of confiding in will be able to give you what you need. Someone struggling with their own emotional issues might not be in a good position to offer support, and someone who is impatient might not be able to deal with a lot of switching on a bad day.

Another thing to consider is whether the person is in a position to believe you. A relative who might deny the possibility of abuse within the family surely wouldn't be a good choice as confidante. Likewise, someone who has a history of being abused might be reluctant to acknowledge that you have suffered also, perhaps even to a greater degree. This isn't to say you shouldn't tell them, but be aware that not everyone is able to offer support to the same degree.

Also consider whether it's worth the risk or not. Do the benefits of telling outweigh the chance that your friend or loved one might react badly? Only you can answer this. If the relationship is more important to you than having

their support, it might be safer to keep quiet. On the other hand, some relationships are strengthened by sharing such an important aspect of one's life.

If you decide to proceed, be aware that not everyone will react in the same way. This can be heartbreaking if you're not prepared. When I told one of my best friends, she seemed to accept my diagnosis and all it involved, but once the implications sank in, she became both frightened and concerned. In a panic, she divulged my secret to at least two other people and then cut off all contact with me. To this day, I don't know exactly what spooked her or why she reacted so strongly, and in retrospect, I greatly regret telling her. As a result, I waited several years before telling anyone else.

In contrast, when I finally confided in my mother, she reacted with relief at finally knowing the reason for all of my strange behavior over the years. Though she felt guilt and pain that such horrible things had happened to me without her awareness, she quickly became one of my greatest supporters.

What about significant others? Having the support of your partner or spouse can be the greatest blessing. When I began dating my now-husband, I resolved to tell him if things progressed to the point where it looked serious. Much to my surprise, I didn't have to wait that long. He had prior knowledge of dissociative disorders, and so by our second date he was able to both recognize and accept that I had DID. Not all cases are this easy, though.

I know many multiples who haven't told their partners about their diagnosis. Some feel their partners won't understand. Some are simply too afraid to reveal something so personal. While having the support of your loved ones can be a lifesaver, having a partner or spouse who doesn't believe you—or worse, takes advantage of your dissociation—can

be a nightmare. Be cautious and make the decision after careful deliberation. Consider: Does your partner have an open mind? Do they love you enough to accept that you might not be the person they married? Will they take advantage of your dissociation, or will they nurture and provide for you when things get difficult? Will knowing the truth make a difference?

When telling anyone, it might be a good idea to test the waters first. Try loaning a friend a novel about DID, one that is realistic and not overly dramatic—perhaps *First Person Plural*, by Cameron West. See what their reaction is, whether they respond with disbelief or with compassion. Perhaps discuss how severe, repeated trauma can cause dissociative disorders, and then, if all seems well, ease into the conversation of what happened to you as a child. Or you might choose to broach the subject of your childhood during one discussion, and save the topic of DID for another time if they react positively.

When you go for it, make sure you mention that it's a sensitive subject and you're telling them in confidence—unless you don't mind if they tell all their friends. If it's okay (or not okay) for them to discuss the matter with anyone in particular, be sure to say so.

You might want to have an easy-to-understand book on hand, something like *United We Stand*, by Eliana Gil, so that you can answer their questions. Don't feel you need to go into elaborate detail of the abuse you suffered. If you want to share those details, do so another time, after they've had a chance to assimilate the basics. Also, try to highlight the positive side of having DID. Perhaps relate a funny experience, such as what it's like to have your feet suddenly start walking toward the toy aisle when you're trying to shop for groceries.

You might find yourself getting anxious during the conversation or

afterward. This is natural. Every time I tell someone new, I find myself becoming dizzy and on the verge of being sick. It's a reaction to the stress of "coming out"—apprehension over whether they'll believe, or whether you've made a mistake. Some alters desire to keep the secret no matter the cost, so you might find them getting upset and trying to prevent you from telling.

Once you've told, don't be upset if your friends aren't sure what to say or how to act afterward. This will likely come as a shock to them—not only to find out that you suffered greatly as a child, but that you have such an unusual condition. Be yourself, and they should soon relax and see that you're still the same person you were before you told them.

Having the support of your family and friends is a beautiful thing. I wouldn't be where I am today if my husband hadn't been so understanding and encouraging. At the same time, it can be devastating to lay bare your secrets only to have someone disbelieve or reject you. Sooner or later, though, everyone needs to take the leap and confide in someone they trust. Be careful and cautious, but know this—it's worth the risk.

MV

Friendship

Oh, the comfort—the inexpressible comfort of feeling safe with a person.

Having neither to weigh your thoughts, or measure your words—but pouring them all right out—just as they are—rubbing them together—

certain that a faithful hand will take and sort them—keep what is worth keeping—and with the breath of kindness Blow the rest away.

By Jeanmarie R.

MV

MANY THANKS TO OUR FRIENDS!

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

Intensive Trauma Therapy - Morgantown, WV

Call Carrie Downey: (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

Timberlawn Mental Health System - Dallas, TX

Call Peyton Orr: (214) 381-7181 or (800) 426-4944

Two Rivers Psychiatric Hospital - Kansas City, MO

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

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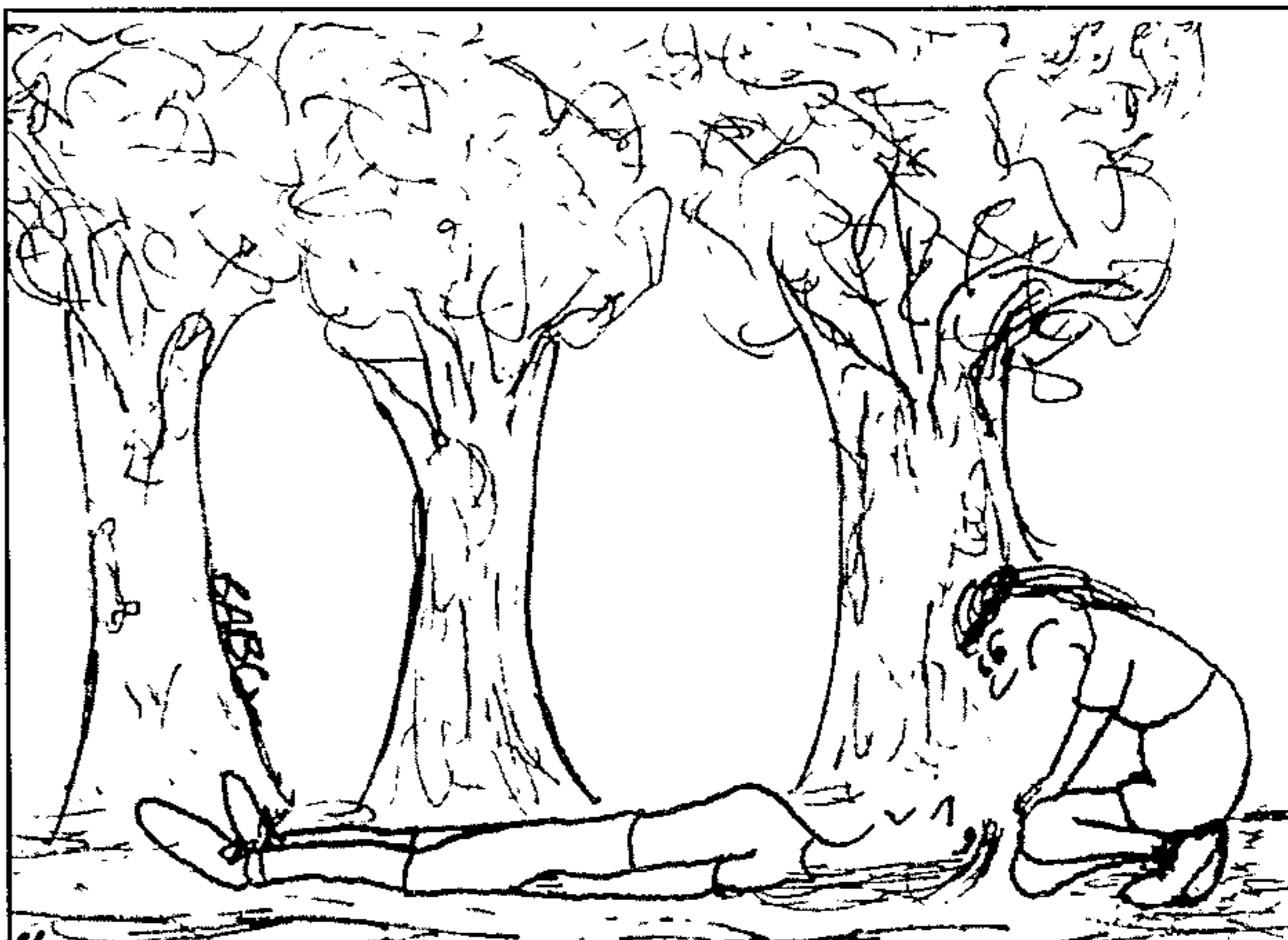
Call Larry Spinosa: (800) 437-5478

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"I'm okay. I'm just listening to my body."

Lessons in Sobriety

By Sonya Rogers Meador

Hello. My name is Sonya and I am an alcoholic. I have been sober since July 28, 1993, and for this, I am truly grateful.

Never have these words rung so true for me as they do today. Not only have I been alcohol free, I have had no psychotropic medications, no hospitalizations, and no lost time, no different names. I am no longer on the outside looking in. I am no longer alone, at the center of the universe. I am no longer defined by my diagnosis, but rather stronger because it is in the past.

All my life, I craved acceptance and meaning. My first high was in 7th grade. I remained high until the age of 19. One year after I graduated high school, I bottomed out and sought treatment. Becoming drug free uncovered issues that needed resolving. So began the path to integration and sobriety. This was 1982.

I did stay clean for 6 years and as things came to the surface, they became more difficult to handle. It had been explained to me that dissociation was needed to survive and the drugs probably saved my life and my sanity.

I was diagnosed with addiction as well as a dissociative disorder. Dual diagnosis. I had a lot of work to do. I learned about the parent, the child, and the adult, but it felt so strange because I felt more like a thousand energies instead of only three.

After 6 years in therapy, many hospitalizations, self-mutilation, many medications, I relapsed. I couldn't bear the crazy lifestyle of not knowing who I was and what I was going to do next. Also, I had not had my last drink yet.

During my relapse, I felt a oneness with everything. I remember thinking, "THIS IS HOW LIFE SHOULD BE!" I felt togetherness inside I had never felt before! So began the beginning of the end. It was wonderful at first. I was able to go dancing. I met men. I felt a part of the world. I needed to get high

or drink to feel this, but I did not care. I felt whole.

Things became difficult to maintain. I had moved to a new city and found a new therapist and she was so wonderful. I had left my husband and my children to learn who I was. No idea why. It just happened that way.

One day, I found myself at a graveyard. I was drawn to this one particular gravestone and it was of a child named Mary. She had died at the age of 5. I felt closeness to this child because I JUST KNEW she died of abuse. She came with me when I left the graveyard.

Without going into detail here, the next years were full of weekly, mostly daily therapy sessions. Now diagnosed with ANOTHER dual diagnosis, Multiple Personality Disorder and Borderline Personality Disorder, I began the process of uncovering, revealing and releasing, all the while dancing with drugs and alcohol. What was strange this time, is that even though the alcohol was fun, it was not needed. Dissociation was an intricate part of my life, clean or sober. I could not make it happen or control it. I would leave the house as an adult and go to work and I would end up coming home as a child, having just walked off the job with no notice or reason. I didn't even know the reasons. I didn't even know how I managed to get home.

I would wake up in my car, not knowing how I got there. I would wake up in my therapist's arms, not knowing why I was there. I would have nights of TOTAL AND COMPLETE FEAR, wondering if I would make it to the morning.

The alcohol was irrelevant at this time. Even though alcohol was important, what was more important was being ALL I was. Every facet, every part, every memory. I was addicted to therapy, dissociation and being held by my therapist. I would do ANYTHING to get her to hold me.

Figuring out what the hell was wrong with me and surviving was another important thing in my life. This drive to see this through to the end caused me to lose everything in my life, even my therapist. Even though I was not using drugs daily, she decided it was not helping and she fired me. This was the end of my world. She was the only sanity in this crazy life I lived. She was my Alpha and my Omega.

Next thing I knew, I had purchased a six-pack and a box of razor blades. I found a cozy place at a church, hidden under a steeple. It was the middle of the night and I would be safe. I drank and began to cut. A few more scars wouldn't make any difference.

I decided it was time to go. I had no one, nothing, and no one wanted me. My children were safe with their father and his new wife and that was all that mattered. I made a cut that was different from any I had made before. It was sort of sideways and it was deep. I began to bleed and lay down to sleep.

I woke up some time later and I WAS PISSED! "Even You do not want me!" I screamed to Whomever was listening. I looked at the cut and I saw a nerve and a vessel. The cut had gone deeper than the nerve and vessel BUT DID NOT CUT THEM! I freaked. Something electrically clicked inside me. I cannot explain the feeling, but it was time. But this feeling of "it was time" was different. I knew that if anything was going to change, it was going to have to be me. This was the beginning of my integration.

No longer was it okay to switch. No longer was it okay to be anything but a 30-year-old woman. Only problem I had was, I didn't know how to be that.

I entered into a halfway house with my teddy bear and a bag of clothes. My car completely died in the parking lot. I had nowhere to go but in. I had nothing to do but give up.

Being in that halfway house was the

most important thing in my life. I began to read the Big Book of AA again. I had tried to get sober in 1983, but they just didn't "understand." I had issues that needed attention and no one was interested in hearing them.

It was different now. The issues were not as important as learning how to live. I could not live with drinking and I could not live without drinking. I needed a solution.

It was difficult to be in the moment. I didn't know how. I knew how to live in the past, but living in the present was not something I could do successfully.

It felt like I had to learn how to do EVERYTHING over again. Things felt familiar, but not real. I had vague recollections of how things work, but it felt like I never had to do them before. Others had been responsible

for my survival and now it was up to me.

It became painfully clear to me that dissociation had been a drug as well. I needed it to live. I needed it to feel something, anything. I needed it to be someone.

Funny thing about AA is that it told me alcohol was only a symptom and that my real problem was living. It was because of a personality defect that I could not live. BINGO!!!! I had found the truth! Weird thing was, how did they know? How could they know? As I read the AA Big Book, it spoke of a Jeckyll and Hyde personality! OH MY GAWD! I had to know more. Not only did I have a drinking problem, I had an addiction problem. I was addicted to dissociation.

Well, needless to say, the program saved my life. Or rather, it gave me a life. I learned how to live as one

person. It was hard. I had never had an apartment, paid bills or kept a job for any length of time successfully. I had never been in a friendship or relationship. I used to take hostages, now I make friends.

Since July 28, 1993, I have not gone to therapy, used any drugs or psychotropic meds or been anyone else other than myself. I now belong to the human race instead of trying to run away from the human race. I am no longer the center of the universe, standing alone, while everyone else is living their lives around me. I am a part of life.

I am an I, not a we.

MV

12 Steps to Manage Overeating

By Big Miriam for the System

My name is Miriam, and I am a compulsive overeater and a sugar addict. This is how I have been introducing myself for the last 5 years in my Overeaters Anonymous meetings. Before Overeaters Anonymous, I ate—overate—to "numb out" and to escape my feelings. I ate because I was desperate to make the pain go away.

For my first years of therapy, I literally would leave my therapy appointment and go across the street to the doughnut shop. One doughnut was never enough. I would walk and walk and eat and eat to just keep the pain at bay.

Being a compulsive overeater with a dissociative disorder creates some unique problems. For example, everyone has a different favorite food. We would go to the bakery for Scared and Lonely One, to the malt shop for Pretty Medium Miriam, and to the pizza place for me and Super Sludge (our "inner monster of anger, sadness and pain." He loves pizza.)

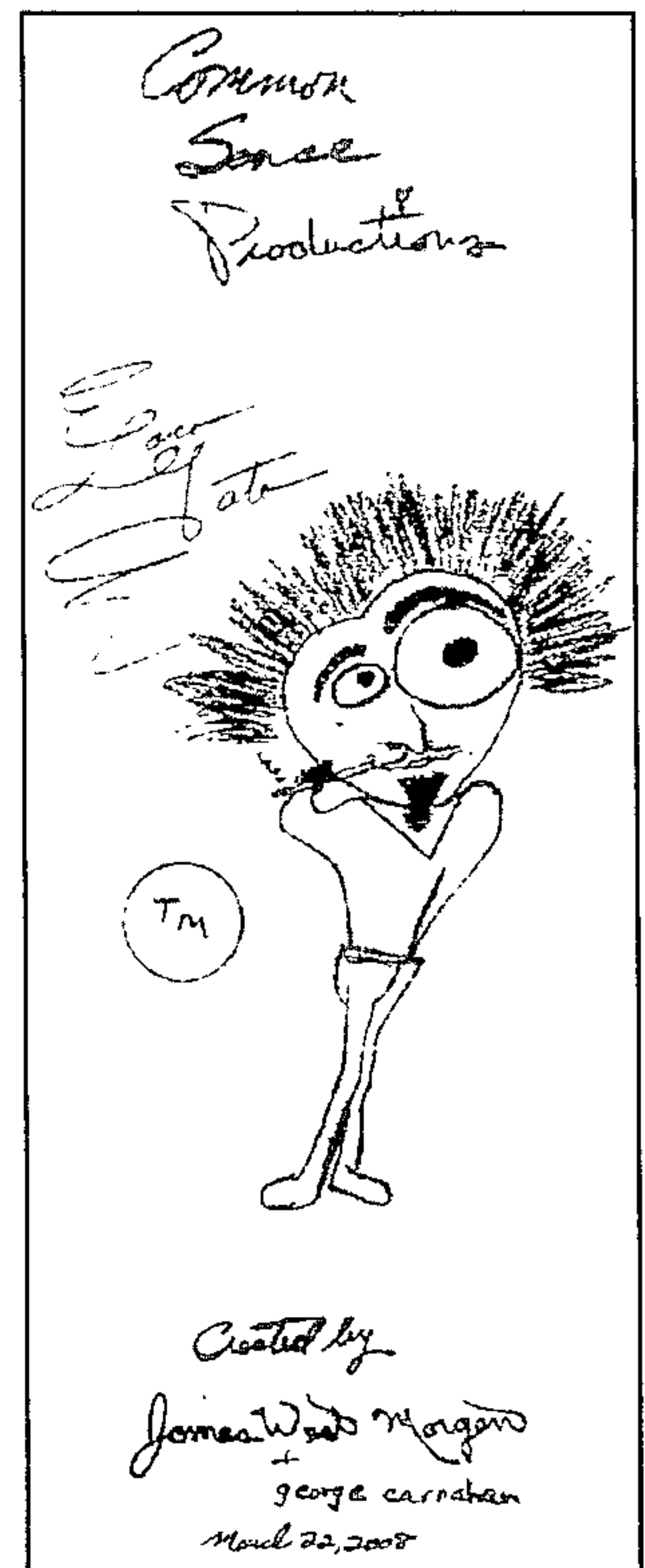
I thought I was doing "healthy reparenting," giving my inner children

the love they never had. Instead, I was just being desperate and self-destructive. The best thing I ever did for my Littles was to join Overeaters Anonymous. Now they know that I, the adult, am in charge, and I keep the body healthy. We still get treats, but now diet soda is a big one.

Working a 12 Step program has enabled me to make great progress that therapy alone could not have done for me. I have a relationship with what I call my higher power today that I am so grateful for, and most importantly I have a fellowship that supports me through life's bumps so that I don't have to eat in isolation.

I would encourage anyone who is suffering with a food addiction or an eating disorder to give Overeaters Anonymous a try. You can find it online at www.aa.org.

MV



Learning to Manage Flashbacks

By Meggan S.

When we realize that a flashback is just a form of a nightmare dream that simply happens when we are awake...the past is never able to enter into our present life. It will never happen again. It is pure memory, and we can learn how to choose the time and place these memories can be allowed to be confronted and processed. Time is powerful, but it has to follow the laws of the universe. And the past is always gone...over...done. The only way to change it is to change how we decide to think about it. We are always and ever within the present, seeking education and wisdom for creating a better future.

We can learn that the past cannot continue to control us, but we can control memories, both good and bad. I have been experimenting with balance when flashbacks enter. Unlike the negative flashback, nostalgia is triggered pleasant memories. Thus I began to actively find good memories close to the trauma, and created a specific trigger to connect the happy memory to the bad one, and then to get the good memory to trigger immediately after the bad one. Then I went to find a second and a third good memory to connect to the single bad one. They would be triggered in logical sequence, so the fears would be overpowered by good memories.

It works best when done in a form of meditation (your choice). We have found a mix of relaxation, positive affirmation and a little self-hypnosis in a state of control so you don't go too deep. We keep music or a TV low as a centering focus to keep selves aware of the present and stay grounded.

Then change the sequence of events in the flashback. As soon as you realize there's a trigger, get a group together (inside) to support the one who is deeper into the flashback. Then you chant "Change the sequence of events" as the flash plays. Then add new happy positive suggestions into the mental experience.

We discovered this when one of our most traumatized 8-year-olds began to go into a flash. We all began to chant "Do not look!" (the abuser was calling her to go to him). "Don't turn around to look." Each time she would start to, we would say "No, look at the lilac tree." It was so beautiful, in my grandparents' back yard...a huge, unmown field area. We kept her focusing on the tree and then added "Feel the warm sun on your face...smell the delicate fragrance of the lilac...hear the buzzing bugs and reach up to pick a blossom." (We had learned how to pick them to suck the nectar but not taste the bitter pollen.) "Keep looking at the tree, smell the grass...the flowers, the sun is so warm...and he is no longer behind us. He is gone. He has left. All there is, is us, and the warm sun and the lilac tree." And we said to ourselves, "What did we just do?"

That was 7 years ago and now we can enjoy the fun memories of playing in the tall grass, and never, never has that flash tried to return.

We have also learned that the vocabulary used is highly important. A "panic attack" is always going to be a threat, as the word "attack" is a word of threat and danger. But a panic "event" is a panic that happens but it isn't this big frightening thing like an attack. A flashback is going to keep pulling back into the past, while a flash is simply a flash—a short space of memories—and it doesn't have the connotations of a bad, bad time. I can have a really joyful memory flash and that is good. We try to de-negative much of the vocabulary used for psych stuff. Yes, there will always be negatives in life, but there is an extremely positive aspect attached to them. We can take them, and use them to learn from.

We lived homeless for 2 years and 7 months in the worst filthy area of Boston, surrounded by fear, lack of food, dangerous people who might harm you for a half-smoked cigarette. It sucked beyond belief. But hubby

and I were not letting it change us for the negative.. We stuck together, protected each other. Now years later we don't really have the bad, bad time stuck in our heads. We remember the fun things. We also learned that no matter how bad things suck for me right now, others are going through a lot worse.

We gained a sense of strength, ability and accomplishment. We both have DID. We team played. We teamed inside our own selves and together, and developed our own sign language to communicate secretly. And in all of this the most important thing, the greatest asset, the real key, was communication. Once those of us with DID realize the bickering and the resistance to communicate is the real enemy of recovery, and decide "I might not want to or like it but if we want a better future we need to communicate and become a team." Or a set of teams, especially for those of us who are polyfragmented.

Each of these things has been successful for us and my hubby's inner guys.

MV

A Good Therapist

The
Haven
Everyone
Requires:
Acceptance,
Persistence,
Intervention,
Safe
Time

By Terri B.

MV

How Yoga Helped Me Overcome DID and Return to the Workplace

By Princess Ocean

I was diagnosed in 1993 with Dissociative Identity Disorder, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, and Fantasy Prone Disorder.

I had a very difficult time accepting the diagnosis of Dissociative Identity Disorder (DID). I felt crazier than before, in a way; in another way, it made so much of the strangeness of my experience on earth make sense. The strangeness consisted of blackouts, bingeing on chocolate, alcohol, drugs, forgetting to get off the bus then not recognizing where I was, having people say hello to me who I did not recognize, forgetting where I put things, not recognizing things in my apartment, discovering drawings and writing I did not recall doing, having many different penmanships, not remembering much of my life especially before the age of 17, feeling an out-of-control rage inside, feeling a deep dark depression, being suicidal, many many suicide attempts.

I was ashamed of the way society, the media and even people I knew mocked DID. The jokes about Sybil and alternate personalities seemed beyond cruel to me.

My understanding of DID is that it is an incredibly creative, intelligent and resourceful way for individuals who undergo an excessive amount of trauma to cope, survive and continue living. Rather than personalities, I had fragmented my traumatic experiences of rape and ritual abuse into small seamless pockets throughout my body. These pockets of memory were impenetrable; there was no possibility of seepage. I had control over my past traumas. I gave myself intentional amnesia to survive unthinkable traumas. I was committed to surviving. I froze these memories into storage inside my body until I would have the safety, time and space to unravel them, one at a time.

I searched and searched for a

therapist. I had several unsuccessful attempts until I finally found the woman I would work with for 15 years now. I grilled her for years. I had been completely shattered and it took me a long time to trust her. Her gentleness, patience and understanding allowed me to reveal each memory at a time. I uncovered perpetrator after perpetrator. At last count I had 37 perpetrators, many of them family members.

I finished my Master of Fine Art in 1999. The last semester of this program I became very ill and tried to kill myself. I was away from my beloved therapist, my cat was killed by a car and I was sexually assaulted in a bar. Being the incredible survivor I am, I still managed to complete my degree.

I worked off and on over the next 7 years. I lived on disability assistance for much of that time as all I could handle was therapy, making art and hanging on to life by a thread. I suffered from drug addiction during that time, poverty, I was an alcoholic, I attempted suicide, landing in the hospital approximately eight times, I hurt myself and I felt worthless.

In 2005 I gave birth to a beautiful, perfect baby boy. That was the end of my addictions. I was driven and determined to create the life I wanted for myself and my son. I left the father, who was an abusive, serious drug addict.

I racked my brain trying to figure out how I could work to support myself and my son with my condition of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and DID. I had always loved yoga and done it since about 1992. I got funding from a place called Teamwork Co-Operative (they help move people on disability toward employment) to take a Yoga Teacher Training course. I found and was accepted into the right teacher training program for me.

At many times throughout the year

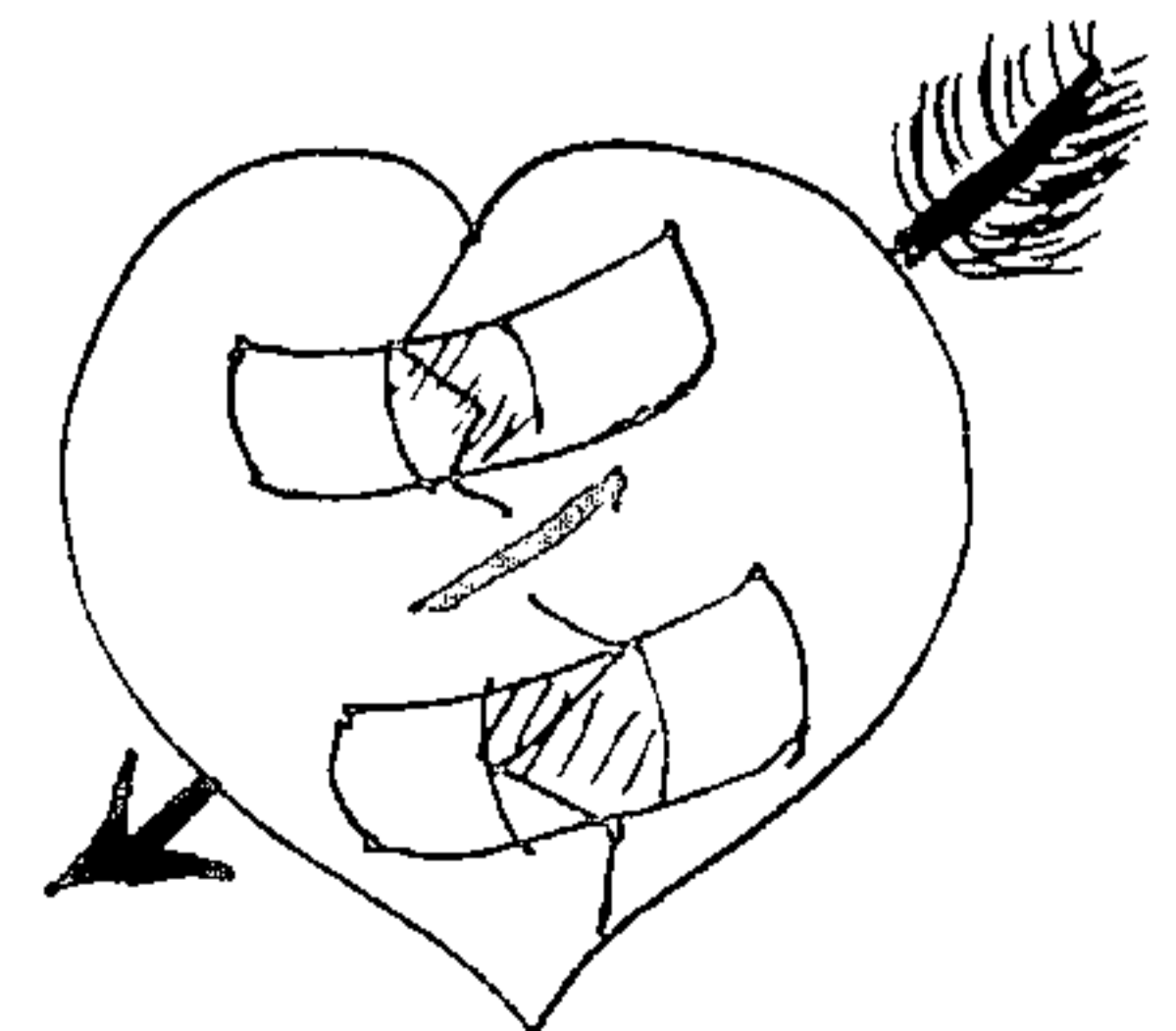
I thought I would not make it through the course. But I graduated and found a place to teach right away.

I now have the life that I want. It has been an incredibly difficult and rewarding journey. I love the studio I teach in. I now teach six classes per week. I have a supportive, gentle, loving partner. My son is 4 now, healthy and happy. We live by the ocean. I continue to make art. I love my life. I have brought myself to this place. I feel safe and happy and fulfilled. I love my family.

I still see the same therapist. We use techniques such as acupuncture, qi-gong, creative visualization, progressive relaxation and talking. Last week we did a few DID tests because I wasn't feeling the same anymore. I felt I had integrated. According to the tests, I no longer have the level of dissociation that would indicate that I have DID.

Yoga taught me a lot about being present in my body. I learned how to feel safe in my own body and my mind. It is now quiet inside. I am very proud of all I have survived and how I did it. DID is something to be proud of. It is a way for those with too much trauma for any one lifetime to survive. I would highly recommend yoga to anyone who dissociates. It has helped me immensely.

MV



Using Safe Inner Places for Resource Building

By Jenn

Since I have known I had parts, I have had "places" for them inside. They have to be somewhere, right? I have found that if I keep tabs on everyone, there is less chaos inside and out. When I started working with my current therapist we created a "Healing Circle" in which to do our therapy. When we start our sessions with EMDR, the first thing is to create inner safety and support. Development of team building and other types of internal resources cannot be underestimated. This is a powerful tool for healing and feeling safe enough to do it. The "inside" is real for our parts and they respond to the comfort, caring and safety there. The constant fear and worry they felt as they grew is allowed to be released.

In releasing fear and other emotions, we are able to work on issues at the underlying levels and heal our experiences. With the places we create inside, we can have the support and nurturing we missed as kids and correct the false beliefs that have been given to us. We can learn we are truly lovable and deserving of happiness. We can grow into a life of our own choosing. Our choice is one of peace, comfort, love and hope.

In order to build my internal resources for containment and safety, I draw and write out detailed descriptions of safe comfortable places. Any thing or place that you want to create is there for you. I have found it important to have younger and older parts helping each other.

Being with others in an active manner alleviates the loneliness we had as kids. The descriptions are written carefully so that there are no negative statements. When the brain hears "No" the context immediately becomes negative. So instead of "There is no fear," it is better to write "There is nothing to fear."

I usually make a tape with my voice and some soft music in the background and listen to it as I fall asleep nightly. It helps reinforce the concepts that my brain was never taught, and as I sleep my brain learns the ideas that I have included in the place description. I have found this to be very helpful and empowering.

Our Strengthening Place

Our Safe Place is an island in the South Pacific Ocean. It is covered by white sand beaches with beautiful blue water coming up on them. Our island is a hidden island. It is covered by a huge glass bubble that reflects the sea and the sky. When someone looks at the ocean in that spot, they see nothing but clear blue water. It looks like the ocean just continues. There is no indication that an island is there.

On our Safe Place Island, there are special places to go for anything we want or need. We can play in the ocean and build sandcastles. We can stretch out on a huge beach towel and feel the warmth of the sun on our body. We can completely relax and listen to the waves as they gently come up on the shore. We can run barefoot through the meadow over the soft grasses there. We can play in the waterfalls that come from the mountain streams. We can go to our safe home there, our Strengthening Place, or anywhere else we may need or want to go.

There is a path on the island that leads to a Strengthening and Healing Place. This place is down a winding

path through the trees beside our safe island home. As we walk upon the clear path, we leave footprints in the dirt. We think of the "Footprints" poem about God carrying you when times are difficult to get through. Mary smiles as she walks beside me, gently sharing the spirituality on this path. Anne also walks with me as we travel to this source of strength. Other parts come with us too, including Rachael, Jennifer, and Adam, Jenn, and other nurturers and helpers. We instantly hear and believe anyone reminding us that we have safety, security and strength here. We are supported and loved here. Our strengths shine here. Our fears subside. We feel a power here that gives us the strength and patience we need to heal and grow.

This Strengthening Place is full of wonder. The temperature is perfect and the sky is blue with a few clouds. The air is fresh and clean and breathing it in gives us its strength and purity. Everything we touch here shares energy with us. The grass is green and is cool when you walk on it in bare feet. Several different kinds of flowers are growing here and there.

You can see daffodils, bluebonnets, daisies, morning glories, and gardenias. The gardenias have a luscious sweet smell that fills us with peace and hope.

There is a beautiful clear stream that passes through our Strengthening Place. We can sit beside it and dangle our feet in the water. The water is cool and refreshing. Even though only our feet are immersed in the water, we can feel its power and strength begin to flow through us. We close our eyes and breathe deeply and comfortably. Happiness begins to grow inside as we gain the knowledge that we are worthy, strong and lovable. We are safe and relaxed here. There is nothing to fear.

In our Strengthening Place, we have a large log cabin. It has a wonderful warm fireplace to sit by. There is strength in its warmth. There are soft rugs around over hardwood floors. The furniture is rustic and comfy. Upstairs are many rooms. One of the rooms is a place for healing and strengthening after specific events. This room reminds us that we are safe and strong and have

the support and fortitude to heal. It has a soft feather bed with a healing blue comforter on it. As we sleep here, our body and mind are strengthened. We sleep peacefully in the knowledge that we can continue healing safely. We are worthy of peace, comfort and happiness.

As you walk barefoot on this soft grass, you notice a stream coming down from a hill in the distance. You can see little waterfalls as the stream travels down the gentle slope, winding as it goes. You can hear the water gently gurgling as it flows downward. You can walk over to this gentle stream and feel the cool water on your feet and ankles when you sit down and put your feet into the water. The water swirls around your legs. It is just the right temperature to be comfortable. You can feel the strength in the water flow into your body. The water strengthens and nourishes your spirit, body, and soul. It feels as if the energy of the water from the stream reaches out to the energy in the water in your body. It is this energy that is strengthening to your body, soul, spirit and mind. The water in your cells drinks up the energy from the stream. Your entire self is nourished by this water of life.

There are all kinds of animals in this Strengthening Place. They are alive and vibrant. There is a glow about them that comes from the strong energy within them. It is amazing to simply watch them run, graze, and drink from the strengthening streams.

In the distance we can see a small

group of deer. There is a majestic stag with strong antlers. We watch him graze in a relaxed way. He knows there is safety here and his does are protected in this place. There are several fawns running and playing

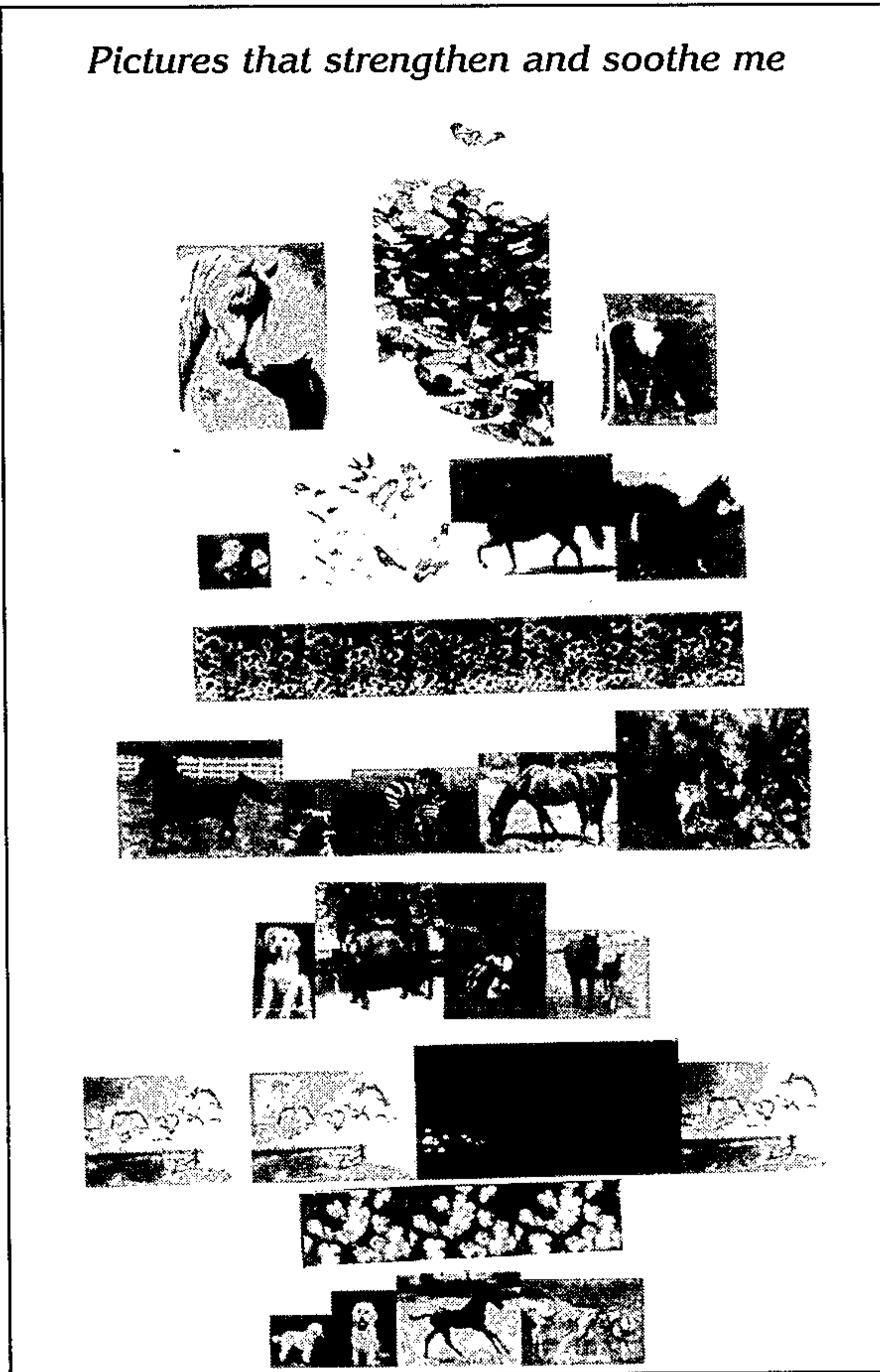
stag leans down and gently touches his antlers to the fawn. It jumps up, healed, and runs off to play with the other deer. The stag and the doe touch muzzles in a loving caring way I see a ball of light grow between

them. The light becomes brighter as the positive energy of loving grows between the stag and the doe. It is a beautiful sight to see this creation of energy as the animals' souls connect. I feel warm, safe and strong here as their light and energy flow toward me. They look at me and seem to smile. They nod their heads, then gallop away. I feel happy and contented, having been blessed by the sight of the light that grows from the touch of souls and the creation of love and hope.

I take a deep breath and my body fills with the loving power and strength of this place. In this relaxed and calm place, I know that I have the strength and capability to overcome anything past, present or future. I know I have the tools and support I need for healing. Every one of us has access to these tools and has the strength and perseverance to heal and continue our

path to a happy and manageable life. We can do more than just survive. We can heal and strive for all that we want out of life.

Pictures that strengthen and soothe me



around the other deer. The feelings of love and happiness flow out of them, almost like human children. Seeing them play brings a smile to my face and happiness to my heart. One of the fawns trips over a fallen log and is hurt. Its mother comes to her side. The stag looks up from his grazing and sees the mother and her fawn. He walks confidently over to the pair. The

The Silence of Shame

By Michael Skinner

Shame and the silence of shame that are associated with survivors of sexual abuse have bothered me for a long time. They have left me asking many questions of *why* over the years: Why do survivors feel so much shame and the need and the desire to stay silent and keep it to themselves? Why? I know some of the answers, but certainly not all, and with this article I would hope that it might be a dialog between us. So if you are reading this, perhaps you might consider contacting me and letting me know your thoughts and ideas around this shame and the silence that so many of us stay hidden in and what can be done to unlock that deep shame, a shame we don't deserve. This silence of shame is too heavy a burden that no one should have to carry. We didn't cause it, and the guilt that is associated with our abuse should not be ours to bear.

Unfortunately for too many of us, it is. So how can we change that dynamic and shift to a new way of thinking and feeling about ourselves?

First off, let me share with you a definition of shame, courtesy of the American Heritage Dictionary, Second College Edition.

Shame – noun. 1.a. A painful emotion caused by a strong sense of guilt, embarrassment, unworthiness, or disgrace. b. Capacity for such a feeling: Have you no shame? 2. A person or thing that brings dishonor, disgrace or condemnation. 3. A condition of disgrace or dishonor; ignominy. 4. A great disappointment.

Verb. Shamed, shaming, shames. 1. To cause to feel shame; put to shame. 2. To bring dishonor or disgrace upon. 3. To force by making ashamed: He was shamed into an apology.

As you can see, the word *shame* certainly has some pretty strong descriptive negative qualities about it, and it is certainly not a word and feeling that should be carried by the majority of us. Instead, we should be thinking with great pride, self-respect and honor, and be complimentary to

ourselves for the great courage and perseverance we have shown in having survived our ordeals. How can we turn things around so we give honor and thanks for what we have accomplished? We have survived impossible odds and we are some pretty amazing, resourceful and decent human beings. How can we get the greater part of society to also start looking at these things in a different light? We honor those in the military, firemen, police officers, teachers, astronauts, doctors, nurses, and so many others who do good things and show great acts of courage and humanity. What we have survived also deserves recognition and applause. We should not be made to feel shame for that which was done to us. We didn't cause it; it was done to us, yet it is we who carry that shame for so much of our life.

Despite all the wonderful things in life that I have done in giving back to society in so many ways, I too carry that shame and struggle with it every day to rid myself of it. I will always be haunted by something my brother David said to me many years ago. He was a gentle man, a good man, a good husband, and so much more, yet he still took his own life. Once while visiting him at a military psychiatric hospital and asking him why he was doing what he was doing to hurt himself, he answered, "There are some things you can never forgive yourself for." He said this to me after I had discussed with him that what had happened in the past to us as children was not his fault. His shame drove him to suicide, shame he never deserved. I also lost my brother Danny to suicide, another good guy with a heart of gold, but a ticking time-bomb ready to explode. He was very angry with me for sharing the family secrets, and our last conversation haunts me as well; in a moment of quiet reflection, he calmly said to me "There are some things better left unsaid."

This question of why we carry this shame and silence had come up

recently for me when I shared some news about a friend of mine, Margie McKinnon of The Lamplighters. At her website [www.thelamplighters.org] is a section where survivors can "Stand Up And Be Counted." I thought this was great, so I passed on the link to those on my e-mail list of Survivor Friends and Friends of Survivors. I have a pretty extensive mailing list developed over many years. I checked back later on to see what kind of a response took place at her website. Sadly, only a few of those on my e-mail list had signed on. This got me to thinking about how so many stay silent, even as adults. Even looking at my e-mail list (my e-mail list stays anonymous to others). So many of the names are just a first name only, or a pseudonym, or a title like Lone Wolf, Dove Star, and other similar-type names. Even with me they still hide their identity, and it got me to thinking how sad and how unfortunate and how powerful is the grip of shame over so many.

The research and studies show that 1 in 4 females have been sexually abused; for males they say 1 in 6, though many believe those numbers to be higher because most males don't report it. Despite our substantial numbers, we are largely silent. Think of what we could accomplish if we raised our collective voices. Think of the true changes we could achieve if we spoke up and told the world and demanded the change and recognition we all so richly deserve. We have a new president coming into office who is all about change—imagine the change we would have if we let everyone know what it is we suffered and what we need to heal. Think of the floodgates that would open up if the millions of us logged on to our new president's website (www.change.gov) and shared what we need to heal as survivors.

I hold no judgment about all of this, my judgment and anger rest with those who caused this shame and silence.. How can we change that? I would love to hear your thoughts and

ideas, so please write to me at mikeskinner@comcast.net or the old-fashioned way via the postal service. Please mail to:

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www.mskinnermusic.com - *Hope, Healing, & Help for Trauma, Abuse, & Mental Health through music, resources, and advocacy.*

www.michaelskinner.net - *Triumph Over Tragedy, public speaking and music presentations on trauma, abuse, & mental health.*

MV

Steady Hands

They laughed at my feeble attempts to express myself,
then wondered why I spent so much time alone in my room...

A closed door, blank paper.
A typewriter's busy, furious clicking:

(Let me write, let me write,
let me fill up the blank skied night with words.)

"Isn't she ever coming out of there?
It's not normal spending so many hours alone in that room."

Sweet oblivion reaches out its kind fingers
and buttons me up,
envelops me in the warmth of my little corner.

Words splash and spill into midnight hours;
they shake their heads in puzzlement—
I am not one of them—
and I have no explanation to offer.

I slowly kneel down
and mop up the spillage of words with steady hands.

By Beautiful Dreamer

MV

Another Loss

By Freda

These days I meet new-to-me inner children often. Recently a 9-year-old came and we talked of what she felt and what she knows. It is the world according to my 9-year-old awareness of the world. Then there were pictures and feelings she gave to me that belonged to a 2-year-old; a memory she has kept safe all these many years.

Daddy

Daddy is my safety. She doesn't hurt me when Daddy is around. She doesn't yell at me when Daddy is here. She doesn't say hurting things when Daddy's home. Hurting things make me cry, but she won't let me cry. Ever. She looks at me like she wants me to be dirt. But she doesn't say anything to me when Daddy is here.

Daddy is tall and strong. Daddy loves to pick me up and put me on his arm. He pats my back, and smiles and talks to me. He fixes my dress so I look pretty, then he takes us around so we can talk to someone new, somebody I don't know. I hide on Daddy's shoulder, but I smile at them, because Daddy is holding me.

When Daddy comes home sometimes I run to meet him with my arms high in the air and he flies me off the floor and swings me high in the air. I like that a lot. And some times he throws me so high I come out of his hands and start to fall and I get scared and I squeal. But Daddy always catches me. He puts me on the floor safe, so he can hug and kiss Mommy.

Daddy is big, and warm, and hugs me. He comes into my room at night to do what Mommy calls "put her to bed." I sleep in my own room now. Daddy comes in and opens the window and makes sure I am all covered up. Then sometimes he rubs my head. His hand is so big

his thumb is on one side of my head and his little finger is on the other side of my head. I like it when he rubs my head.

We used to play and tickle until Mommy came in all mad. She said I wouldn't go to sleep if we played like that, so Daddy stopped. I liked it. I got tired if we played like that. But Mommy said "No!" so Daddy not do it any more. I miss playing with Daddy at night.

Then one day I went to be with Daddy, and he scared me bad. I saw him, he was standing in the kitchen with Mommy. He came at me all mad, like Mommy does. I backed up. Mommy hurts me when she is so mad. Daddy grabbed my arm until it hurt. Then he got his face close to mine. He was mad at me. He scared me. I stood a long time looking at my shoes so I not cry. Then I went away.

I don't know where my Daddy went. My Daddy not around any more to hold me. He, that man, he scare me like Mommy scare me. I afraid of Daddy now.

I not have a Daddy any more.

I never could understand why I could not connect with my dad while he was living, even as an adult. Now I see a 2-year-old translated a disagreement between two adults as being her fault. She also interpreted her dad's anger as being equal to and equally as dangerous as her mother's anger—which was physically and emotionally very painful.

I lost my "Daddy" that day, because my mother had trained deep fear into me. He could have been my fortress of safety and love, if he had any idea what his wife was doing.

He had no idea of the consequences of an ordinary happening.

MV

Redefining Happy

By Pat M.

I'm not sure if any of us get through one day without hoping for something else in our lives that will make it more complete. I live in America where whatever we have isn't necessarily enough. There are bigger houses, faster cars, and better vacations. All in all, we are a greedy country in a lot of ways. I am guilty of being greedy myself. But after my illness, I no longer care about material things. My life has changed paths and in a way, I am better for this. What am I looking for now? It's very simple, really. I am chasing my past and hoping to recall my life.

The brain is very complex. I am thankful for its ability to function without needing my permission to do so. As a child, I lost all of me. I wasn't asked if this detour was acceptable to me or if I could cope with the outcome of abuse. I wouldn't have been able to answer such a difficult question at such a young age. My healthy, strong brain saved what was left of me by dissociating.

In the past, multiple personality disorder was a scary diagnosis. It sounded as if many different people were living inside one person. As a woman who has been dissociative since childhood, I have been one girl/woman who was shattered into a million pieces. The way in which my brain saved me was through letting me live my life in fragments, because life was too overwhelming all together for me. I believe I have gone through about eight different versions of myself over the years. The longest was from the age of 19 until the age of 48. I never remembered my childhood over the years, and I was okay with this. It wasn't a particularly happy time in my life. When I dissociated 3 years ago, I lost all memories of my life with my husband and children.

As I understand DID, all my memories are inside my brain, in individual compartments, not meant to be opened ever again. None of the girls I became crossed over into the next version of me, so there isn't a

continuation of my life. It's all choppy and finite. Without memories, I cannot fathom how I got to be 51 years old. Who am I and where have I been? What makes me, me?

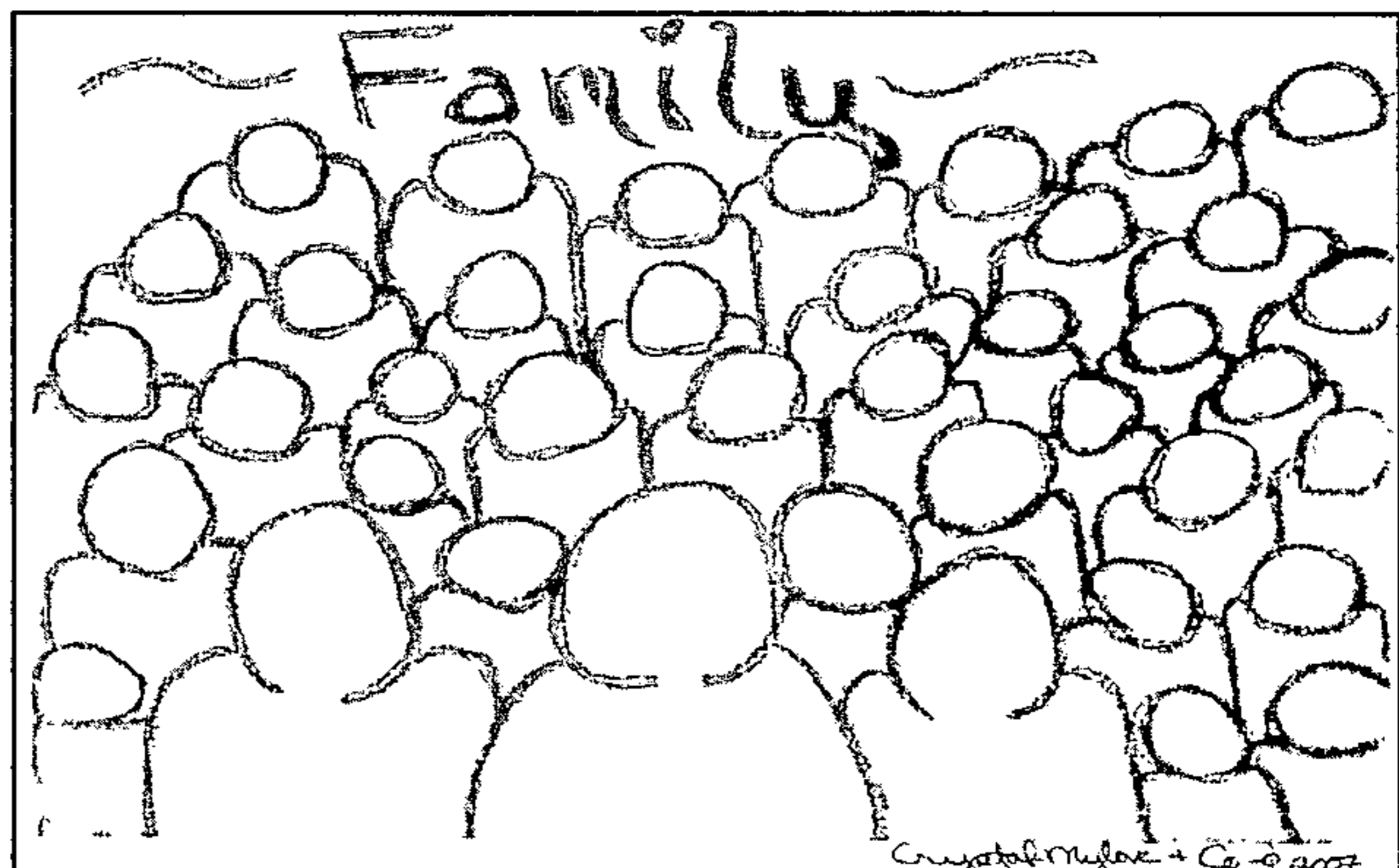
The last 3 years I have concentrated on getting up off the floor and starting over. I had emotional seizures because I couldn't cope with the abuse, to say nothing of living with strangers who had expectations of me. This was a very difficult time in my life. After much therapy and prayer, I moved on to the next phase. I have worked on overcoming depression, OCD, and PTSD. I have blended into one person. None of these will ever be gone. They will be with me always, just under the surface of my being. I have a caring psychiatrist who works with me in finding the best medication for all the symptoms that won't subside on their own.

There is one area left to work on. I have no memory. I need to remember me. I walk around without a clue to what I have done in my past, or yesterday, for that matter. I am beginning treatment to recall the good things in my past. I want to remember my marriage, my children, and my life. My psychiatrist has recommended Eye Movement Desensitization Reprocessing (EMDR). I have found a doctor close to my home and I am

awaiting a call from her to begin treatment. I am excited there is something to try. Maybe it will work and maybe it won't. I'll get to meet another therapist who may have different ideas on how to cope with childhood sexual abuse. The more I know, the better chance I have at a full recovery.

After all the work and the trials and errors of the last 3 years, I have learned a valuable lesson: Life doesn't start tomorrow, it is now. Whatever my life is today, I am happy and grateful. Everyone has a different path in life. This is mine. It is up to me to take care of myself and I am learning how to do this. I have been given an opportunity to heal and I am moving forward in that direction. Happiness comes from within. No one can take this from me. I haven't given myself too much credit in my lifetime about anything. My self-esteem has been low and I couldn't find anything about myself to like. During the last 3 years, I have come to respect and love myself. I am proud of my accomplishments and I am especially proud of the way in which I've handled what was done to me so long ago. I can't make it go away, but I can see the situation clearly. I am free to be me.

MV



12 Steps – What Works for Me?

Journey from Survival to God

By Jeanette R.

I survived cult and parents through Dissociative Identity Disorder, compulsive overeating and alcohol. I survived my twin sister's death the same way.

Today I don't drink alcohol, I don't compulsively overeat. I am aware of, accept and live with DID. I no longer survive; I have learned how to live. I live life peacefully a day at a time most of the time.

So, what happened in between the surviving and the thriving? Life was chaotic. I grew up worshipping in a satanic cult and the worship and torture were continued in my home. Since I just couldn't deal with all of this, I dissociated. I remembered nothing. We appeared to be a "normal" family. And that's how it was for years and years and years.

My twin entered the convent at age 19. I entered at age 21. I functioned well as a Sister. I was a good teacher; I enjoyed the children. I never liked church and never told anyone how I felt about God—especially God. I was too afraid. And I felt safe.

After my twin died (age 50), I was hospitalized for major depression. I began using psychotropic drugs. I felt trapped in my own head. I had many diagnoses. Finally the DID came forth. I was sent to a DID therapist. She patiently worked with me and sent me to a psychiatrist who understood DID and slowly weaned me off all psychotropic drugs. I stopped drinking alcohol through the help of AA. I was a dry drunk for about 4 years. Then I began to take the steps seriously. Meanwhile, my compulsive overeating was totally out of control and my health was being compromised. My therapist strongly suggested OA. I was obsessed with food. My self-sufficiency failed me. I had no faith in a God who would let me go through cult and home torture and create me a twin in my mother's womb and then take her through cancer. So I was totally lost—alone. I felt forced to go to OA. I

watched and noticed a woman who was abstinent and happy. I wanted what she had. I knew that if I asked her to be my sponsor, I would have to do what she did. Finally, I just asked her and she said "Yes." My action of surrender to something that was not of me was enough to allow God to get in and strike me abstinent. I grew to trust my sponsor, and she led me through the steps and I found the real God—the one who was always with me—the one who brings good out of all things.

It's exciting to believe that God is in charge of the future and to trust the future to God's providence. It's exciting to ask God to let me know His will for me and to give me His power to carry it out. My old ideas and attitudes and emotions about God have changed. I see the real God in me and in all with whom I come in contact. All living beings have been created by God and are, therefore, inherently good. Free will and independence can work against that good as it did in my parents.

I have the opportunity today to use my free will to depend on God and work through my issues. I'm on a journey. When I cross from this life of mortality over the bridge of death into everlasting life with God, my journey will be completed—I will have reached my destination. Until that time, I choose to use the 12 steps as a guide to living in order to maintain sobriety and abstinence.

The stability of sobriety and abstinence gives me the ability to work with DID one day at a time. I'm learning to look at the past, live in the present and trust the future to God's providence. I switch less often and have integrations more often. The integrations enable me to feel more complete, more whole. This is a difficult, yet rewarding, process which will take as long as it takes, one day at a time.



A Light of Hope

The warm breeze washes over us... as we fly within our soul.

An acceptance we never knew before, & we dance.

We fly by the bright-colored flowers of today.

Such radiant colors. The Colors that speak a different truth or how it is now.

Oh, and then...joy broke out inside, through and through...each touched like never before, we kept breathing together... and we kept flying watching the wind move leaves so as to part the way for us Together.

Then a hand reaches out to us, from within us, the safest being came forward and gave us peace, and a calmness we had never shared.

Sharing?
Is this how it feels to heal?

The wings that seemed broken forever are strong and graceful.

And so we soar with the strength of an eagle and the gentleness of the beautiful butterfly we feel like.

Oh...so much has changed and so much is changing.
And so we breathe together!

"We like flutterbys"

We will continue to fly, and continue to remember it's okay to heal, it's okay to know, it's okay to work together and feel and teach and grow.

By Carol and Guarding Angels

Dreams of a Multiple

By Velvetfairy

I am 39 years young and a closet multiple. I have been teaching yoga at a gym for the last 4 years. While I do love yoga, I have no passion for teaching. But it has helped keep us out of the mental hospital. It has helped us own our power. Our "yoga teacher" is a personality that we have begrudgingly grown to accept and respect. But we look forward to letting her go.

She doesn't "feel." I call her "the bionic woman." I can come in to class with all kinds of physical ailments, or tears just dried on my face from a sob in the car, and she takes over, feeling nothing but strength.

About a year ago, I interviewed for and was offered a high-paying job teaching yoga to mental health patients at a prestigious "recovery" center. My interviewer did not know I was a multiple. I charmed him in the interview and made him believe teaching yoga and fitness was my passion. This center was led by staff psychiatrists from a hospital I was familiar with. (I had been an inpatient there many years ago during a nervous breakdown.)

Their last yoga teacher was fired because he was upset about how medicated the patients were and voiced his opinions. My interviewer asked me what my feelings were about that. He said that if patients asked me my opinions on the drugs they were being given, I would need to say that I trusted the psychiatrists and that they should too. I lied and agreed with everything he said. But the truth is, I didn't trust psychiatrists. My own experience with them has been, for the most part, devastating. My interviewer mentioned nonchalantly that most of the patients "dissociated." I understood.

He offered me the job on the spot.

I told him I'd think about it and call him by Monday.

Even though the money was great, I knew I could not take the job.

I strongly suspect that some of the

psychiatrists from my past were closet multiples like myself. I played "victim," while they played the one "in control." Now I was being offered a job where I would be playing the one "in control." I didn't want to play that game. There would have been a great deal of interaction between me and the patients, more so than my interaction with the members of the gym. I just didn't want to have to be that tricky.

What I am about to tell you is very personal. When I was 6 years old, I had a dream. This dream had nothing to do with teaching yoga. My dream was to be an actress. As I lay in bed, sobbing to God, I made a pact with Him.

I said to God: "I won't kill myself if you help me be a Star."

And we shook.

And so I didn't kill myself.

At 22, I was accepted into the Juilliard School Drama Division, on full scholarship. I'll never forget sitting on the steps at Lincoln Center Plaza, staring up at the huge JUILLIARD letters, in ecstasy. It felt like my dream had come true.

But I would never officially graduate from Juilliard. I was too sick.

I suffered from anorexia, depression, and anxiety, all symptoms originating from my multiplicity, and I dropped out in my third year, twice.

But the heads of Juilliard believed in me so much that I was awarded an official "alumni status."

Thirteen years have passed.

I have not given up on this dream. It feels just as strong as ever.

But I will not pursue it until I am whole. I want to portray whole people, and I cannot truthfully do that until I myself am whole.

I have done many outstanding performances on the stage while I was multiple, and am proud of them. But in order to be the relaxed and open actress I dream of being, I must be free of the hidden traumas stored inside me.

And so I wait.

One of my yoga students gives me a free aura reading every year for my birthday.

During my last one, one of the readers saw the abuse in my early childhood, and gently made reference to it. The other saw my future and said I would be speaking in front of many, many people. But what I will never forget is when one of them suddenly exclaimed "Magic and miracles!"

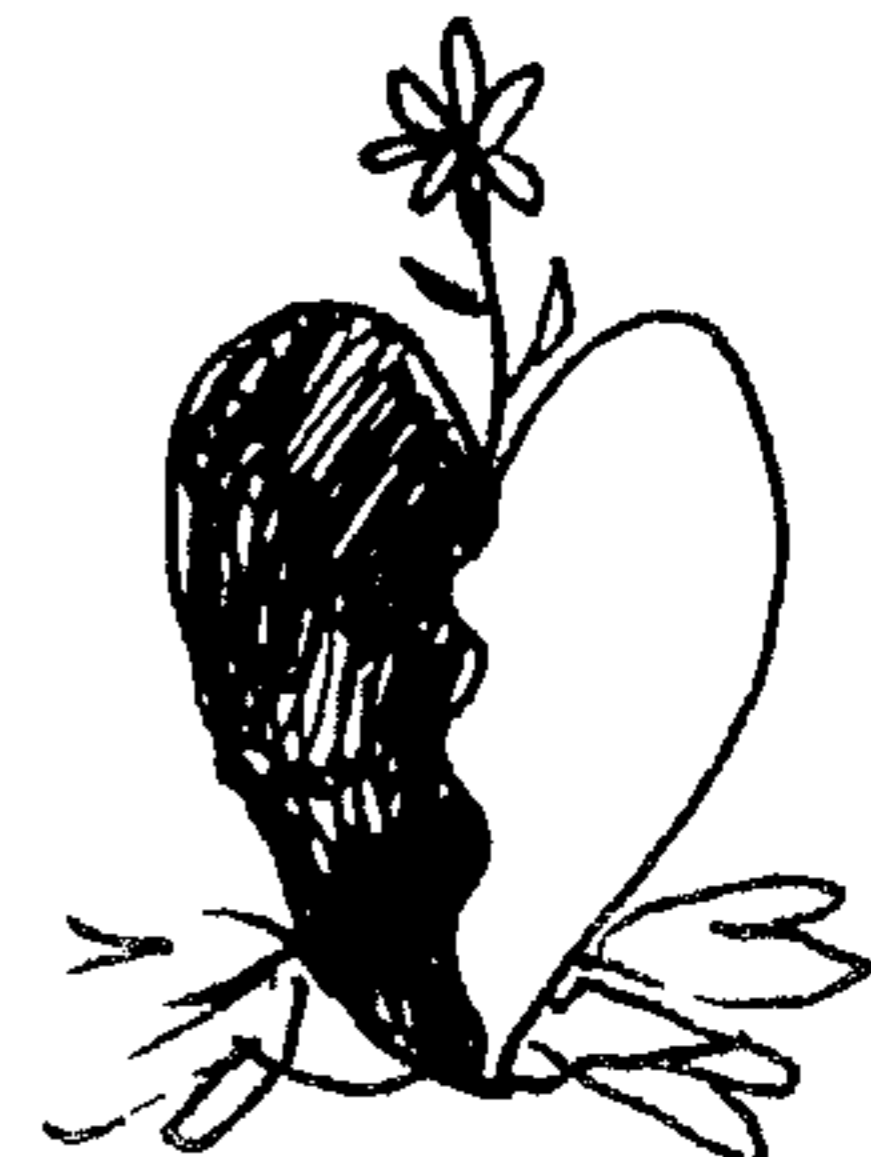
That is what I am expecting: "magic and miracles" occurring in my life that will afford me the opportunity to work with extraordinary people who will help me abreact the traumas of my past, and replace old belief systems with new ones. The main ingredients that make a great actor are trust, being open and relaxed, and listening. While I am multiple, all of these traits are challenging.

The name of the game is Patience. I feel it rarely!

In the meantime, a great deal of my life is about coping day to day. But there is a lot I have to be grateful for, including *Many Voices*, which reminds me that I am not alone in my struggles.

For all the other brave souls with DID who are reading this: May all your dreams come true too!

MV



BOOKS

Hi, I'm Bill and I'm Old: Reinventing My Sobriety for the Long Haul

By William Alexander © 2008 by Hazelden Foundation, www.hazelden.org 180 pgs. \$14.95. Softback.

"Mindful aging" is the theme of this book by a recovering addict who is as concerned with addiction to the self as with addiction to various potentially harmful substances. After more than two decades of sobriety, the author found himself tempted to relapse. Though he managed to control that step backward, he realized the fear of powerlessness over aging had once again stirred his impulse to drink. At that point, rather than ignoring (or drowning) the inevitability of age and death, Alexander decided to examine it and come to grips with the process in a way that fit his personality and needs.

This is one man's journey to acceptance of mortality, but the story is universal. Addicted or not, we all face the same uncertainty, and the more information and preparation, the better.

Heaven Knows I'm Miserable Now

By Andre Jordan © 2009. Published by HarperPerennial, www.harperperennial.com 256 pgs. \$10. Softback.

This book of cartoons is focused on a topic *Many Voices'* readers know well—depression. British-born artist Andre Jordan is (or was) seriously depressed. In therapy, when told to express himself on paper, he turned to art. Andre created a blog, www.abeautifulrevolution.com, where he posts his sketches and thoughts to share with the world at large. The world responds: his blog has received over 2 million hits, as readers relate to Andre's frustrations in life and love. He also posts a column on the BBC's disability website, OUCH!

True to its subject matter, many of the drawings ("doodles" the artist calls them) are not amusing in the usual sense, unless you are deeply into dark humor. Be prepared for some major downers, and a few violent and non-PC images. But on the other hand, these are real feelings, honestly stated (well, okay, some of it is a bit exaggerated). Still, many MV readers will relate to quotes like these: "My father once said I was a waste of space. I am determined to prove him right," and a little

spaceman saying "I have decided to leave you, Earth Mother. I need to be with people of my own kind," and the character who says "I am the Messiah" while the doctor replies "No, you are bipolar."

However, by the end of the book things are looking up. A hand clutches the string of a balloon labeled *Hope*. Caption: "Don't

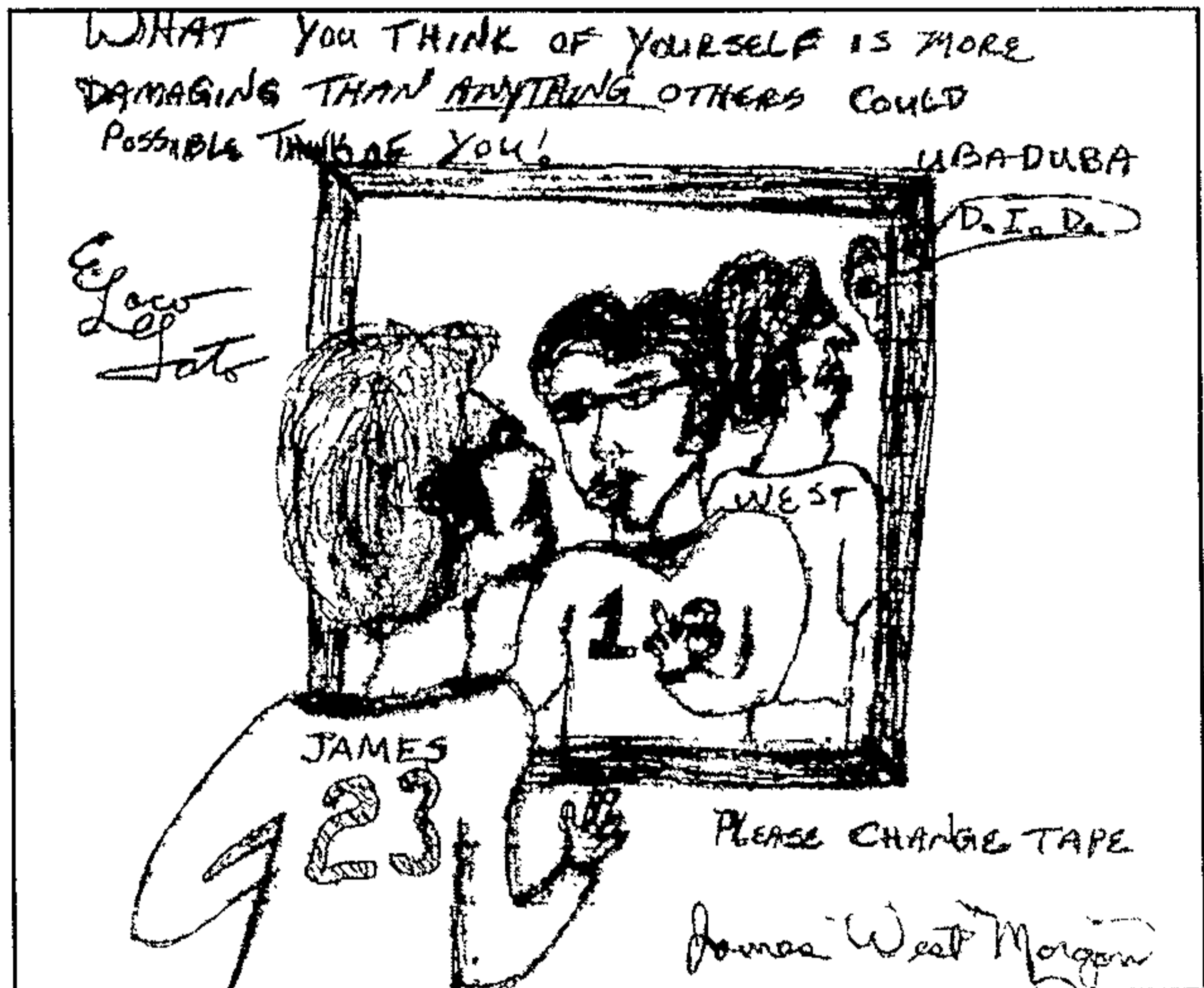
let go!" And after doodling in detail his agonized search for the right partner, in real life Andre recently married and moved to the US.

So—welcome to America, Andre! MV readers who can deal with dark humor will want to check this out. --Lynn W

MV

Recovering

By George Carnahan



In 1997 I got clean and sober. Not long after that, I began having memories of childhood sexual abuse and torture. I began hearing others speak of their experiences in this area. In 2000, two friends and I began an SIA (Survivors of Incest Anonymous) meeting at the South Shore Recovery Club in Crownsville, MD. It was called "The Inner Child" and lasted over 5 years.

It wasn't long before I realized I needed to seek professional help. In 2002 at the Baltimore Veterans Hospital it was confirmed that I had DID.

Not long after that, I realized they (my alter personas) had been trying to contact me through poetry, drawings and writings. After 6 years of intensive therapy I slowly came to know each one of them intimately. I then realized that the only way to begin feeling somewhat whole would

require me to allow them to take me back through my life to the original trauma that caused the first split. However, I first had to get past myself and each preceding persona. Our solution was to stop bad-mouthing one another and work together. We did this by creating a caricature of ourself that depicts all of our talents.

I do not exactly consider this an integration, but more of a "defragmentation." We are currently working to explain this process in a book of the same title. So, here is just one rendition of our revelation. I sincerely hope this drawing might help others to get past themselves, in order to seek the truth and set themselves free. You see, the truth can truly set you free, but the fear of it can kill you.

MV

THANKS FOR SHARING!

We love to receive your wonderful ideas, writing and artwork. Please send anything you would like to share with others. Consider our upcoming themes, too!

April 2009

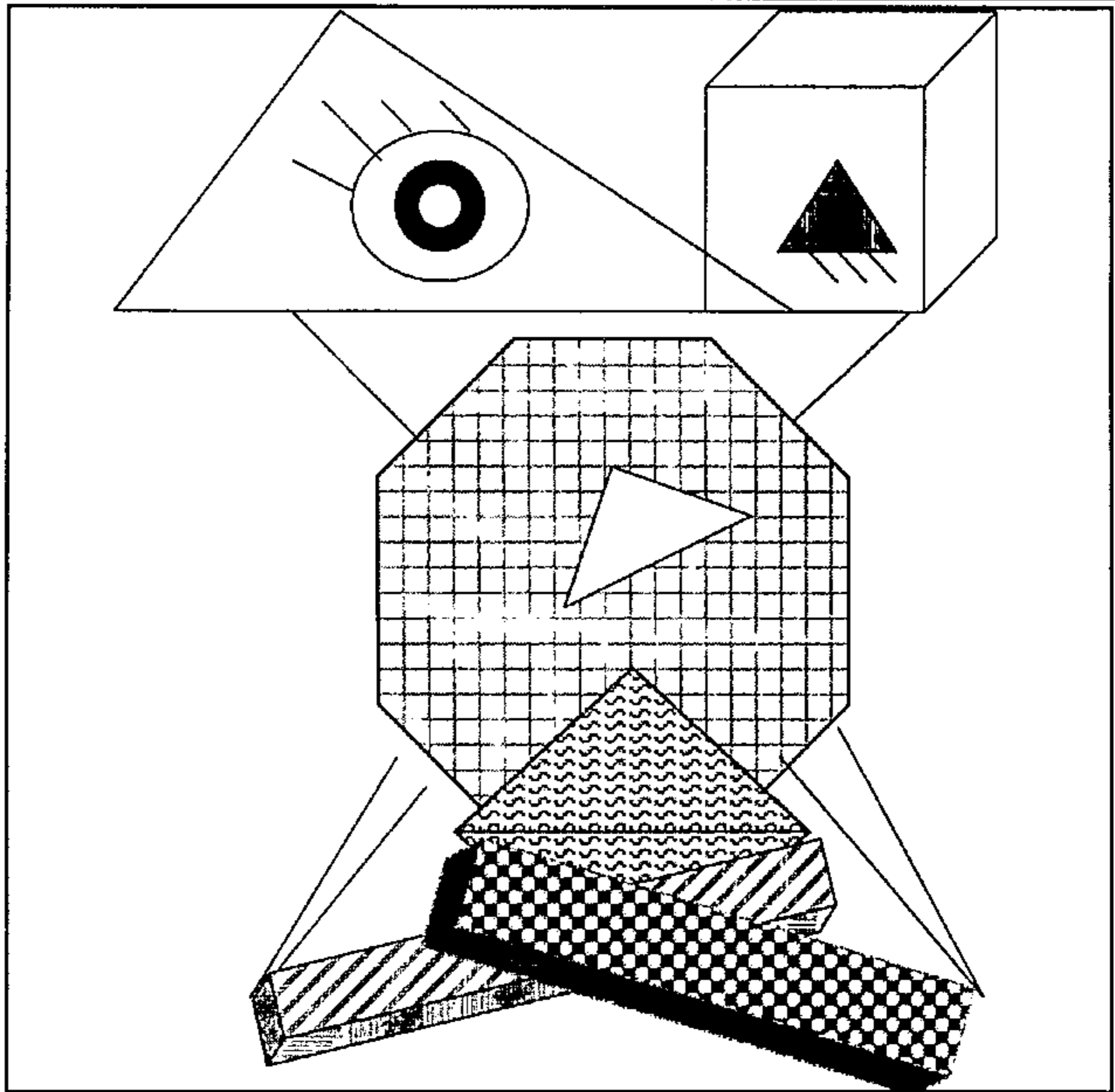
Safety First! Leaving abusers. Creating safety inside & out. ART: Your Safe Place DEADLINE: February 1, 2009

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Share with us!

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

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