HOLIDAY HEALING
and
Much More!

Me and two of my little ones.

Merry Christmas

Happy Holidays
to all...
Healing Through the Holidays

We used to be depressed because everyone was going to be with family or friends on Christmas. Well, we don't want to be with our family, but we felt depressed not doing what everyone else does. So we stay at home. We go to the grocery store and get whatever we want for dinner. Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. Usually it's a pizza or egg rolls or a frozen dinner we usually can't get because we don't have a lot of money, but Barb says it's Christmas, so we can have whatever we want. We also found an artificial tree in the garbage (people in our building through out lots of good stuff and we decorate it and our apartment. We make paper chains and every year we buy a couple of ornaments (they go on sale after Christmas). Barb's mom calls us all the time and tells us (Barb or she) won't want to be alone on Christmas. Barb points out that it's her MOM who doesn't want to be alone on Christmas. We also read books from the library that we really like (such as Wizard of Oz and Little House on the Prairie). It is kind of sad we don't have a family or outside friends, but we know separating from the tentacles of Barb's family is one of our big steps in finding new friends and maybe a family (if Barb ever gets married).) We know we can't have friends until we ditch Barb's family (except her sisters, because they are OK. And one even has Others like us. She just doesn't know it yet, but we know them.)

If people at work ask us what we did for the holidays we just say "Oh I spent it with friends and I relaxed at home. Then we ask what they did.

As far as presents, we usually don't get them for each other. We make cookies for our therapist and work (it's our social skills practice) and the dinner and ornaments are the group present. Sometimes the little ones want stuff and if they get real whiny we'll try and get away with a candy-cane bribe, but sometimes we have to break down and get them a toy. It's hard saying 'no' to little kids during the Christmas toy hype.

Also, we stopped sending presents to relatives. We say we just don't have the money and are only sending cards. This means more money for our Christmas!

By Barb W.

I take everybody (adult and child alike) to shop for presents, to look at outside lights, to special plays and shows. I let my children talk to other children as much as possible. I try to let the excitement, love, and joy of the season fill up each one of us so that there is no room for sadness within the system.

By Aileen et al

How many times over the years have you heard or sung "Rudolph, the red-nosed reindeer", thinking it a cute little ditty written for children?

Until recently, I never thought it might have a deeper meaning in my life. Then I thought about the way Rudolph's plight is similar to those of us who have experienced being different.

When I thought about all the pain I'd felt over the years because I was different from other children — how I wasn't allowed to play with other children because I was kept isolated, and how, as an adult, I have often felt that I didn't fit in anywhere, whether at work, at church, or even in my own family, my tears overflowed.

As a child I was called names and laughed at and the pain was unbearable. So, like Rudolph, I kept to myself. This of course only made my "difference" more apparent to me.

Then, one foggy day when I was deep into my confusion and pain I realized that my difference would always be there unless I did something about it. And like Rudolph, I had a decision to make: could I take that fear step into the unknown? I did, and I was amazed to find that when I exposed my differences, I received the love and support that I had always longed for. I also learned that because of the suffering I had experienced, I actually had a wonderful gift to give — love and education.

That special holiday song will always remind me that my "difference" will help me to move forward. I give my life story and knowledge to others. I shall receive even more abundantly.

By Susan 1 of 20

I grew up in a place that believed in sacrifice on some of the holidays and to me all of the holidays were evil and bad. I didn't like holidays. We stayed in a big eighteen-room gray house with my Aunt Anner and Uncle Harry and other relatives. The family believed in practicing witchcraft so I hated holidays even more.

Every Halloween I felt more suicidal than usual and I would end up in the hospital, because I felt I had a lot of demons inside me. I thought it was because I was a bad and ugly little girl when I was growing up.

I still feel that way sometimes but not as often, since I found help for me and my parts.

But about a year ago I decided to transform the holidays into happy times. I began by treating the holidays as I would any other day.

One of the main things I'm learning is prayer, and I couldn't do that before. I also called some of the other women I think of as my sisters (because they are in my MPD group). That helped me a lot. They don't really care about holidays, but we all

(continued on page 3)
(Healing cont’d)

talked about the Christmas
decorations and how pretty they
are. I still don’t have to be a part
of celebrating the holiday.

Healing for me is accepting
Jehovah God in my life, and
having other people like me to be
there for me on the holidays and
other days. I’m there for them too.
I’m beginning to realize that my
parts are all special and creative.
and when it gets close to the
holidays some of us work that
much harder to reach out to other
ones.

Most of all we have to learn to
love ourselves more on holidays.
because on those days we used to
hate ourselves the most. So we try
to pull all of us together and
become a group. We let all the
parts know that we’re there for
them, and that we can give each
other a hug, or they can hug
themselves...a good thing for
them to have on a holiday when
they’re feeling upset.

By Avern M. age 5
(with help from some others)

As Christmas Season begins to
show itself, my thoughts drift back
to the time I was in counseling
and was working hard to
remember specific memories of

Especially for Partners:

Weekend intensive workshops
for couples in intimate
relationships where one or both
partners were sexually abused are
being conducted by healing
survivor Betty Button M.A. and
Allen Dietz, CSW-ACP. This
married couple regularly train
therapists and consult in the
health and human services field.
Current schedule includes
workshops in Salado, Texas and
Orcas Island, Washington. Call
512/444-9822 for information.

Stand Fast is a new networking/
newsletter organization for partners
of those sexually abused. For
information, write to PO Box 9107.
Conimicut Station, Warwick, RI
02889.

Rebecca

You came to me when I was small;
You have helped me all these
years.
Now you have come out to let me
know
You will always be here.
I hear you talking.
I hear what you say.
You come out when I’m scared.
when I’m afraid.
You tell me what to do and what
to say.
When all I want to do is run away.
I know the others.
I know them by name.
But they are not quite the same.
You are my protector.
You are my guide.
You are my friend from inside.

By Donna C.
Our practice is a part of a "team effort", actively engaged in facilitating physical recovery for survivors of extreme abuse. Many different-skilled professionals have participated in this work: physicians, chiropractors, physical therapists, and trainers, of course — but also occupational therapists, movement instructors, recreation specialists and coaches. Our focus is to help abuse survivors restore the links to their own personal, unified sense of body/mind — links that were damaged or broken by torturous assaults.

The success of this program is enhanced by a consistently high degree of peer involvement. Consultations usually involve survivors who have worked through issues then make themselves available as resources for others.

Integration of the body/mind complex must be understood as much more than physical therapy to relieve pain and tension. The physical impact of trauma goes far beyond the obvious body-memory, as the following examples show.

1) Despite the process of abstractions aided by a counselor, survivors tend to retain certain "out of body" states related to the torturous assaults of the past, including numbness, distorted posture and movement. Other persistent problems are hatred of the body and body functions and aversion to touch by the self or by others.

2) People with dissociation may never really "sleep". Instead, they experience a series of dissociative states, with different parts taking turns being on watch. In some cases the individual is up and down all night. For others, the switches are less drastic. In either situation, the lack of REM sleep therapy modes encourages clients to begin to think about recovery in holistic health terms. But it is not

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Cautions

1. Be especially cautious about touch. Victims and survivors of profound abuse may have strong aversions to any kind of touch. For the protection of clients and therapists, every suggestion made here should be carefully chosen and even more carefully executed to suit the particular individual's needs. No client or therapist should participate in an activity that is personally inappropriate.

There are many resources that help in this work, but two books we strongly recommend are This Touch for Health (1979), and Meta Fitness by Suzy Prudden (1969).

2. Go slow. Overt health concerns may be addressed as soon as the client can tolerate medical assessment. But it may be months or years before the individual is able to participate in reconstructive physical therapy on a regular basis.

3. Reduce the need for the client to dissociate during exercise sessions by providing a safe workout space. The presence of a sensitive coach or peer who gives spoken encouragement may help clients stay "in the body". Mirrors placed so clients can watch their bodies move may increase the session's effectiveness.

4. Be aware that real relief for clients comes only when the physical activities, bodywork or massage are designed to assist the working through of a specific body memory. The optimum results occur when there is a close working relationship between the psychological counselor and the physical therapist or other practitioner(s).
(Therapists' Page, cont’d)

a quick or simple process. Reclaiming a body long seen as
the enemy of the mind because of
the pain s/he endured, the pleasure
s/he may have felt from sexual
arousal during the abuse and now
displayed in continued dysfunction
through weight or other addictions,
can seem a very unsavory task.

Our process begins early in
therapy, when clients begin to
realize the profound impact of
abuse and neglect on every aspect
of life. The result is anger and
frustration—emotions with definite
physical accompaniments which
are dealt with as therapy
progresses.

In working with abused clients,
we first help them let the mind
slowly register the extreme trauma
that the body experienced. Next
we find ways to regain regular
functioning for the traumatized
physical system or body part.

The team structure used in
physical activities adds support
and encourages progress. We
emphasize the concept “I am a
body”, not “I have a body.”

We use a variety of breathing
and centering techniques to help
survivors claim their own body
space. One clue for identification
of survivors of abuse is reverse
breathing. The stomach is pushed
out as the air is exhaled, pulled in
as it is inhaled. High shallow, rapid
breathing and long periods of
holding the breath with no eye
blinks are also significant.

Another issue along with
breathing is timing. It is easy to
push survivors to be involved in
the physical activities before the
psychological recovery is far
enough along for the mind/body to
begin working together. It is
beneficial to have persons working
on physical development processes
any time during the therapeutic
recovery. However, the
connectedness cannot fall into
place until the later stages. In
several cases the client worked
diligently and laboriously over a
period of two or three years with
some benefit. When the time was
finally right, everything became
exciting, new, meaningful and
rewarding. They, in fact, couldn’t
deal with the stress locked in the
muscles from the combination of
terror and trauma. One young
man, age 14, would get tears in
his eyes from the pain if his
shoulder muscles were depressed
by touch by even a quarter of an
inch. Six months of carefully
designed weight training activities
allowed him to work that rigidity
and pain out of his body system.

The movements designed can be
isometric or free weight, or by
weight machine. The exercises
must develop the muscle by
moving from origin to insertion.
because the locked muscle can be
further injured with incorrect
activity.

We found that our clients had
trouble with simple exercises like
mirroring another’s hand motions.
Other difficult, yet therapeutic
exercises, are cross-pattern
crawling and alternating right and

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Dear lady at MANY VOICES,
We have wanted to be in your book but we were wearing scarpery pants
because you might not like our pictures. I want to surprise Wes for
Christmas by having my picture in your book, because he takes care
of me and the other girls and loves us beyond death. That is my wish
for you and Santa. I know I don’t color as good as some big girls but I
tried real hard.

Love,

Susy. 8 (I live inside of Grown Susan, 26)
(Therapists' Page, cont'd)
left side exercises where arms and hands cross the body midlines. An interesting benefit: clients who mirrored hand patterns with the therapist at the end of an intense counseling session had increased coordination levels for the drive home.

Those people who feel safe in swimming pools may begin with slow easy movement in warm water. This decreases weight strain on body structure and allows a wider range of motion.

When approached in a careful, delicate manner, massage, physical therapy, chiropractic and other bodywork interventions have proved very useful to our clients. But issues around touch should be explored thoroughly at the outset. (See "Cautions" sidebar.) Bodywork can be very triggering to clients, bringing painful memories that must be handled with infinite care to avoid overwhelming the client.

With time, our clients come to understand that a new painful body-memory is actually progress, reconnecting the messages of body and mind. We try to give child alters encouragement to pass the pain along with the other memories to the functioning adult alter. This frees the child from hopelessness and despair. As the agony is accepted at the adult level, the child can move more freely...broadening the range of physical activities the individual may engage in. Once the body can move freely without pain, clients often experience safer expression of emotional energy, particularly anger.

In many clients, individual alters may seem to reside in, or be connected to, specific body parts. The therapist(s) must be acutely aware of changes in posture, emergence of marks or scars, and the presentation of symptoms while maintaining sensitive connections to earlier memory work.

Physical activity offers many opportunities for helping the adult learn to provide appropriate parenting for child alters. The little one who just can't get enough swimming or bicycling presents the adult with a chance to learn about healthy parental direction at several levels. Our clients report a strong sense of moving from "victim" to "survivor" during this stage.

In later stages of therapy, bouts of flu-like illness with vomiting, diarrhea, and headaches mark critical fusion and integration points.

In short, the work dissociative clients do to reintegrate the body with the mind seems to be paying off for them. Participation in regular physical activities increases awareness of the body and energy for the whole therapeutic process. As the client takes more and more responsibility for the physical self, therapy for the whole dissociative reaction is enhanced.

A Survivor's Checklist

By Cathy

WHAT I NEED TO KNOW is that:

NO .............................................. is not rejection
LIMITS ....................................... are not abandonment
ENCOURAGEMENT TO GROW .......... is not a subtle request to hurry up
 and get through

WHAT I NEED TO FEEL is that:

LOVE ........................................ doesn't equal pain
TOUCH ...................................... doesn't lead to abuse
MY BODY IS JUST THAT ............... my most sacred possession and
only I decide who shares it on any level

WHAT I NEED TO DO is to:

CREATE SAFETY .......................... for the child who fears
PROVIDE NURTURING ................. by surrounding her with loving people
PUSH .................. when she needs to move; respecting her need to stop
HONORING THE WAYS SHE'S LEARNED
TO SURVIVE ............... while encouraging her to move beyond them

WHAT I NEED TO REMEMBER is that:

I AM STRONG .............. but strength today doesn't mean pulling away;
it's knowing when to reach out
THERE IS SAFETY .......... it comes not in hiding, but in staying open
to the loving relationships I've built, the ones
I have learned to trust

But Most Importantly:

That Inside Of Me There Has Always Been A Light; A Sparkle Of Hope
That Has Never Stopped Burning... And Today I Can Let It Shine...
I Am Whole And In That Wholeness...
THERE COMES CHOICE

Items of Interest

MARS STATION BBS is an on-line computer bulletin board for sexual abuse survivors. Operating at 2400 baud, the specialty board hopes to offer any survivor in the U.S. listings and descriptions of treatment facilities within their area. Facilities may write to PO Box 038 Rockville MD 20848-0038 with info and $20 to be listed. Call data line at 301/294-5182 or for information, call voice line 301/294-5321.

The RA Project, a survey of 33 ritual abuse survivors from 13 U.S. states examines the history of abuse along with perspectives and feelings of survivors. The study was recently conducted through the University of Colorado at Boulder. Copies of the 75 page report are available for $8 from RA Project, 5431 Auburn Blvd. Suite 215, Sacramento, CA 95841. Delivery 3-6 wks.
Recovering
By Rita M.

Q: Please explain about ritual abuse, and therapy for it.

A: Ritual abuse refers to many types of groups, not just to "satanic" cults. For example, there are certain "Christian" sects that are very cult-like and have abusive rituals that all must participate in. Ritual abuse also refers to any rogues [ie. non-affiliated group(s)] or individual(s). There are abusive individuals who take whatever information they have learned or been raised by and augment it (add to it/ improve upon the concept), making up their own "cult" or set of rituals as they play out their own past abuse on their own or other people's children.

Therefore, not all ritual abuse is "satanic" and not all "satanic" ritual abuse is the same. Much depends on the players in the game, how organized the group was, was it intergenerational, how many abusers were involved, and what sort of abuse (exactly) was going on. To emphasize the point I made before...the damage sustained by a child who is abused depends greatly on the number of perpetrators involved and whether or not they were family members, the type of abuse (physical, sexual, emotional), the level of violence involved, and so forth. I do not mean to discount the ritual abuse experienced by some survivors. However, there is some hysteria among therapists and clients about "ritual" abuse, and I'd like to address this in a small way:

The descriptions of ritual abuse by clients are horrible, to say the least. A client with ritual abuse issues is going to have a harder road, but I do not believe that therapists should treat their ritual abuse clients differently (aside from discussing safety issues and boundaries regarding expectations, etc.) than non-ritual-abused persons with MPD. I think there is a real trap in thinking one is "special." All people are special, each in their own way. What I've seen happen, and I think it's really a tragedy, is that clients and/or therapists get into this mode of perceiving people with MPD (in general) and those ritually abused as "special." The trap is that boundaries get blurred, expectations on both sides go beyond what is reasonable, and ultimately, everybody gets hurt.

If I could make an analogy here...MPD is like a puzzle. Some puzzles are quite simple. Others are much more complex. However, a puzzle is a puzzle. No matter how many pieces a puzzle has, it still has to be put together one piece at a time. Certainly, a thousand-piece puzzle is going to take longer than a thirty-piece puzzle. With hard work, determination, and concentration, each can be put together. I really don't want to see clients or therapists get caught in "how much worse" one sort of abuse is over another. It's all tragic.

The key question is "Okay, now that we know this...what are we going to do about it?"

Incantation of the Hollow Children

We are the unnamed ones
we do not smile
we dwell in the shadows and corners.
We have learned to tiptoe over broken glass without wincing.

We are the invisible ones,
erased into a misplaced childhood.
We bleed when you do,
and cry when you don't.
We have never grown up.

We are the undaunted ones
we have all the answers
we need no one
untamed and haughty,
we gnash our teeth at you
and play hide and seek with headless horsemen.

We are the hollow children.
We do not believe in angels
we search for corpses in dumpsters
while you sleep.
We will not let you forget.

By Jeannette M.
Overcoming an Eating Disorder

By Pat and Alters

dysfunctional issues., when on October 17, 1986 I began having nightmares. These led to the memories of extraordinary ongoing childhood sexual abuse and "I believe and don't believe" ritual abuse.

After an increasing awareness of internal changes taking place over a period of months, I felt compelled to consult with one of the experts in the field of dissociative disorder and MPD. At this time, 10 parts came forward identifying themselves and describing their roles in our system. I was diagnosed as having atypical dissociative disorder. My treating physician agreed.

I had been symptom free (of eating disordered behavior) for some time. But when we started dealing with childhood sexual abuse issues in October we began overeating, vomited a bit and gained a great deal of weight.

About 18 months later, after a therapy session, I felt one part inside (Patti, the 6-7 year-old) say that the food was almost killing them and that they (the children inside) had been vomiting the food for the last week. (Incredibly, the vomiting for the previous week had actually had a different feel to it than usual.) Patti had acknowledged that those inside knew I had been trying for years to nourish and take care of their pain through the eating disorder behavior. Another part (Patsy, the four-year-old) said the alcohol I drank confused her. I was basically a social drinker at the time, with occasional episodes of drinking excessively.

That evening at home I asked inside what they wanted to eat. Patti wanted a mini-cheeseburger (like I would feed my young grandson). She wanted a small amount of mayonnaise plus ketchup and relish. I had always put gobs of mayonnaise on everything. This was the best tasting cheeseburger we had ever eaten. Patsy wanted a small brownie and milk. Since that day in March, 1990, when I weighed 216 pounds, we have not overeaten, purged, or drank alcohol. We have lost 70 pounds without even trying. We have maintained our weight loss for over 9 months with no effort or concerns around food. We have not become rigid but eat anything we want, including sweets and chocolate. We enjoy food and basically eat when we are hungry, and stop when we are full. We no

Please Note:

A national television documentary film is being made about dissociative disorders and MPD. It will address the abusive origins of MPD/DD and a survivor's life experience and healing. People who might be interested in sharing their experiences and insight with the documentary researchers, please write Michael Mierendorf, PO Box 80761, Minneapolis, MN 55408. Your responses will be totally confidential and you will be contacted by writing or by telephone, according to your preference. Deadline December 10, 1991.
The Very First Time

I wish he would go away and stop hurting me. 
He won't go away. Who are you? I'm your friend. What is a friend? They help you through the rough times and take the pain away. Mostly they protect you and they love you. I don't have any friends because I'm in a lot of pain and there is no one to "take it away." Yes there is. I'll take the pain away. All you have to do is give it to me! Really? Yes, really. Okay, you can have my pain. Now, what do I do? Just don't think about it anymore and it won't be there. Yes, I can do that. Thanks. Friend! You're welcome!

By Melody M.

Gifts

By Laughter, for Regina A.

On the Twelfth Day of Therapy my Clients Gave to Me:
12 broken contracts.
11 bleeding wounds.
10 pages of homework.
9 gory drawings
8 emergencies.
7 hospitalizations.
6 hundred state forms.
5 threats of homicide.
4 crying alter.
3 family fighter.
2 frightened secretaries.
and a dead cat in a brown bag!

On the Twelfth Day of Therapy my Therapist Gave to Me:
12 rules to live by.
11 signed contracts.
10 pages of homework.
9 yucky memories.
8 new-found alters.
7 books to read.
6 hundred state forms.
5 years of therapy.
4 videotaped sessions.
3 cups of coffee.
2 tag-team sessions.
and one grueling headache!
In The Land of Abundance

By US

Once upon a time there was a little girl named Rosa Maria who was born into the world of “Terrible Sorrows.” She didn’t know it then but her mother and father were being held captive by the wicked wizard in the land of “ScareCity” where there was never enough of anything to go around and everyone lived scared to death to ask for help for fear they would be eaten up instead.

The rule of this land was the survival of the fittest. If you wanted anything you had to play the survival game. The rules of the game were to fight, steal and kill for what you needed, or you were left for dead and forgotten.

Rosa Maria was very smart and quick to learn this game and enjoyed playing it at first because she became very powerful. Until one day she realized that the game had turned into herself. She was fighting, killing and stealing pieces of herself little by little. This realization was so painful that she wanted to stop playing the game but then was filled with the terror of being left for dead and forgotten. She knew she couldn’t endure that agony. She felt she was on a fast moving merry-go-round that wouldn’t slow down to let her off. She was confused and filled with despair of ever ending the pain this game caused.

Then one day a small child came to her and asked why she was so sad and Rosa Maria told her of the terrible merry-go-round game that she didn’t like playing anymore.

The small child laughed and said, “Well when I don’t like a game I’m playing I just say ‘I DON’T WANT TO PLAY THIS GAME ANYMORE’ and walk away. If you don’t play the game the rules of the game don’t fit anymore.”

Rosa Maria thought about how simple that seemed. Just when she was about to say those same words to get out of the survival game a large ugly toad came along and started singing his terrible song “You’ll never stop this game of terror. To think you can will be your error!”

This terrified Rosa Maria and she told the small child what was happening. Again the small child laughed and started singing her own song in perfect harmony. “I don’t see an ugly toad and if there is no toad there is no song.”

Rosa Maria joined in on the child’s song getting louder and louder to drown out the toad’s song. At this the ugly toad got so angry it began to blow itself up to look even more ugly and frightening. The louder she sang the more he blew. He was so intent on blowing himself up that he didn’t realize how big he was getting and suddenly there was a big explosion so loud that the entire earth shook.

The fallout was so powerful that it blew Rosa Maria and the small child to another land. When they got up and looked around they saw that the explosion had released all of Rosa Maria’s beauty that the toad had swallowed when she was born into the land of “ScareCity”. For awhile they thought they were still in “ScareCity”. Then all the abundance around them started to sing their song: “We are the treasures you’ve long searched for. Journey through us to share your abundance. We hold you in high esteem.”

At first Rosa Maria was disbeliefing because of all she had already been through. She turned to the small child and said, “Is this too only an illusion?”

The small child laughed again and said, “Real is what you make of illusion. You are the creator of the games you wish to play. Use the wisdom you have gained to make rules that bond, not bind.”

With that the small child jumped into Rosa Maria’s arms and said, “Take me home now. I’m tired and want to rest.”

Rosa Maria said “I don’t know where you live.”

Again the small child laughed and said, “I am a part of you and I live in your heart. I am the heartbeat you’ve been missing.”

Rosa Maria grew very sad because she didn’t want to let the small child go away and leave her alone again. Seeing her sadness the small child knew what she was thinking and again chuckled. “I’m not going anywhere except inside you. Whenever you need me just call ‘Me. I love to play games when the rules are simple.’”

Trembling Rosa Maria held ‘Me’ in high esteem. She listened to her heart beat for the space where a beat was missing and then tenderly placed her there. Tears filled her heart and soul for this newness left her feeling fragile yet complete. She closed her eyes out of fear and for a moment she relented the terrible aloneness from the world outside of “Terrible Sorrows’ and she thought she had returned to the land of “ScareCity”. But just when she thought nothing had changed many voices deep within her began to sing, “We are the world, We are the Children. We are the ones who make a better place because we’re living! Open your eyes and see yourself for you have made yourself REAL! From this day forward you are held in high esteem for your gentle strength.”

Rosa Maria slowly opened her eyes and saw her beauty mirrored inside and outside of her and she sang back, “I see in your eyes the love I’ve always wanted, and for the first time it’s in me, looking back at you.” She then stepped forward to begin her journey through this land called “ABUNDANCE” filled with wisdom, age and grace.
What Would You Say?

By The Painkeeper

If I met someone today who told me they'd just been diagnosed with MPD, and had uncovered a long history of sexual, emotional, and physical abuse... what would I say to them?

Dear [Name],

Although I have known you for only a moment. I feel as though I know your soul. In your eyes I see confusion and disbelief, in your soul I see pain and fear. Yet your whole self emits immense strength and determination. You see, my dear friend, you are truly a survivor.

Your journey through life has been travelled alone. Throughout each and every trauma (and there have been many) you, somehow, found inner strength to go on, searching, not only to receive love and compassion but to give it to those who are deserving of it. You are an asset to life. I feel joy in my heart because you are here. I am truly honored to have met you. You see, my dear friend, I am also a survivor who has been diagnosed with MPD and — I am afraid. Somehow, just by meeting you, I do not feel so alone.

And now you have found someone who is dedicated to your healing. You are about to embark upon the biggest challenge of all. I salute your courage. You are about to enter what may at times seem to you to be the twilight zone. The world of strange concepts, altered definitions to words, honest communication, encouragement to defy your past and to believe in you. I see that you are skeptical and suspicious of this new world. However, I also see the deep desire to trust and to be free. I am making a personal challenge to you, to risk. I am confident that you will prevail. You are, after all, a survivor.

To the doctor they say, “Doctor, heal thyself.”

To the survivor I say, “Survivor, survive thyself.”

It is important for you to realize that your tour of duty is over. The only war you have left to fight is the war within. Although your abusers are no longer here, they left with you their lies and feelings of worthlessness. These belong to them. I encourage you to discount their voice, and come to understand that they tried desperately to pass their worthlessness on to you. Acknowledge your strength in stopping this horrible cycle. As a survivor, you hold the keys to being permanent, durable, lasting, persistent, endless. I encourage you to keep those words in mind in your travels through healing.

It is unfortunate that this process is necessary. I don’t think you will find a single person who has either completed the journey or is at the beginning, minimize or lie to you that it isn’t the most painful thing they have ever done. Maybe that’s because, for the first time in our lives, we are actually feeling. Our entire self is beginning to thaw after a long, long time of being completely frozen.

I encourage you to reach out. By doing so you not only empower your own process, but also the continuous journey of those around you who are trying and struggling as they heal. When we let someone in, we are not alone. When we are able to help, we feel worth. We all need each other. If you do not reach out, you actually deprive us of witnessing your strength and determination to heal. There is a lot to be said for collective consciousness. The strength of others to heal becomes our strength to heal. What a truly awful world it would be if we all stayed within ourselves.

By being diagnosed with MPD, that tells me that you had an open mind towards creative ways of surviving. I encourage you to have an open mind towards creative ways of healing. The necessary steps are known; the tools are available. However, you are the only one who can take each step. You are the only one who can utilize the tools. For the first time ever, you have a choice. Do you choose to run? I have chosen to become whole.

I don’t know what else to say to you, except that I care. Maybe that’s all that ever needed to be said.

You Are Never Alone

You are tired
You worked hard
You remembered true pain.
You were unloved.
You were hurt.

You have never been able
to rest and sleep.

That is over.

We give you:
- dreams to replace nightmares
- love to replace hate
- comfort for your pain
- wishes for a peaceful life.

We only ask that you trust and accept
- Us as your friends.
- So long we have hidden from you but now
- We come to let you know us at last.
- I am the child in you.
- I am your protector.
- I can take over your pain.
- I will handle your anger.
- I am strong.
- I can help you now. We will never be alone.
- We are here for you.
- Go to sleep now.
- Rest.
- We are here for you.

By B.A.D.
Ending Therapy — Going on Alone

By A Survivor

All my years of therapy, to this point, have been with the same therapist. He has been my support in times of struggle and my nemesis in times of backsliding and denial. Therapy is not easy for anyone, but when abuse is involved, it is especially difficult to learn to trust another person enough to be honest and accept their help. In my case it took several years of therapy for intermittent unexplainable depression before my inner self could trust enough to reveal my abuse and for my other personalities to begin to emerge. Even my therapist, who worked extensively with abused and dissociative clients, was unable to break the barrier and was surprised at the brutality of my experiences and the extent of my inner world.

Despite all I have experienced in therapy, today I am dealing with my most difficult stage. The End of Therapy. I never really gave much thought about ending therapy. I always felt that at some time I would realize that I no longer needed the support of therapy and that my therapist and I would come to a mutual decision about when to conclude. This was not to be. Although I was given plenty of notice my therapist chose to close his practice before I felt I was ready to conclude. Over the years I kept my personal problems and history very private, only sharing with my therapist and infrequently with short-term groups. Being a very private person, I rarely shared my pain and needs with family or friends. Even when hospitalized, I would depend almost entirely on my therapist, not utilizing the therapeutic milieu, the staff, or other patient contact. The "perfect patient" never acting out, never demanding attention, followed all the rules and therefore rarely benefited from all the excellent help available.

I realize now that this was a mistake. Although my therapist frequently encouraged me to seek out others and to use all available resources, I stubbornly kept everything to myself. I now realize that relying entirely on single therapist treatment is not wise. I believe that both clients and therapists should reevaluate treatment modalities and integrate a system where there is always a back-up resource available to the client. Another trusted person or support network to turn to is needed when a separation with the primary therapist becomes necessary. The separation may be due to vacation, leave of absence for medical or educational needs or retirement. Whatever the cause, the client must have alternative help readily available, not just an "on call" person, but someone the client knows and has learned to trust. This is especially important to those persons with a history of abuse because trust is the most important factor in their therapy and a very hard-won commodity. If I can help anyone in some small way with my experiences, it would be to encourage both clients and therapists to utilize some form of alternative co-therapy to provide maximum support for the client.

Today I am depressed, tearful and angry. Angry mostly at myself for not utilizing outside resources and building a support network to help me through this difficult time. My therapist gave me the best therapy I could have asked for. He was my rock and my salvation. I would not be alive today without his help. I wish him peace and contentment. He has truly earned his rest and retirement from being a tireless caregiver. Although together we neglected to build an adequate support system for me to utilize, he has helped me build the inner strength to go on alone. The sadness will pass and I will have the strength to move forward and grow as a whole person. One thing about those of us with a dissociative disorder: WE ARE SURVIVORS.

Between the Lines

Lately there is no definition to the line of sky — the coastal range of mountains is purple and white like the city and the smoke. The water gleams with smooth opals like the windows on the lower hills.

I cannot tell if I am seeing or being — if my vision is of the outside or within. The haze, the film, the trance hovers all day long, and the only sure moment is the morning light coming up over the dark pines outside my window.

My cat on the sill chatters at the birds and doesn’t know who I’ll be this time as she turns around to see — and neither do I. She looks as surprised as I do but she is not afraid and I am.

Time is way back behind my eyes and moves with images I never want to see. There is comfort in the green of the winter grass, the rush of wind against the window glass, and the way that children sound when school lets out.

They stay the same.

Otherwise I am lost between the lines of losing time and the undefined December sky.

By S. ’90
Jeremy's Poem

One of the members of Our Family is blind. He is Jeremy and he is 12. He is black. I never knew about him before. My doctor told me about him because she met him. Then later Mickey told her why, because when the body was 12 a man on the next street used to follow us in the woods and try to do things. One day he trapped me and pulled his thing out. I guess he thought I was a girl, but I'm not. I forgot about that till Mickey told about it. I didn't like remembering it. I blacked out after the man did that, and that is when Jeremy was born. The doctor said he is blind so he didn't have to see that man's thing. Sometime that year or the next year I kept feeling a pressing issue to learn braille. I thought it was because I read a book on Helen Keller, because we are partially deaf. We wear two hearing aids. I went away for braille stuff and learned it. I did not know it was Jeremy wanting to learn it. He must have seen me read the book somehow, about Helen Keller. And made me want to learn braille. I did it. Now he writes poetry in braille! I want to put one of his poems in for you. I interpret it all into sighted-English. It is hard, because I forgot a lot of it. I have to look things up. But I do it because I want to know what the braille things say.

Here is his poem called Colors. I am typing it the same exact way he wrote it.

COLORS

Blue.
Blue be the
Warm sun
Warm my face.
Cas people always say
"Look at that blue sky." on a warm day.
Yellow.
Yellow be the Heron
that people shoot up
because they always say
The Heron Man got
Yellow Eyes
I ain’ goin say
All the colors
Cas you know there are too many
I gon tell you about TWO
Colors now.
You listen up close now
Cas they real important to me.
There White
and there Black.
You lissnin Man?
Don be wastin my time.
White be the soft fur
On my best dog in the world
Cas then everybody they say
Dat Holly she so pretty an
White like snow.
Never us got no presheation
We be the ones brush her and stuff.
Black is best and it is Last.
And it be
What I see
All the time.
But don’ sweest
Because to me
Black be
The Color of
That beautiful Woman
I gon have one day.
So black be Love
For you ain’t never hear that before.
Then you just saw a new idea.

(Jeremy’s Family asks if others have alters who are blind or deaf or have other physical differences from the body. How do they cope? How do you help them? Write to us and we’ll print what we can.—LW)
It Bears Repeating

By CAT

There is so much pain and misery connected with MPD and problems dealing with the diagnosis itself. I AM NOT A MULTIPLE PERSONALITY!!!! (Words I live by.)

But then, how else to explain the unexplainable. The occasional warm and loving feelings I experience when I’m told about some things my alters have said and/or done. Good things, funny things, told to me by my therapist (most often) but occasionally by my own children.

I want to tell you about one of these incidents that at first caused me to feel very angry but now brings feelings of much love and warmth.

After a particularly harrowing few weeks? (Months? A year?) of dealing with past garbage and the diagnosis itself (or not dealing with it) everyone was exhausted, depressed, suicidal etc. In other words, ready to Give Up. Most therapy sessions were missed and many dates cancelled. The only things that were manageable were those that had to do with daily living, such as marketing. And it took every ounce of energy to accomplish even these simple tasks. Most days were spent in bed feeling crazy and wishing for death (Most days still are, but not to such extremes.)

After one particular trip to the market I walked across the parking lot to get a few needed things at the pharmacy and suddenly found myself with a large teddy bear in my arms.

Ok! What’s this damn bear doing in my arms? And I try to put it back on the shelf, but my arm won’t let go of it.

I’m struggling with this funny thing in my arms and people are beginning to give me funny looks and I’m feeling very embarrassed. I start mumbling to myself, “Come on! Put the damn bear back! Don’t need another bear!”

I take my purchases to the check-out counter. Bear in arms, hoping the salesperson will help to take this appendage away from me. Wrong! When ringing up the sales and needing to check the price of the bear ($60! Shit!) he had to do it with bear in arms.

I walk back to the car, holding this bear. Drive home, holding this bear in the house. With the bear and Boy am I pissed!

It didn’t take me long to find out that it was two of my alters. Katie and Amy, who were the culprits. One, seven years old. The other four.

Then a few weeks ago my daughter had her first child, a girl. My second grandchild. Wow! What an experience! So much excitement!

I immediately went out and purchased armfuls of pink frilly things for the baby. Oh, was I ever in heaven! I came home and began packing everything to send to her and the next thing I see is the teddy bear in the box. What? Hey Wait A Minute! What is This? There’s no room in the box for the bear. Out with the bear! OUT!!

But the bear is back in the box. What can I say? What can I do? Katie and Amy love this bear. They sleep with it every night. And they’re willing to want to part with it. But this is a three-foot bear!

So OK. But the bear goes in another box. The bear will have to fly solo.

Katie and Amy packed the bear and they sent it off.

Yes, I love them, YES YES YES.

Reeee-Raahah

Reeee Raah
Reeee-Raah
Someone singing in my ears.
Words of movement.
Words of comfort.
Rocking. Swinging.
Reeee-ing us up.
Raaah-ing us back.
Again and again.
We hear the words ringing deep within our ears.
A sign of comfort.
Someone must be content.
Within (or without) the struggle of our day.

By Twinkle
Great Ideas From Survivors

Leather "survivor bracelets" are stamped with one of three sayings (WE ARE SURVIVORS or HEALING WOMAN or HEALING MAN). Bracelets are 5 inches long, stained antique or dark brown, with your choice of brown or purple leather straps and a turquoise fastener. Price of $5.50 each includes postage and handling. Send your check and choice of design/wording to JFP Inc., PO Box 6933, Denver CO 80206.

Books

Allies in Healing
When the Person You Love was Sexually Abused as a Child

Laura Davis, co-author of the deservedly-renowned bible of the survivor community "Courage to Heal", has done it again. This time, she's put her organization and writing talents to work for partners of survivors...those who suffer as their loved one suffers, not only empathically, but for themselves.

This book begins with the basics of defining child sexual abuse, through the agonies of changing relationships, the partner's needs, crisis, communication, and naturally, sex. But there's so much more...and as in Courage to Heal, this book uses the real questions of real partners to structure answers that come out of practical, daily-life situations, not abstract theory. To me, that's a major strong point. It doesn't just go on and on about how awful things are...it suggests ways to deal with the awfulness, or, if that's not possible, how to make the decision to leave.

Most of all this book is about the healing process and how to facilitate it. That's why I'm reading it, even though I'm not in an intimate relationship. I figure my parts are partners within, with conflicts, misunderstandings, and many of the challenges "outside" relationships endure. If I were learning and practice, maybe my inner selves will be "Allies in Healing" too.

By Lynn W.

...And For Kids...
The Newbery Medal.
Since 1922 a book is annually honored for being the most distinguished contribution to American literature for children published during the preceding year. These books are generally geared toward juvenile readers.

The Caldecott Medal
Since 1938 an award is given to the artist of the most distinguished American picture book for children. These books are generally for preschoolers and early readers. Copies of these lists of award-winning children's books are free and available in public libraries in the children's sections. We keep our lists in our puruse at all times.

The Caldecott Medal books please alters and fragments in me of all ages. Also they introduce us to illustrators and authors whose other books we can then enjoy. Sometimes we read them or show them to our cuddlies.

It seems to me that the Newberry Award-winning books are the ones my adults are most able to appreciate. Possibly there are teens and others in me enjoying them too. Emotionally none of us are particularly advanced, so these books reveal truths to us and show us how life can be. Many of us really love these books and reflect upon them often.

One of our ways of taking good care of ourselves and treating ourselves well is by going to different libraries. One has live animals in glass cages; another has an aquarium and an indoor fountain; some have special chairs that are sort of like lying on the floor, or sitting inside a shell; one is beside a river; one has gorgeous mosaics, and art work in its stairwells.

For some of us libraries can be away places. No responsibilities. No need to interact with anyone. We especially like adult quiet study rooms or chairs by windows. Once we borrowed a video, "Follow Me Boys," which helped us to cry healing tears.

And all of this pleasure, quiet, comfort, artistic beauty, learning...has cost us not one penny!

By Rose
Thanks to all for your excellent contributions! Keep 'em coming.
Please note the February theme of Hospitals. I'd like comments from CLIENTS AND PROFESSIONALS, regarding hospitalization of people who dissociate. The more input we have, the more useful this will be. Please help! — LW

Coming Up!

February 1992
The role of hospitals in treatment of dissociative disorders: professional and client opinions. (ALL INPUT WELCOME: Who benefits and why. Selecting a facility. When outpatient treatment is preferred.) ART: Cartoons about hospitals (funny or ironic).

April 1992
Finding an effective therapist. Innovative ways to budget for therapy and other essentials (food/shelter); stuffed animals. ART: Draw your strong, wise self.

June 1992
People parts: fragments; ego states. What is your concept of self? How do you deal with differences between your outside (physical) self and internal (psychic) structures (different genders, animal alters, etc.) ART: Exotic alters and their purpose.
DEADLINE for submissions: April 1, 1992.

August 1992
Memories are they all real? Does it matter? Retrieving and processing memories safely. ART: Draw memory containment or pacing images that reduce overloading your system.
DEADLINE for submissions: June 1, 1992.

October 1992
Employment and dissociative disorders. Keeping a job or getting one while in therapy. Strategies to improve self-control. ART: New Fall Styles in defensive barriers for the workplace.
DEADLINE for submissions: August 1, 1992.

December 1992
How to build a safe support system, with peers or 'normals'. Or both. List of support groups/resources. ART: Draw your connections with others, as they are, or will become, with healing.
DEADLINE for submissions: October 1, 1992.

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 cant 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 except your work.

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