

MANY VOICES

WORDS OF HOPE FOR PEOPLE RECOVERING FROM TRAUMA & DISSOCIATION

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Inside:

Practical tips on living and self-management

Nature's Triumph

The seed sprouted as all seeds do,
because it had been granted the essentials -
just enough soil, air, light, and water -
scant, but adequate
to sustain life.

An inner instinct,
a yearning,
a Divine pull,
kept it growing upward -
around the rocky ledge,
through the tangled undergrowth,
undaunted by cruel brambles,
it made its way toward the greater Light.

Until, when the time was just right,
it blossomed,
opened its magnificent petals,
smiled in the radiance of the sun
and became all it could be

The world would see the misshapen stem.
The world would see the scars upon the leaves.
The world would label it a mere weed.

But people like myself
who have grown under similar adversity,
see the tenacity,
admire the strength,
and wonder at the achievement,

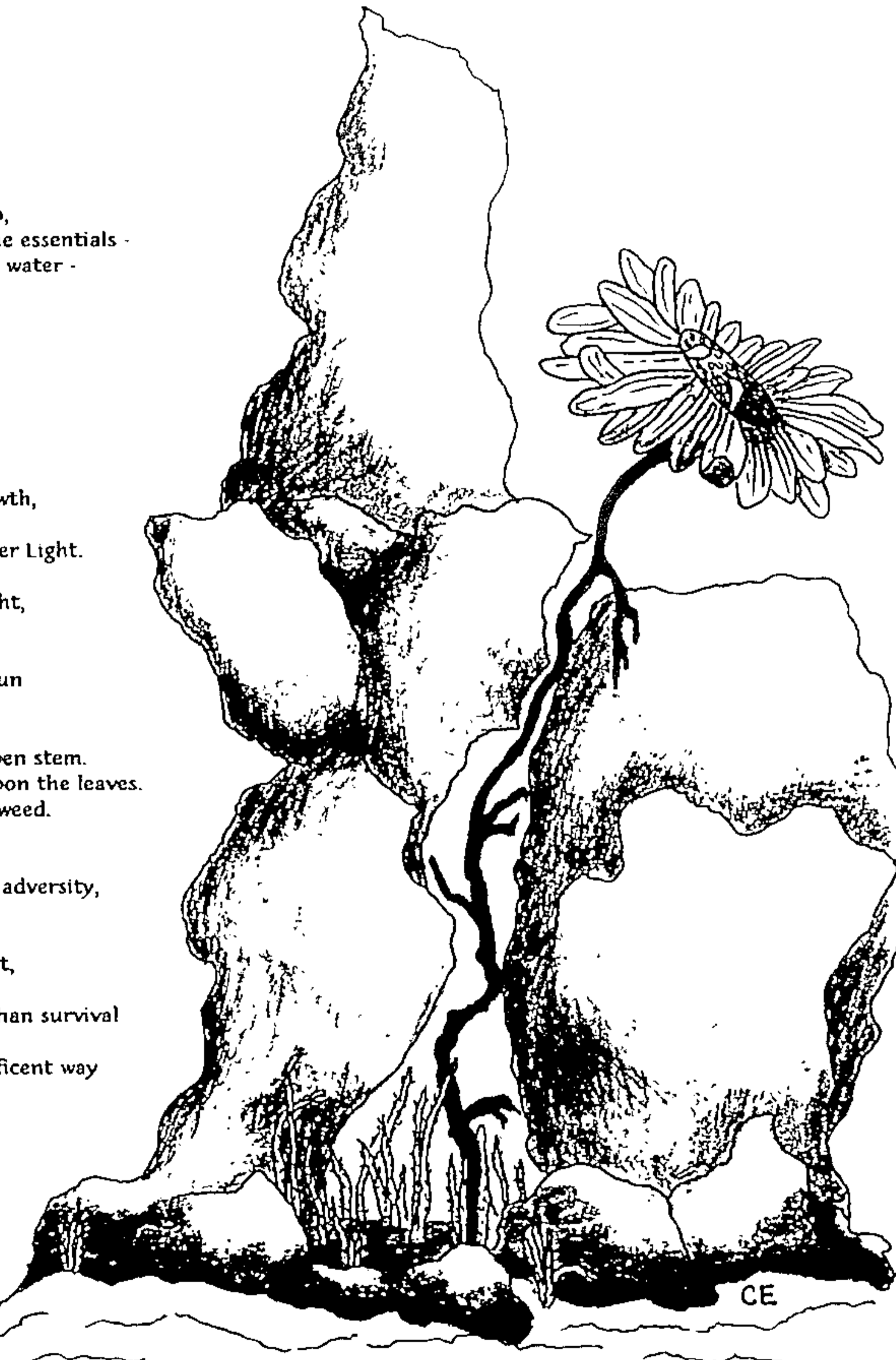
that culminated in much more than survival

that bears testimony in a magnificent way

that wholeness is possible

against all odds.

CE



The Strategy of Skirmish

By Jigsaw

Although I knew I needed to clean the basement—I mean scrub hard and sort out and throw away and organize what's left—I found myself unable to do so. When I go down the steps for vegetables from the freezer or for scouring powder, I often forget why I went down there. When I was a kid, I was in trance when I followed him downstairs in another house, and I must have done anything he directed me to do. Now when I go downstairs to get something, I often block out the reason for my errand. And it was equally frustrating to know I *must* put the growing clutter down there in order, but whenever I tried, I felt as if invisible ropes held me fast. The intention was there, but I couldn't follow through. And the frustration mounted.

One day I went downstairs, stood with my arms folded, and surveyed the problem. I saw a couple of small tasks I could do as parts of the mega-job of cleaning the whole big basement. I went up to the kitchen and made myself a cup of green tea and drew up the strategy of skirmish. Then—when my mood was an active, enterprising one—I'd go straight down to the basement and do *one small task* (or skirmish).

One impulse one day, I quickly went downstairs and focused only on the white bookshelves (we dissociatives can, indeed, focus well at times). I cleaned the shelves, threw away all magazines and papers I didn't want, keeping only what I want. I had concentrated, and in minutes, one small area was done. My first skirmish completed, I went upstairs and celebrated over a cup of green tea.

Over the next weeks, I continued the attack on the basement by dividing the overwhelming task into small units, and then I'd pick one off now and then. The beauty of the basement-rehab plan was that it worked on impulse. Somehow I easily granted myself permission to go down and just cruise around, figuring out what my next few skirmishes might be. I'd keep them in

mind, then attack later, just one at a time. I'm convinced that what worked was prior planning, then impulse-plus-speed. That combination puts me in mind of what the high-functioning autistic Donna Williams said in one of her interviews or books: a computer helps her write because its speed bypasses enough of her inner censors to let her type.

So increment by increment the basement got cleaned. Never was I tired. Never did a skirmish fail. (Each was so small it was predestined to succeed.) Never did I pump myself up with caffeine (which is a temptation) in order to complete a skirmish.

Some time later, a one-day trip was canceled. I knew I *had* to devote that day to reshaping my pension plan at work: I had neglected and in some ways mismanaged those funds. I awakened that morning buoyant and happy with all my paper work spread out on a big table, but soon I felt as if I were crawling on the carpet, as if I had a bunch of bricks on my back. In my childhood family, the rule was that a female must balance her check book carefully and stay within a reasonable budget, but the unspoken rule was mighty grim: money has more value and worth than she does.

Only after I had made four calls on four different days to change allocations within my pension fund did I realize that I had again used my Strategy of Skirmish. I'm sure that everyone else would have made only *one* call for the four changes in allocations. I guess I needed to make four different phone calls to spread out my anxiety and to do the task in a way that was acceptable inside.

Right now in my office there's been—for months—a big stack of papers, and it keeps growing. When I look directly at that pile, I feel simply overwhelmed, as if someone put a cape of depression snugly over me. Again, I feel like a victim, as if I don't have the use of my hands. And this time I'm a victim of a pile of papers! Then a thought came to me: this fat

stack is a candidate for the Strategy of Skirmish. It was as if the pile winked at me and said, "Whittle me down, little by little."

I think I jolly well may.

MV

There is Hope

I had to write to share with you the tremendous hope and joy that I feel today. Today, May 19, 1997, I achieved my final integration with my alters. It has been a very long, very hard struggle. Hospitalized for the first time at the age of 13, and hospitalized every two months for the last five years, I have survived it all. Not only am I an abuse survivor, but I survived the trauma involved in finally remembering it all through therapy.

I was diagnosed with MPD in 1993. Since then, I discovered all my alters, went through crisis after crisis, and finally, this year, have been working on individual integrations. My therapist, Dr. D., has stayed with me through it all, and I owe him my very life. I did switch psychiatrists a few years ago, and finally got put on Clonidine and Risperidol to control the switching.

I can now look forward to sleeping at night without nightmares. I can wake up in the morning and know I'll be me. And now I have a part-time job—no more disability.

But most of all, I feel hope and joy at being alive. I'm no longer constantly "on alert," wondering what danger lies ahead. I have established a "healthy" relationship with my mother (my abuser) with clearly-defined boundaries and limits.

These are all things I never considered possible a few years ago.

All the pain, the crying, the fear and the agony—was worth it. Because I am now ME.

By Jan

MV

Progress

Confusion and chaos
 Discard and disharmony
 Reaction and appeasement
 Betrayal and loss
 Fantasy and illusion
 Silence and thunder
 Survival and indomitability

Of these I was 'begotten',
 A kaleidoscope of division and disability

Color and hue
 Tone and texture
 Shape and form
 Substance and light
 Knowledge and balance
 Reality and history
 Awareness and expression

Of these I am 'becoming',
 A spectrum of aspect and emotion

Solitude and humanity
 Cohesion and constancy
 Viability and vitality
 Courage and fortitude
 Strength and maturity
 Self and will
 Love and honor

Of these I will 'be',
 A unity

By G.



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Angels:



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Days In The Life

I used to love the fall.
 Now these crisp, clear days bring a vague sense of dread. It's subtle, skirting the edges of thought, but it's there.
 How do I describe these days? What words explain the happenings inside?
 Sometimes others might notice. I write a paycheck, take it to be signed. Then I stop in panic, run back to the computer to recheck numbers, unable to remember what I've done...
 I call in sick and stay home with my bear. We curl up together, scared to move.
 On my therapist's mat I hold a bear and a blanket, using fingers to answer yes-no questions. I feel wide-eyed and small. I am unable to speak.
 Inside someone corrects me. "She can't speak. You can."
 Right.
 Most days it's more subtle. I walk to the park on my break. Inside I hear random comments — voices grumbling about my boss, praising the view, asking to play. Someone hums a song, over and over. (Doesn't everyone's brain work this way?)
 I (we) reach the playground, climb to the wooden platform, grasp the second horizontal bar. A sudden moment of self-consciousness — I look quickly to see that no one's watching. A voice asks "Do we care?" We take a breath and swing down, half-surprised when our feet touch the ground. Can't we still cross, hand-over-hand?
 Walking back to work, I join the conversations. The cool day brings an odd mix of joy and fear. Different ages name the feelings: 5, 11, 14, me...
 I don't think everyone's brain works this way.
 In a week we go for testing. I asked for a diagnosis. Do I want to know?
 What would it mean, being diagnosed multiple?
 It would mean knowing, for the first time ever, that I'm not crazy.
 From inside come more answers:
 "It would mean we could be free."
 "We could play more."
 "It means bad things really happened."
 "It means nothing. We already know."
 What would it mean? Honoring that we survived. Naming what already is.
 I say silent thanks to all inside. I am glad, this day, to be one of many.

By Weaver & The Scholar

Managing Your Life

By The Team

Here are some ideas on ways to handle finance and personal management:

1. Use duplicate checks. That way, if you forget the amount of the check you wrote, the duplicate is always there.

2. Have your bank return your checks. That way you can look at the signature if you need to find out who is spending the money. (Plus you have them for tax deductions!)

3. Have a rule that you don't close the door to your home unless you can see the keys with your eyes or feel the keys with your hand. It doesn't count if someone says the keys are in your pocket. They may have been in the pocket when they were out yesterday. I haven't locked myself out of my apartment since I started using this rule

4. Use a planner, like *Franklin, Day Timer* or *Day Runner*. Take it with you everywhere you go. Make a rule that everyone can enter information into its calendar, but only the person who made an entry can erase an entry. Before I had this rule, I missed a birthday and a wedding! I keep everything in my planner—my budget, checks, credit cards, grocery list, address list, Christmas list, coupons, a comb, a screwdriver for my glasses, Kleenex. It's amazing what you can put in. I also include a list of doctors and the medication I am on, in the front of the book. I use the planner instead of a purse. Franklin sells a strap you can attach to the planner.

5. Keep your area (home, office) with a place for everything and everything in its place. I find that the neater I keep the area I'm in, the less distraction I have when there is a lot of internal confusion. (Also, my perpetrators never came when our childhood home was immaculate—because that meant a party and many people would be there. So, for me, neatness is an obsession. It keeps the "bad guys" away.)

6. Keep a regular routine—like laundry on Monday, groceries on Wednesday. I find this helps keep the

chores done, and it also gives me a plan when I'm too depressed to even care if I have food in the house.

7. If you receive a paycheck or Social Security check, see if you can have it directly deposited to your account. Saves a trip to the bank.

8. Make a contract with yourself that your children don't drive. If you're having trouble after a session, ask your therapist to always invite a grown-up to come out to drive you home.

9. Schedule a playtime every week for the children, even if it's just an hour one evening. When we were able to do this regularly, the children were less likely to pop out at work or while we were driving.

10. Keep a toy box for the children. Shop the dollar stores for toys. I have amassed quite a collection of books, dolls, and games this way.

11. Give your child alters an allowance. Mine get a dollar a week. They are allowed to spend it on anything they want. They can spend the month's allowance all at once (we bought a Skipper doll on sale that way) or spend it a little at a time. For a month, then, their allowance is \$4. They have to agree on what to spend, or agree to let one child alter spend it if there is something they really want. For example, I have fewer boy alters than girl alters. So usually we get girl toys. Sometimes, we let the boys get whatever they want even if the girls want something else, since it's the "boy's turn."

12. Get a stuffed animal for the children to go to sleep with.

13. Read Steven Covey's *7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, Alan Lakein's *How to Control Your Time and Your Life*, and Stephanie Wilson's *Organize Yourself*, to help you with more ideas!

14. Use a kitchen timer to help you remember when to do something. I routinely set the timer to remind me when it's time to leave for an appointment, put the laundry in the dryer, when the bagels will be cool

enough to eat, everything. I even have a special ruler for my *Franklin Planner* that includes a timer—it helps me to never miss a meeting at work!

Hope some of these help!

MV

Dizzy

It's dizzy again
and so alone
we won't stay in one place
and everything
jumbles around

Maybe if we draw it would help
or loud music
filling up our body
so we could get One

We could write in our journal
or try to dance
kiss our dog on his licky nose
try to b.r.e.a.t.h.e.
cry and become dead

We can't stop it
and it won't stop
everything jumps around
out our head and in
we're going to fall down

In and out and in
over and left
and right and next-to
on all sides of us
walking straight is hard

No matter what we try
(or me or me or me)
getting present in a Now
breathing deep
nothing works
only dizzy

By A Few

MV

Gems & Stars & Things:

Organization, Identity & Self-Nourishment

By Gwen

You are precious—all parts of you. All parts of you have stories, memories, and hold gifts that can enrich your life. To begin working toward making collective decisions about money and what to buy, for example, you might want to begin by figuring out what your interests are. Then purchase stuff that can be shared. For example, if your interest is art, and you find an artbox full of paints, get paints that all of you think are pretty and will want to share. Okay, so I may be speeding through several years of therapy, but you get the idea.

Stretch your imagination to find ways in which your interests connect. For example, when one part is interested in building and tile flooring, how could that connect with other parts interested in jewelry and crafts? A common link might be that all of you enjoy the textures of clay and earthenware, that you love working with your hands. Once you can find what parts have in common, then you can begin to generalize your interests.

For example, if you asked me, I would tell you that my interests are psychology and art—really, this encompasses many interests. My interests in math began to be clearly linked to my interests in medicine and science. When I thought about this further, my interests in math, medicine, science and nature were interests that were *within* my interests in psychology and arts.

For example, I did not learn math well as a child. In the beginning, I felt as if math was a completely separate topic from my love of nature; it had to be for trees and stars to be safe. But I am still discovering that math is a language that can be used to talk about the age of an ancient tree, the starry distance between galaxies and planets, the amount of veggies I need to eat in a day, how medicine works. Math is still really scary, or maybe it's the gender bias and abuse that is scary to feel and remember, but I'm making

progress. I'm still figuring out that *math* itself, did not hurt me.

The separate-ness of interests became less as I realized how my interests fit *within* each other. Imagine a sky dome, with your main interests being the constellations. But then, you discover you want to draw them. You decide to camp out beneath the stars, and discover the velvet atmosphere of the planetarium, and now you think you might like to learn to sew a cover for your sketch pad, made of velvet. Many interests can fit within the sky dome, which is sort of the imaginary structure that contains them. In this example, sewing, camping, drawing, and nature are all encompassed within one container.

Figuring out what feelings connect the different interests of alters may be difficult. This took a long time, and required very conscious effort. But, you may find that you begin to save money, and sometimes that can be a big benefit. For example, when I figured out that child alters who loved to swim and delighted in water, as well as child alters who were drawn to pretty gems, as well as adults who relaxed by meditating—all could enjoy and benefit from a toy with water, gems, and images that changed shape and floated, and was filled with relaxing, cool, and beautiful colors—I got something that not only attended to the need I have to play, but also gave me something I could enjoy on many levels.

In addition to saving money, an equally rewarding benefit is learning how to nurture yourself (all parts of you.) Now, when I buy clothing, I can find a cuddly winter coat that appeals to my child need for comfort, in a color that appeals to my earthy sensibilities, and with a look that is sort of outdoorsy, to appeal to all of me.

Once I began to be able to consider all of me, separate purchases for separate alters also became easier. It was simpler to support and nourish my different interests. I knew that in

nourishing a child alter, in providing special things for her that we *both* thought beautiful, I was enriching my own identity and strengthening my bond with her.

When I could see how it all fit together, everything made more sense. I began wanting boxes to fit it all into—boxes for letters, boxes for keepsakes, boxes for art supplies. Each thing purchased separately for an alter became a gem waiting to be discovered by all other alters, because it was bought with full consideration for how *all* would feel.

There are still many things that I think of as belonging separately, but there is a warmth in sharing and many rewards—a collective identity, for example, that *feels comfortable*. I no longer hate myself for being alive and interested.

MV

If Only For A Day!

What is this feeling that sits with me in my lap like my favorite melody, which fills me with such sweet emotion?

I feel this presence with me here. A sensation of wellness ripples through my body as if lighting my life from within. Today—I was given the gift of inner peace. Today—I could see with clear thoughts the true color of my life. A sigh of relief was felt in each and every fiber of my being for the strain and the pain have taken their toll on my very soul. In long moments of silence I feel a smile creep upon my face, as if welcoming the silence to this place. Chaos has taken a Holiday and while chaos is away—life comes out to play.

By Pamela

MV

Therapist's Page

By Laura Russell, Ph.D.

Laura Russell, Ph.D., NCC, CCMHC, is a licensed marriage, family and child counselor at Gentle Support Counseling Services in Lawndale, California. She has worked with trauma survivors for many years. *Many Voices* thanks her for allowing us to reprint her insightful material on choosing a therapist

Finding Help, Solving the Puzzle

Susan was upset. She'd been seeing the same therapist for three years and didn't feel like she was getting any better. Furthermore, she didn't feel respected or as if her counselor believed in her

Susan suspected he had decided she that she was incurable. She thought he wasn't listening to her, and occasionally suspected her doctor of falling asleep when she was talking. She felt wrong, bewildered, and misunderstood.

She began to get angry at spending all the money. Worst of all the therapist had begun to give her advice, insisting she follow it. She felt blamed and judged when she reported that his advice didn't work.

Susan joined a self-help group to deal with her addictions even though her counselor recommended against it. She simply couldn't understand his point of view on this.

After she had actively participated in her self-help group for a while, she began to question the quality of the psychological services she had been receiving. Susan decided to stop going to the counselor after a conversation with some of the people she trusted in her group.

Finding the help you need is similar to putting the pieces of a jigsaw puzzle together. Whether your need is for yourself, your children, spouse, or entire family, your task is to find the therapist who can best help you. While there is excellent therapy available, there is also poor and abusive therapy. Sometimes, people simply go to the wrong therapist for their personality and needs. In these cases the puzzle pieces never fit together.

You can get the help you need! One of the most devastating aspects of mental and emotional difficulties is when people begin to feel hopeless. What happens to many people is that they develop a lot of psychological pain and begin to feel different from other people. Sometimes they have had unsuccessful counseling experiences, and even believe that mental health is something they cannot have. Most seriously, you might have lost your vision of yourself as a functioning and contented human being. Don't give up! Continue to search for the therapist who matches your needs and personality.

One major factor in successful therapy is the relationship which develops between you and your psychotherapist. What you can expect from effective therapy continues our comparison to a puzzle with many pieces. These puzzle pieces are described below:

- * **Improvement:** To increase your coping ability in your day-to-day life.
- * **Open Communication:** To learn to communicate your full range of emotions.
- * **Listening actively:** To be heard and understood.
- * **Believe in You:** That your doctor believes you can get the help you seek.
- * **Psychological Safety:** To reveal your true self without being criticized.
- * **Encouraging You:** To get support and encouragement to try new behaviors.
- * **Sharing the Power:** To have control over what you say and do in therapy.
- * **Limits:** To know that your boundaries will not be violated.
- * **Boundaries:** To be aware of who is deciding what help you receive, and why.

There are some actions you can take to increase the success of your therapy and continue filling in the pieces of the puzzle:

- * **Choose** someone you like, admire, and feel comfortable with.
- * **Ask** your friends or relatives for the name of a therapist they trust, if that is comfortable to you.
- * **Call** and interview the therapist on the telephone. You may interview more than one therapist, and compare.
- * **Ask** any questions you need to ask.
- * **Take** your time to develop trust.
- * **Set** goals for yourself.
- * **Check** to see if you are meeting your goals in therapy.
- * **Let** your counselor know when you are not getting what you need.
- * **Trust** your gut instincts more than the counselor's authority.
- * **Get** a second opinion if you think you need it.
- * **Be** open to change.
- * **Terminate** therapy when you are ready.

You can tell a lot about the counselor by how they respond to your questions, comments, feelings and requests. A checklist of questions you may want to ask is listed below. You are entitled to ask any of these questions. If you don't understand the answers, ask again.

Qualifications

- ___ What is your educational background?
- ___ Are you licensed?
- ___ Board certified?
- ___ What experiences have you had with my type of problem?

Therapy Approaches

- What is your specialty?
- How does it work?
- Are there any possible risks involved?
- About how long will it take?
- What should I do if I feel therapy isn't working?

Appointments

- How are appointments scheduled?
- How long are sessions?
- How can I reach you in an emergency?
- If you are not available, who is there I can talk to?

Finances

- What is your fee?
- Do you adjust your fee according to a person's income?
- How do I pay you?
- Do you bill clients?
- How do you handle cancellations?
- Do I need to pay for telephone calls or letters?

Support Groups

- Do you work with people who go to support groups?
- Do you refer people to support groups?
- How does this work with your type of therapy?

Confidentiality

- What kind of records do you keep?
- Who has access to them?
- Under what conditions are you allowed to tell others about the things we discuss?
- How do you handle information when you work with children?

Boundaries

- How do you decide what kind of therapy to use?
- Who decides what limits are set in therapy?
- What appropriate boundaries between therapist and client do you recommend?
- Will you respect boundaries that I set for myself?

While asking questions is one of the best ways people have to find the best therapist for them, some insurance companies have decided to limit your choices. In these instances, decisions about the kind of therapist and type of therapy you receive are made by the company. Managed care places an emphasis upon short-term therapy and crisis-oriented therapy. They may limit the number of sessions or put pressure on your therapist to limit your sessions. Their criteria often emphasizes the bottom-line dollar cost to the company. Thus it is also important for you to know what the choices are, who is making them, and why. This you can discover by asking your employer and insurance company. Currently, some people are deciding to pay for treatment themselves in order to control these choices.

If you wish to contact Dr. Russell, you may reach her by mail at Gentle Support Counseling Services, 19800 Hawthorne Blvd., Suite 258, Torrance, CA 90503. Phone: (310) 793-3114. Her office is located at 15901 Hawthorne Blvd. Suite 200, Lawndale, CA 90260.

MV

"I NEED 5 GET WELL CARDS FOR A MULTIPLE PERSONALITY PATIENT"



Sometimes

Sometimes it scares me
 To see my mind go whirling
 I'm never quite sure
 About the promises I make,
 But I always sound sincere.
 And sometimes I tremble
 When I reach for her hand,
 For I might accidently
 Touch her soul
 (And I'm not strong enough for that).
 And sometimes it's funny
 To be so near yet alone
 I'm not sure that I want
 To know how we live
 From heartaches to smiles.
 Sometimes it's easier
 To pretend that she doesn't matter
 Than to want to be a part of her,
 But it's never quite
 Exactly like it seems.

By Beverly

MV

Evaluating

By The Shadows

Problems that Shadows are dealing with: Followed by things we've learned so far to help live with the Shadows

MONEY PROBLEMS:

- Items showing up with no receipts
- Others buying "unneeded" things (unagreed-upon purchases)
- Constantly having to go out to return the unneeded things.
- Can't keep cash without it disappearing.
- Cash also just showing up out of no place.
- Bills not getting paid, paid late, paid twice
- Not knowing if a payment was made or not
- Not understanding concept of dates and time enough, causing problems to send things out without getting it there too late.

MONEY SOLUTIONS:

- Now money outlined per category so (i.e.) phone category is \$ for phone bill only and not to be spent elsewhere, and same for groceries, etc., so everyone knows exactly how much we have for what.
- Have a budget outline for each paycheck to show how much should be put aside in each category. If there is any left-over, we try to decide together how it will be spent or saved.
- One place to keep all receipts to be accounted for by the one inside who deals w/our finances.
- Carry no cash, or if must, clearly label its use
- Signed up for auto payment of all our bills and paychecks are automatically deposited by the company she works for
- Got checkbook that makes carbon copy.
- Was given computer program to help with finances; balances checkbook and monitors expenses for us.
- We now have a calendar program on our computer that can be set to beep to remind us when to send things out even if calendar dates not actually understood by most inside.

GROCERY SHOPPING PROBLEMS:

- Going over-budget: often items were purchased not on list, and usually can't return food items after purchase.
- Shadows buying things only they themselves like, but then never around to eat it, when \$ could have been spent on others that are around more.
- Takes hours to shop: pull something off the shelf, someone sticks it back, have to keep putting things not on the list back on shelf...yet at checkout, it's back in the cart.
- Problems making so many decisions (first what to buy, then which brand, how much, which size...afraid of making the wrong decision, that they will pick wrong item and be punished.) Therefore, takes one hour to pick which peanut butter, let alone all the other items on list.

- Someone always seems to panic or gets confused where they are, what they're doing there and abandons cart...either leaving store altogether, or starting over with her own cart.

GROCERY SHOPPING SOLUTIONS:

- Limit trips to grocery store to once a month except for perishables.
- Freeze as much as possible, even milk, bread, hot-dogs, etc. ?????????????????? We are open to any other suggestions.

COOKING PROBLEMS:

- Easily side-tracked and food burns and fires have been started.
- Smoke alarm very sensitive and goes off even if there is only smoke, panicking children into hiding, which is bad since then stove left unattended.
- No one seems to be able to stay out very long in the kitchen; some get bad memories or get bothered by sights and smells, some come out to do bad things and

accidents happen.

- A lot of dangerous items around if someone shows up not feeling so good about living.
- Children in kitchen unsupervised but trying to "help out" causing accidents and messes (so far one got an electric shock and nearly killed herself because she didn't know better not to wash plugged-in appliances in the sink...one spilled sugar all over the floor and counters, and another hurt her hand trying to lick cake batter from the mixing bowl while another was still operating the mixer.)
- Someone puts teakettle on, and another leaves house unaware.
- No sense (of smell or taste) of when food is safe or not, and have gotten food poisoning.

COOKING SOLUTIONS:

- Avoid cooking as much as possible...keep to just warming foods in microwave when really needed.
- Eat only fruit, cereal, sandwiches, and things that don't require cooking and feel safe to everyone.
- Keep a fire extinguisher near stove.
- Smoke alarm is electric so we turn it off now if we have to use stove so it won't scare anyone (just need to remember to turn it back on...bathroom light doesn't work if smoke alarm off so that's a reminder for some who go in there) (Not sure this is best solution but it's helped a bit).
- Do not deal with cooking any meat...no one can handle it without bad things happening...it disturbs the Shadows.
- ???????????????????? Open to suggestions. Still a big problem area.

EATING PROBLEMS:

- No one can agree on same likes or dislikes.
- Can only seem to eat very selected items which is far from

a balanced diet.

- One Shadow refuses to eat and tries to stop others; she also tricks others to think that we already ate when none of us did.
- Forgetting to eat and drink.
- No sense of hunger or thirst like most people, until light-headed.
- Shadows afraid to eat, thinking they'll be poisoned.
- Food (the smell or sight) makes many sick so they can't eat.
- Can only eat under certain conditions. Things need to be just right...most need to be alone. Only two or three can eat in front of people.

EATING SOLUTIONS:

- Try to make eating one of the things on the big to-do list and have computer beep us when we're at home on computer all day.
- Try to make eating part of daily routine (so far only seems to work for the Shadow at work because she is usually required to take a lunch- but she often works thru her lunch time.)
- Try to take a multivitamin to make up for probably not eating properly.
- Try to only shop for items acceptable to most.
- Put up a note on fridge asking "When is the last time you ate?"
- ???????????????? Open to suggestions. Still a big problem area.

SECURITY PROBLEMS:

- Locking self out of car.
- Locking self out of apartment several times.
- Losing keys (they are probably never lost...just in a place no one else would think to look.)
- Forgetting to lock up or maybe thinking they are locking things, but are actually unlocking everything. Some get things backwards
- Concerned people broke in, but nothing stolen.

SECURITY SOLUTIONS:

-Made a duplicate car key to keep in wallet, since usually if leave car still have wallet in bag.

-Saved up and purchased extra apartment keys (still looking for safe place to keep since have no one to hold for us that we trust).

-Have special hook that keys should always be put on...but still problem with not everyone seeming to know or do this.

-Put a note by door knob asking "Do you have your keys. Did you lock the door?"

-Labeled lock which way is locked and which way is unlocked.

-Got locks changed from original and gave no one the keys.

MAIL PROBLEMS:

-Some not knowing what is important and throw out the wrong things.

-Some afraid of the mail, bills and mail not getting opened or dealt with.

-Not checking for mail.

-Bills and out-going mail never getting sent

MAIL SOLUTIONS:

-All bills placed in special place for Shadow who takes care of finances.

-Have a special out-going mail container to check each time before leaving...or some put it right at the door so see before opening it (Important things should be put in Teachers work planner and she will mail it at work).

-Mail not belonging to you set on counter...one Shadow usually tries to go through at least weekly to check for important things.

PHONE & MESSAGE PROBLEMS:

-Shadows afraid to answer phone.

-getting scary calls by unknown people.

-weird calls with music, sounds, or beeps.

-family calling.

-afraid of having to talk to someone who knows us but we don't know them.

-worry they'll have to deal with a situation that another would be better equipped to deal with.

-not getting important calls regarding Shadows work because everyone afraid to answer.

-People upset that calls aren't returned to them.

-Work Shadow upset that someone never called back, but they did..but no one left her the message or thought it wasn't important, or thought the Work Shadow got it and that it had been a long time so it could be thrown away, or message given to the wrong Shadow who then didn't know what it was and threw it out .

-Even when the Work Shadow knows someone called back, she says she is still often unclear what the final outcome was and has to try to contact them again.

PHONE & MESSAGE SOLUTIONS:

Have answer machine to help screen calls (need to make sure people you want to hear from know they need to speak to be recognized for Shadow to answer since often people hang up when they hear machine).

-Tried taping all conversations on the machine to be saved for others to hear, but tape always runs out and many feel it's an invasion of their privacy.

-Tried keeping a notebook by phone to record messages to never be tossed out, but so far this hasn't worked...messages still vague, incomplete, not dated since most have problems with that...maybe try again later?

-The Work Shadow would like to try voice mail like at her work, can save exact message for 14 days, can leave messages for all the Shadows, has a time and day stamp, don't have to be at home to check messages, so like when we got put in hospital couldn't check messages from work or parents and they were wondering what was going on...but too expensive for us now.

-Was able to get caller ID to help screen calls; dates calls.

DRIVING & GETTING LOST PROBLEMS:

-Ending up on toll ways with no money (they don't take check or credit cards).

-Getting stranded.

-Running out of gas (it was full the last time).

-Lights being left on, draining battery.

-Fear sets in, someone wanders from car or gets approached by strangers

-Costs us money we don't have.

-Makes some late to where they were going.

-No sense of directions, North, South, East, West meaningless to all.

-Directions to places must be exact...seem to not be able to follow directions, or maybe just don't trust directions

-Unable to reverse directions to get back home.

-Problems "zoning out" esp on longer drives and missing signs to exit or not sure if "zoned out" and went too far or not.

-We wind up driving, yet not sure where we were going, or where we currently are, or someone not liking where we are going and decides to go elsewhere, or unaware and just enjoys being out and driving with radio.

-Not being able to find car after leaving a building, shopping mall or finding car in a parking garage.

-One insists on parking where people would least expect you to be. i.e., if Work Shadow to be at work, she'll park it at other end of Centre so no one knows she's at work or would think to look for car to do something to it.

DRIVING & GETTING LOST SOLUTIONS:

-Trying to keep toll money in car labeled for that use only.

-Keeping pages of directions to and from commonly-driven-to places in organizer

-Always get thorough directions with landmarks and right or left instead of NSWE; ask how to know when we've gone too far and passed up where we should've gone.

-Got a calling card to make calls in emergencies in case have no money.

-Keep our address and list of numbers in organizer book to call who we are trying to get to, if lost.

-Note in organizer book where we are parked so if someone else leaves they can find it.

-Was recently given a cell phone to keep in car to call when stranded or lost (still need to teach us how to use it. It doesn't always work for everyone.)

-Just got AAA motor club that we can call in emergencies instead of parents (but can only call 3x a year or they cancel)

CONCEPT OF TIME PROBLEMS:

-Missing appointments.

-Knowing when to make appointments.

-Knowing how long it's been since heard back from someone.

-Knowing when to check back with people.

-Paying bills on time

-Plans being made on top of other's plans or when the Work Shadow has work or a meeting

CONCEPT OF TIME SOLUTIONS:

-Have an organizer book with monthly and daily calendar to list appointments and things everyone may want to view

-Now have computer calendar that beeps reminders to all of us. It keeps track of time for us and warns you if you've overlapped plans. (Some people still seem to insist on keeping their plans secret from everyone, though)

INTERNAL COMMUNICATION PROBLEMS:

-Communication best on computer but not always convenient and not everyone knows how to operate computer; most children don't read or read well enough to understand things and aren't concerned with outside-world happenings.

-Away from computer usually through written notes, but only by limited # of Shadows willing to write; organizer book not felt to be private or secure enough

-notes often get lost, misplaced.

-outside people laugh, think we're weird.

-Work thinks the Work Shadow is super organized but they don't like her notes all over the office.

-Teacher has pockets full of notes but can't find things in a hurry.

*Evaluating, Con'td.***INTERNAL
COMMUNICATION
SOLUTIONS:**

-Try to keep notes to each other in one of two places: organizer book or computer; although sometimes post in prominent places. But those must be taken down if someone comes to apartment (which is rarely)

-Computer now has passwords for privacy which has helped more Shadows be willing to communicate with each other

-Check computer each day you are around for communication from each other and for calendar updates.

-The Work Shadow has separate organizer for work-related things now, in case people would go through her things. Has a place for updates and her notes and documentation of calls requiring follow-up and all the to-do lists.

-If no one in lunchroom, lunch is set aside for catch up on notes and to leave notes to whoever may be helping the Work Shadow as to what is priority. Or if work is going smoothly, or if there is a pressing matter within Shadows

VISITOR PROBLEMS:

-Repair people, mail delivery, pizza delivery (which there shouldn't be anyway) even often someone we know never get in even though they are expected

-Intercom scares Shadows.

-Sound scares many Shadows into hiding

-Afraid to speak into intercom or talk to someone they can't see.

-Even if there is a note up that we are expecting someone, they are too afraid to let anyone in

VISITOR SOLUTIONS:

-Put a note up that we are expecting someone...give name and time estimate and remind everyone on note to expect intercom buzz to go off when they come.

-Tell people to call just before they leave so we know they'll be here soon; some

can call from their car phones when they're here like the sister does (she just thinks the intercom doesn't work and that's the only way to let us know she's here)

-Remind Shadows if afraid to speak in intercom they can take the keys and go down to meet person, but can't be too slow or the people will go away

-If not expecting intercom to go off can look out balcony window to see if they recognize any cars of who may be there or go and hide like they normally do if it doesn't feel safe.

**TAKING MEDICATION
PROBLEMS:**

-Problem taking meds on a consistent basis as prescribed; often take too soon or forget.

-Taking too much medicine because someone not aware another already took it.

-Many do not understand the one body concept...one body concept doesn't seem to always apply to all in body (some unaffected by other's meds, etc.)

-Inappropriate use of meds or purposeful overdose (dangerous to have meds in house with certain Shadows around, yet others need it.)

-Meds don't work like they should

-Children often sick by adult-dose meds.

**TAKING MEDICATION
SOLUTIONS:**

-Tried getting rid of all meds including even everyone's headache meds and vitamins so no chance for overdose or creating stomach problems again, but they just replace it.

-Don't bother taking prescribed meds from doctors; they don't work (Only exception so far are antibiotics).

-If ever need to take meds again, maybe use calendar reminder to remind, or get a pill tracking box from pharmacy like hospital suggested, even for vitamins.

The Tornado

Feelings clash and crash! Swirling in a violent dance.
Wreaking havoc on my once glittering sea of calm.

Where is the solid ground now?

Where is the crystal clarity? The one Sure perspective,
that changed from self to self, but never overlapped?

The one Pure perspective that said:

I am afraid OR I am brave.

I am strong OR I am a slave.

One position. One point of view.

One feeling at a time!

Now the tornado is within me.

A swirling vortex of
point and counterpoint,
desire and despair,
freedom and fear.

And you say, "Wait!

Stay in the fear —

in the eye

of the storm —

you will find

your bearings again."

In the midst of a tornado?

Give me the storm cellar anyway!

I am so afraid

of the ambivalence!

So here I stand.

Longing to return
to the Land
of Oz.

Longing for the
Wizard

to come and
make it all better.

Longing to float away
from the storm

in the arms of
the Good Witch

securely wrapped
in a bubble of love.

To go over
the rainbow.

And longing to
stand and

**DECLARE MY
INDEPENDENCE —**

Be the woman
you believe me

to be

And the

storm

rages

on.

By Judith M. Godschild ©1997

Partner's Page

Lessons From A Topless Beach

By Richard

My wife and I had the perfect honeymoon, cruising the Caribbean for a week on a classic windjammer. That week is full of memories — scuba diving, beachcombing, watching porpoises leap the waves, standing on the bow together as the ship plowed down an endless path of moonlight.

One of my favorite memories is of a tropical beach seducing my wife into going topless.

Terre-de-Haut is a neat, quiet island that the tourist mobs haven't discovered. Thanks to its French heritage, Terre-de-Haut also has a topless beach.

We had planned to spend at least one day playing in the water and roasting on a tropical beach, and Pont Pierre was the perfect place. The crescent of sand sizzles under the sun, while a constant breeze tempers the heat and a natural rock breakwater calms the waves.

It was also the perfect place to confront body-image issues. My wife was looking forward to spending a day on the beach, but she wasn't about to take her top off. So it was fascinating to watch the beach counter her objections.

First she wasn't going topless because she was too old, until she saw women with a lot more mileage than she has taking off their tops.

Then she wasn't going topless because she was too heavy, until she saw bare-breasted women with their thighs rubbing together and hips rippling like the waves.

Then she wasn't going topless because her breasts weren't pretty enough, until she saw tiny breasts and stretched, flabby breasts and heavy, pendulous breasts.

Then she wasn't going topless because she wore the wrong suit, until she saw other women in one-piece suits peeling their tops down to their waists.

I made it clear that it was her decision, but I really didn't think she would. So I was pleasantly surprised when I came out of the water after a swim and found my bride sitting on the

beach with her top off, breasts and shoulders gleaming in the sun.

She smiled shyly as I sat down beside her, told her how pretty she looked, then asked why she changed her mind.

"I looked at all these other women going topless, and I finally asked myself, 'Well, *why not me?*'"

I asked how it felt, and she said the hot sun and warm wind felt good on her breasts. She had risked doing something adventurous and sexy, and nothing awful happened. Emotionally, it was liberating.

Me, I was elated that my wife had made a breakthrough in accepting her body and sexuality. Besides, I think my wife's breasts are two of nature's better efforts.

And since then, I've learned that accepting her body image is something that *both* of us must do.

Survivors, especially multiples, often go through as many changes physically during recovery as they do emotionally. In our support group, it's happened to almost all of us. We fall in love with a person whose body we like. Then the memories come, and the therapy starts, and the food/weight/body issues kick in. And the person we fell in love with changes before our eyes into someone who looks quite different.

My wife has run the spectrum from near-anorexic to very heavy. She tells me that, for her and most multiples, these weight changes are tied to avoiding sex. "We're trying to make ourselves unattractive to protect us from men."

It's hard not to take that personally, even when she assures me it isn't. For a long time she wouldn't let us discuss her weight gain, which led to a major fight. As we worked on damage-control and clean-up, my wife began to confront and deal with her weight issues.

Unexpectedly, once I could express my anger, I also began accepting my wife's body. One morning, while discussing love-making, my wife admitted gaining too much weight and said she would work on losing it.

I thought a moment and said, "And I've been learning to enjoy the changes that the weight has brought."

She asked what I meant. I said that, while I *did* want her to lose weight, I had been trying to focus on the changes I *liked*. Her big hips and soft upper arms are wonderful to caress and hold. Her breasts are larger and fuller and sway gently as she moves instead of bouncing.

She thanked me and told me that she could believe that more easily than all the times I had reassured her that I still found her attractive.

Since then, my acceptance has helped my wife face what her negative self-image and fear of sex has done to her body and health. She recently began monitoring her diet and exercising regularly, and she is beginning to see the first positive changes physically and emotionally.

(I may have done my job *too* well. My wife has asked if I'll still find her attractive as she gets smaller!)

These are the lessons my wife and I have hammered out, one by one, the hard way:

Realize that your partner may undergo drastic weight changes as he or she moves through recovery.

Express your feelings about how your partner's body has changed, and about her reasons for it happening.

Be gentle and loving as you state your dislikes.

Whether your partner gains or loses weight, not all the changes will be negative. Focus on the ones you like.

Encourage your partner to dress appropriately for his or her size. The comfort level far outweighs the cost of a new wardrobe.

Negativity feeds denial. Accepting your partner's weight change will help him or her accept it, too.

Paradoxically, that acceptance will help your partner see clearly what has happened, and do something about it.

And there *is* hope. The memory of my wife, enjoying the hot Caribbean sun on her breasts, is proof.

Cleanup! Room-by-Room Attack Plan

By Barb W.

The following should be done when your place is a disaster, or for fall or spring cleaning:

You will need the following items: **Bleach. Window Cleaner. Vinegar. Soap (such as Murphy's Oil Soap.) Furniture polish. Cleaning cloths. Bucket. Vacuum cleaner (preferably with wands to clean drapes and furniture.) Lots of shopping bags or grocery bags.**

KITCHEN:

1. Clean out and wash the cupboards Wash and dry the exteriors
2. Clean out and wash the drawers Wash and dry the exteriors.
3. Clean out the refrigerator using a bleach water solution Toss out any expired food
4. Defrost or wipe out the freezer Toss out any food that is questionable
5. Wash the exterior of the fridge with a window cleaning solution
6. Wash and organize the dishes
7. Clean the stove and oven At least soap-and-water clean the cook-top surface
8. Clean the interior of the microwave with a bleach water solution
9. Soak the coffee machine with a vinegar/water solution If really gunked on, use straight vinegar and soak overnight
10. Soak dish rack in bleach/water solution Rinse thoroughly
11. Clean cutting board with bleach water solution
12. Wash the kitchen doors to outside and basement with a mild soap and water solution (like Murphy's soap)
13. Wash kitchen floor with soap and water solution.

DINING ROOM:

1. Clear the stuff off the dining room table If there is no place for it, store it in an all-purpose shopping bag to be sorted out later
2. Wash the table and chairs with Murphy's soap solution If not possible, use furniture polish to clean Polish table and chairs with a light furniture polish
3. Pick up the stuff under and around the table and put where it belongs If there is no place for that stuff, put it in an all-purpose shopping bag to be sorted later
4. Vacuum the floor and draperies

LIVING ROOM:

1. Stack the magazines in a pile Put pile in all-purpose shopping bag for later sorting
2. Stack the newspapers in a pile. Put in all-purpose shopping bag for later sorting (or recycling)
3. Clear off table in front of couch. Put things where they belong If no place, put in all-purpose shopping bag for later sorting
4. Clear of table(s) next to couch Put things where they belong If no place, put in all-purpose shopping bag for later sorting
5. Clear stuff off couch chairs Put things where they belong If no place, put in all-purpose shopping bag for later sorting.
6. Pick up stuff on the floor and put it where it belongs If no place, put in all-purpose shopping bag for later sorting.
7. Pick up pile of mail Sort it Toss out junk mail Put bills under magnet on refrigerator or in one (1) other safe place (Always keep all bills together)
8. Vacuum the floor and stuffed furniture
9. Wash wood tables with Murphy soap solution Use window cleaner on glass surfaces (including TV screen) Wax furniture with light furniture polish

STAIRS:

1. Remove stuff off the stairway Put it where it belongs If no place for it, put it in all-purpose shopping bag for later sorting.
2. Vacuum the stairway

BATHROOM:

1. Take towels, rugs, washcloths and any other washable fabric stuff and put it in clothes basket.
2. Fill sink with warm water and bleach Wash the sink area, and toilet area Drain water and rinse sink out. Refill sink with bleach solution. Wash the tiles in shower and bathtub Wash the floor
3. Clean out and wash medicine cabinet. Throw away any really old prescriptions and toiletries Wash the mirror with window cleaning solution
4. Put clean linens in the bathroom

BEDROOM:

1. Find laundry basket and pile anything that isn't hung up in it
2. Strip the bed.
3. Pick up stuff on the floor and put it where it belongs. If there is no place, put it

in the all-purpose shopping bag for later sorting

4. Vacuum the floor and under the bed.
5. Put clean linens on the bed.

STUDY:

1. Any papers not in files go into all-purpose shopping bag to be sorted later.
2. Any discs laying around should go into the all-purpose disc box on the desk.
3. Dust the desk.
4. Pick up stuff on the floor and put where it belongs. If no place, put in the all-purpose shopping bag to be sorted later
5. Vacuum the floor and in the closet

BASEMENT:

1. Fix the clothesline. Or clean off washer and dryer top Put detergents/bleach/fabric softener together in easy-to-reach place (box or shelf)
2. Pick up stuff on basement stairs. Put where it belongs. If no place, put in the all-purpose shopping bag for later sorting.

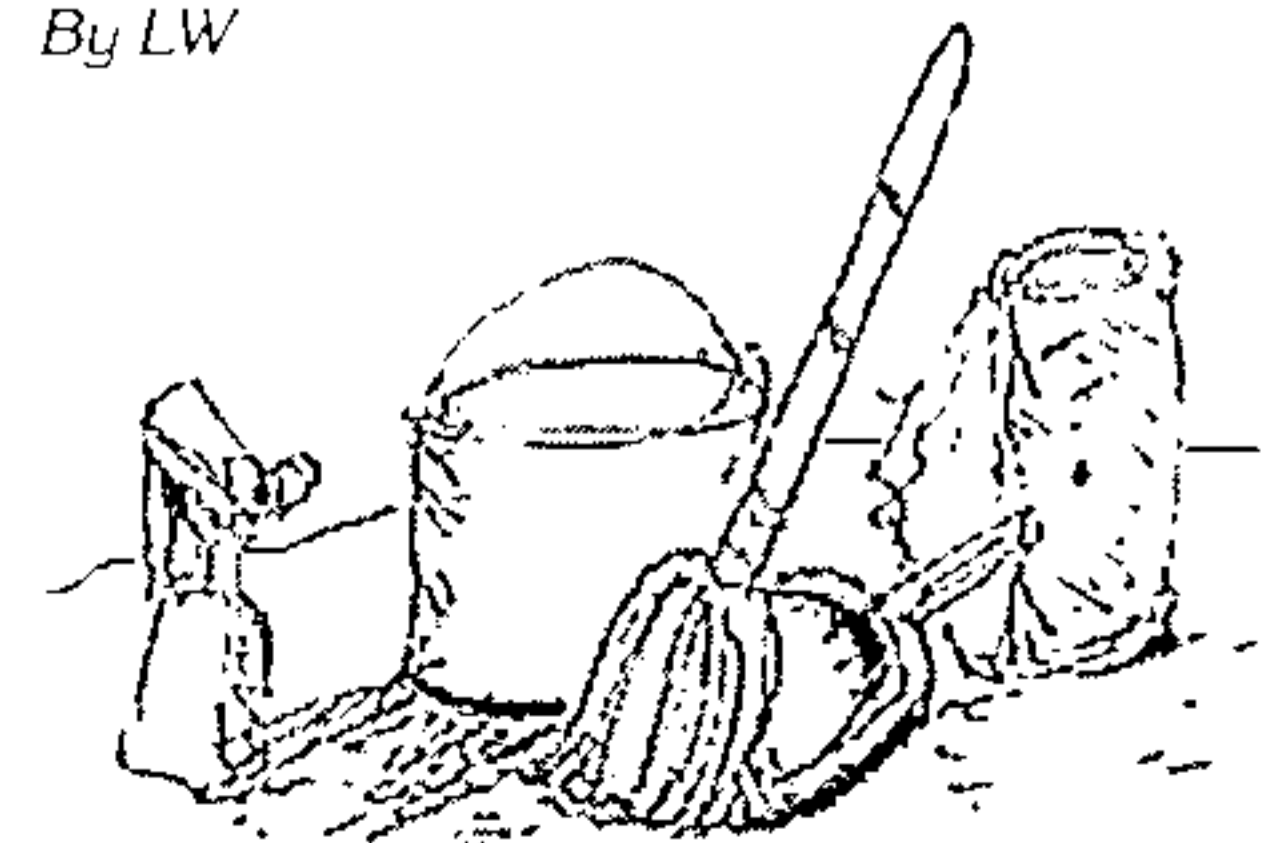
MISCELLANEOUS:

1. Wash the windows.
2. Sweep the porches.
3. Wash kitchen and bathroom walls.
4. Have broken/unneeded furniture, appliances, hauled away.
5. Give away clothes that don't fit, books you don't need, etc.
4. Spend at least 1/2 hour a day sorting through shopping bags until all are emptied.

To keep your place from becoming a disaster again, every week do bathroom, kitchen, refrigerator (for health reasons) vacuum and dusting, laundry and straightening up. You'll be glad you did!

MV

*Broom defies gravity.
By LW*



Piece by Piece

By Jalanda

As I was growing up, my life was composed of many pieces. My pieces were part of a much larger puzzle. Finding those pieces, and attempting to put them back together, has been the biggest challenge of my life. I thought going through the abuse was the hardest part. It was hard and very painful, but putting my life back together in a healthy way is a step-by-step process that challenges me to the max—every day.

All those pieces are so very special and unique. As I cry to the sky, the tears all have abundant stories to tell. The stories may be sad, happy, full of fear, or just full of never-ending pain. There are so many stories, for there are so many tears. Inch by inch, the pieces are searching for their rightful place. Sometimes they fit perfectly, sometimes they don't. At least they know, now, that they do have a home, and if they continue to be persistent, that they will eventually find their own special place.

Hope, my guiding force, peeks around the corner, watching, waiting.

Every now and then he will whisper in my ear, "Don't forget about me; I'm a big part of what you need." The pain rages out to wrestle with Hope at times, but, luckily, Hope is much too bright to let the pain completely overtake him.

Finally, my walk down the path has direction. The path still has roadblocks, and does get dark, but Hope seems to know where to find me, even in my best of hiding places. In my darkest moments, the Light will appear and show me new roads, new ways, and I know, then, that I'm not alone, and that the Light will guide me and help me through.

Yes, the puzzle continues to be mysterious, full of missing pieces and parts unknown, but it is slowly taking shape. That up-and-down road, that often finds me crying, is the same road that catches me kicking up my heels and dancing with glee. Yes, I can be a wild, dancing fool at times, and, yes, I can be a lost soul at other times, but I can truthfully tell you—that I'm a very thankful one.

MV

Label Me with "Hope"

Labels. Labels. "MPD". "Multiple" having many parts, elements or relations, "Personality" the individual quality that makes one person be different and act differently from another. "Disorder" a sickness or disease. "DID". "Dissociative" having to do with breaking a connection. "Identity" to recognize as being a particular person, "Disorder", same as above.

I don't know about anyone else, but neither of these labels sound very good to me...especially the "disorder" part of them. In fact, if one looks at the definitions of each word separately, DID is almost worse than MPD (and it was supposed to be an improvement!)

Labels serve no purpose other than to save space when filling out forms. I don't like labels and so I have decided to quit calling myself "a multiple". That is not who I am. Neither am I a "dissociator." And I definitely do not "have" a sickness, or a disease...so I am going to quit saying I "have MPD" or I "have DID."

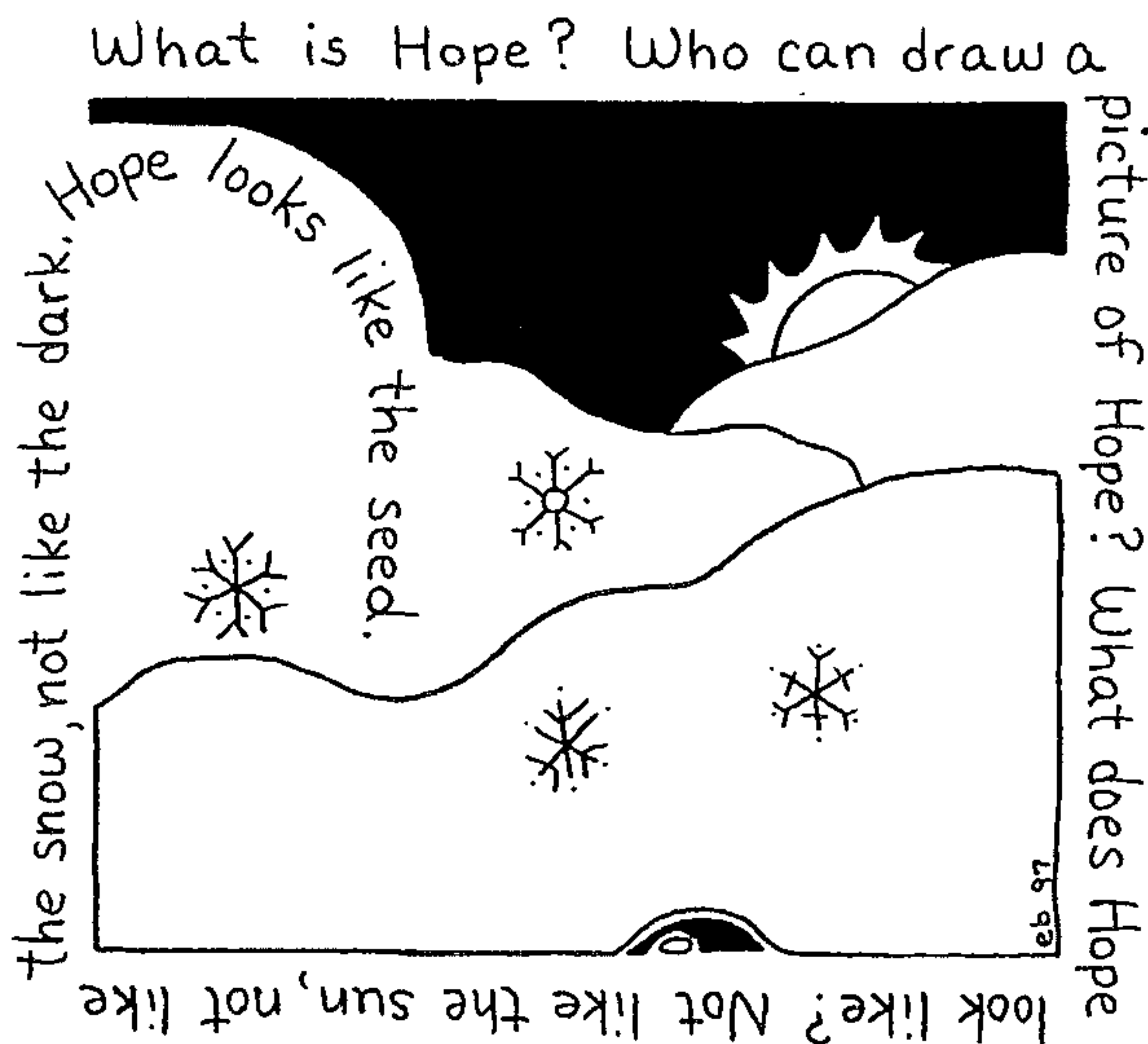
What I have is HOPE. Finally. After years and years. If we would like to make that into a label, then what I have is a "Heavy-laden" "Organization" of "Person" "Elusive". "HOPE". If someone wants to label me, let it be that.

We are heavy-laden...some with fear, some with sadness, some with anger, some with duty, some with guilt...but we are organized (been put into working order) and always have been. We are arranged in a specific way for specific purposes. We are a human being (and only one human being because we all live within this one body which is now forty years old (sigh), but we are an elusive human being at the same time (hard to describe or understand). We do not have a disease. We have HOPE. We are HOPE...a heavy-laden organization of person elusive.

I like it. Label me with "HOPE".

By Elly for Ellie's family

MV



Letters

I am desperately seeking a therapist. I live in a rural area where there is no one who treats MPD. I would like to have therapy over the phone. I think this would work because I feel comfortable on the phone and I have found calling a crisis line helpful. I have no insurance, and I cannot pay more than \$25 an hour. If anyone knows of a therapist anywhere who would be willing to do this, please write. Also write if you have other suggestions for my situation. Thanks. —Rebecca

Some of us wonder if there is ever an "all better" or "recovered" state of being. When does one no longer need to go to therapy? What can one expect from a daily life that doesn't get filled with recovering activities? A perspective from some people who are functioning from this place would be most helpful. —Joani

We'll gladly forward mail to our letter writers...and sometimes (when we have room) we'll print a few replies. Here's one for "Shattered Tribe" of our August issue...LW

How I Heal

As I fade I wave slowly
A bent line on a crooked page
I reach inside. scribe to a screaming council

How can I write this wordless pain?
It's all so much more than I can bear
for you to share with me now.
Colored wall fish and bubbles watch
shining
The void opens and we begin again
mapping the darkness
A poison kiss that soils the soul
from a living lie that denies itself,
smiling
to the firm, insistent tug of a small
hand

I turn my attention
A wash of image/feeling/knowing
and I know that we knew also
Kindness, love, beauty and wonder
and we knew how to love
In the calm exhaustion huddled close
we find sleep.

By David T.

MV

Response to 'Shattered Tribe'

We too were shattered in childhood, each part taking responsibility for a time of day, a type of situation, or a particular feeling that we all might survive.

As an adult we searched for healing through religion. The pain got worse, we stopped going to church, and in a last-ditch effort for healing we decided to try therapy. This was a difficult step since the church preached that therapists, psychologists, psychiatrists, etc., were only after money and would ultimately rape your mind. We figured, what the h__l, we have been raped physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually for our entire 35 years of existence. We figured we had a 50-50 chance. Either it would happen again, or it wouldn't, but it was worth a try because the pain was too great to continue to survive. We knew that if this didn't work we would die.

We began therapy and amazingly, it seemed to actually begin to help. After a few months we were shattered even more by what had become a very abusive christian (small "c" intended) church (cult). The pastor said it was our fault when our husband and (4-1/2 months later) our son died. Each one died in a bizarre accident. The pastor claimed that we were not in tune with God's will, and so He took our husband and son to get our attention and to get us in line spiritually (i.e., to get us to quit therapy and come back to church).

We stayed in therapy because it was helping. The pain was still there but it was different. The old pain was like a poisonous stench and always felt dirty and nasty, but this pain was cleaner. It was the pain of healing. We began to believe this might really work. Our therapist accurately diagnosed our MPD, helped us through the loss of our husband and son, as well as helping us when we began a new relationship with a very supportive man.

We married this man and we moved when his work took him to a new city. This move was hard because we had to find a new therapist.

We were just beginning with this new therapist, and were not even close to working through the loss of our first therapist, when we found out that the

entire five years we had been seeing the first one he had been breaking confidentiality. He had told his daughter, his son, and several other people that we had known (who had become his clients) enough of our "stuff" that they easily recognized who he was telling them about.

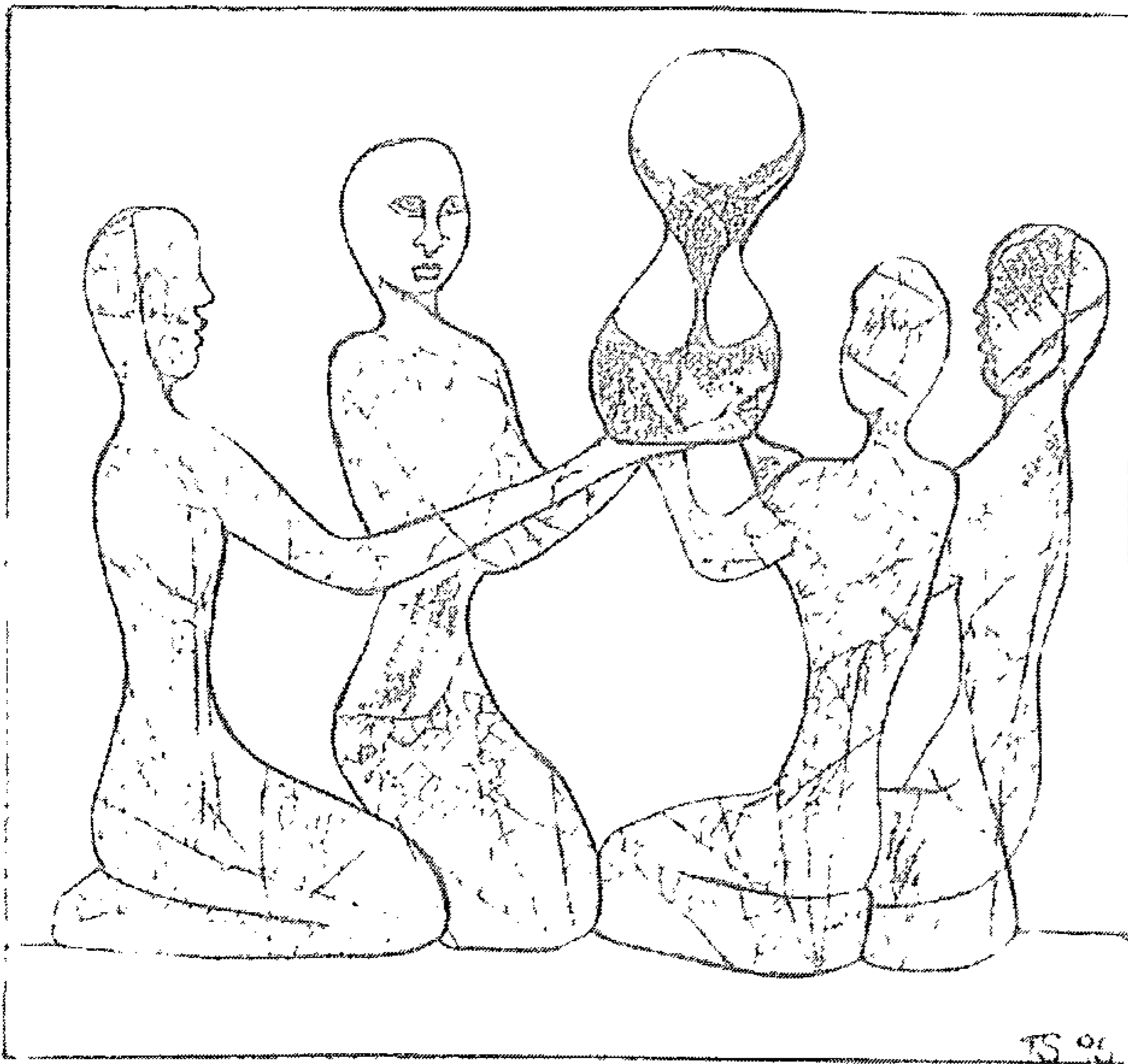
We were once again torn and shattered.

What has kept us and keeps us from giving up? First, we are survivors and we have learned how to stick together, cooperate, and help each other. Our husband, lover, friend, has remained supportive through this. Our new therapist has also been nurturing and validating. This has helped but what I think has helped the most is the realization that we have done the work and we have been healing *ourselves*. Our therapist *did* help us, we *did* make progress, we *are* in less pain than any other time in our entire life, but *we did the work!* We were not responsible for the childhood abuse, we were not responsible for the abuses in our adult life, and we were not responsible for the abuse by our therapist. Other people have abused us throughout our life and other people have helped us throughout our life, but we have done the work of healing. We realized that we are responsible for our healing, and we have made progress. This has also given us a renewed determination. We have survived and we have even begun to thrive and we are not going to let *anything* or *anyone* take that away from us, ever again.

Sometimes we forget all this when the pain of betrayal hits us and we are again thrown into confusion, depression, and suicidal thoughts, but someone inside always finds the strength we need and then we can get up again and go on. So how do we survive? Ultimately, it is the same way we survived our childhood. I became "we" and we helped each other survive. We will continue to help each other survive, and maybe someday we will become "I" again...or maybe not. Regardless of whether we remain we or become I, we will have survived, and we will thrive, and we will live, love and trust again someday. I hope this helps.

By Janene +

MV



Circle of Life

The circle of life
 is unceasing and never ending
 as time continues on
 Our lives are challenged each day
 allowing some direction,
 but not able to stop its continuation.
 We make the choice
 to follow the progression
 without influence
 or fulfill our lives
 with meaning and purpose
 The circle will continue its momentum
 whatever the choice
 carrying with it
 the heart and spirit of the soul
 Life may provide
 painful obstacles
 too difficult to overcome
 but survival is achieved with persistence
 and a will
 to hold on and proceed.
 Then the healing will begin
 allowing life to go on.
 For as the circle is perpetual,
 life will exist
 until the very end
 of time.

By Cheri K.

Books

Clear Your Past, Change Your Future

By Lynne D. Finney, J.D., M.S.W.

© 1997. Published by New Harbinger Publications, 5674 Shattuck Ave., Oakland CA 94609 184 pgs. \$12.95. Paperback.

This book takes a positive approach toward "recovering memories." Finney, who identifies herself as an abuse survivor as well as a psychotherapist, has written previously on healing for abuse survivors and selecting a therapist. Here, she suggests a self-help process of inner exploration that could be practiced individually by some people who are not in active therapy (though she does state that if emotions seem to be too intense, or if the subject matter is "extreme" a therapist should be involved.) The intent is not merely to relive past traumas, but to identify the beliefs formed by trauma ("I am not lovable," "I am evil," etc.) and to see that these beliefs are not accurate. After changing core beliefs, injured people can move on to see themselves more whole, more able to change harmful behavior patterns, and live more comfortably than before. She

also gives helpful exercises for coping with feelings, nurturing yourself, and even how to resolve issues with people who have died. This seems a good book to read to get yourself "unstuck" in the healing process.

Rag Doll

A Journey of Healing and Integration

By Alayna © 1997. Published by Mystic Moon Publications, PO Box 252032, West Bloomfield, MI 48325-2032. 106 pgs. \$12 Paperback.

This personal-recovery history is written as a series of letters to a friend. In the letters, Alayna explains her process of recovery—beginning with her initial suicide attempt, moving through the remembering phase and appearance of alters, and ending with her integration. An afterword by Judith A. Goren, Ph.D., who was "Alayna's" therapist, does a good job of summarizing the diagnosis and treatment of dissociative disorder. A thoughtful presentation, with enough restraint to avoid "freaking out" readers...even those unfamiliar with D.I.D.

Becoming One

A Story of Triumph Over Multiple Personality Disorder

By Sarah E. Olson. ©1997. Published by Trilogy Books, 50 S. DeLacey Ave Suite 201, Pasadena, CA 91105 269 pgs \$16.95. Paperback.

Edited transcripts of therapy sessions form much of this personal-recovery story. These are largely set up around chapter themes, featuring one or more alters, such as *Resistance in the Therapeutic Setting*, and *Trust in the Therapeutic Setting*. Some sections relate even closer to Sarah's particular situation, such as *Family Dynamics and Confrontations*, which is mostly a series of letters to her older sister. For people who want to read phrase-by-phrase accounts of the therapy process, this may be interesting and enlightening. The topic index is a useful reference.

By Lynn W.

COMING SOON!

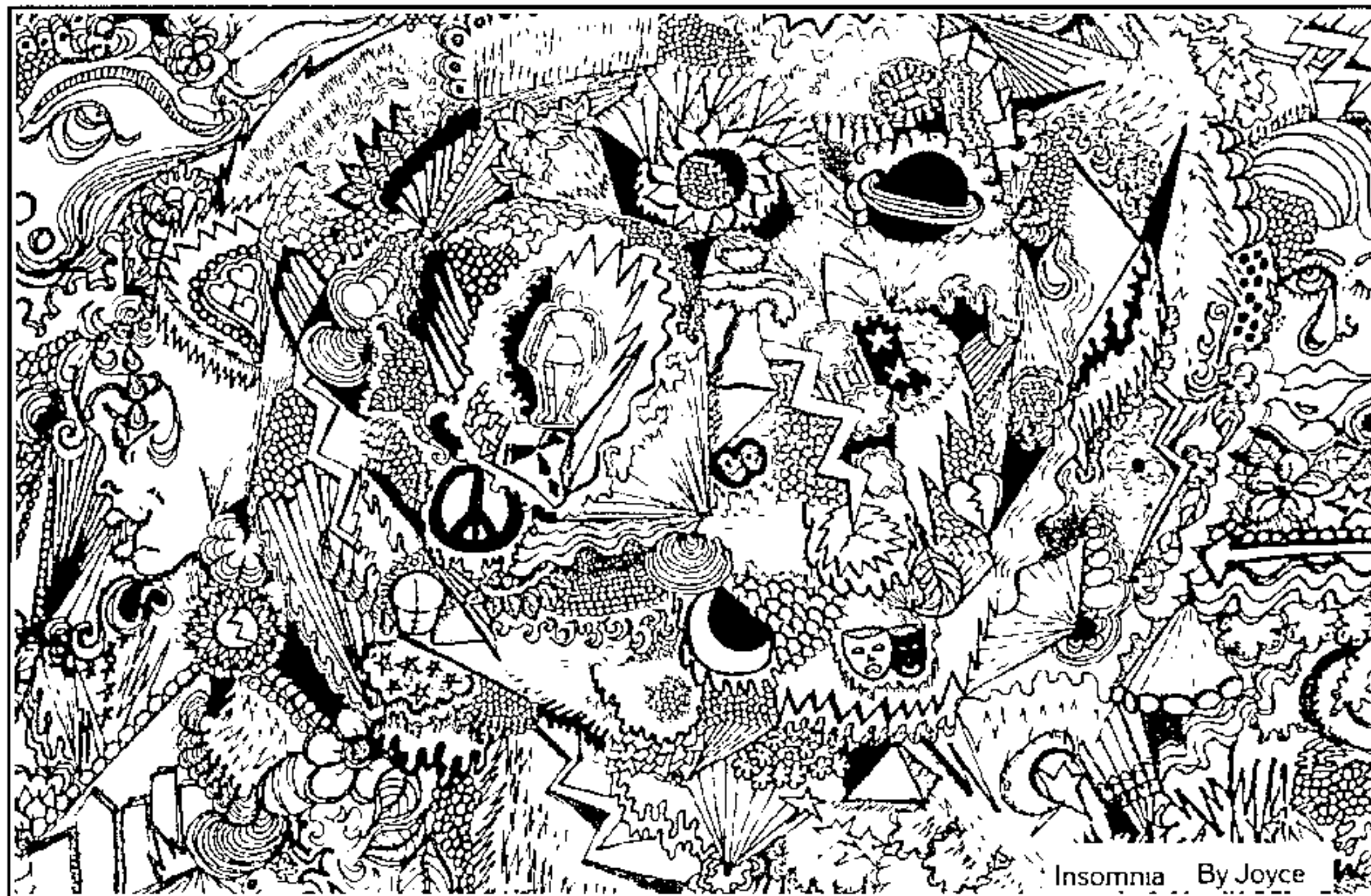
Please, check out our upcoming themes and put your great ideas on paper! We need lots more opinions on the Internet, Hospitals, and Extreme Abuse (for starters.) Also, we continue to experience an Art Shortage! Please send us your reproducible art. Vertical, Horizontal, Cartoons...you name it, we want it. And THANKS for SHARING!

February 1998

Recovery help on the Internet. Pros & cons. Safe use. Finding affordable access. Also: pets & healing. ART: Draw your pet (or your computer). DEADLINE: December 1, 1997.

April 1998

Hospitals & HMOs in DD Treatment...does short term therapy work? Coping with body memories. Preparing for invasive medical procedures. ART: Healing Acts. DEADLINE: February 1, 1998.



June 1998

Ritual and Sadistic Abuse. Realities and distortions. Is validation possible? Legal issues and risks for survivors & therapists. ART: Serenity. DEADLINE: April 1, 1998.

August 1998

Exploring mind, consciousness and personality. Strengthening the healthy core. Structure of alters and internal systems. Measurable physical differences among alters? ART: What you see when you "look inside." DEADLINE: June 1, 1998.

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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