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Ritual & Sadistic Abuse:

Complex Issues of Truth and Healing

RA is not an easy subject to address. Several contradictory viewpoints are intentionally presented here. Graphic details have been edited out, to follow MV's longstanding policy. However, the contents may still be upsetting. Put MV down if it bothers you. And thanks to all who shared their thoughts and drawings. - Lynn W.



Angel Pauline, by R.S. Lange

Angel Pauline

...Here is Joan of Arc
rising
patron saint of abused women
entering through the side door

Your wings are knit
with fur,
pearls, jewels, pears,
tears, fruit

They are lighted from within
from behind
comes the sore source
of your beauty

Your arms form
the mirror and all terror
sits before you
peering in...

Your face is the footprint
of an elephant—long dead
the imprint of ocean waves

Sewn eyebrows
carefully strewn patches
of clear grace
your eyes shadow the moon...

And though Pauline is
motionless
she moves with her eyes
an unseen hand
tarries above my heart

A flood of graciousness
comes to mend
the rent garment

Sideways slices
icicle arms
like two bent knives
her arms are the swords of
the true revolution

Pauline is here
this is her resurrection.

*Excerpts from a longer poem
by R.S. Lange*

MV

(The following letter is reprinted with permission from both the author and the editor of the ISSD News, June, 1997, where it first appeared. – LW)

Show Me the Conspiracy: Reflections on Satanic Ritual Abuse

By Kenneth A. Nakdimen, MD.

The chair of ISSD's Ritualistic Abuse Task Force has found that there is definitive forensic evidence for the existence of ritualistic and sadistic abuse, some of which features satanic paraphernalia and rituals. He also has found that there is no definitive forensic evidence for the existence of the criminal conspiracy known as Satanic Ritual Abuse (SRA) (Ross, 1995.)

If the existence of SRA could ever be proved, the resulting news story would probably preempt even a state of the Union address or an O.J. verdict. That is how sensational the alleged SRA conspiracy is. It is alleged to be multigenerational, in that the involved families have been in the cult for generations. It is said to be large scale, in that the perpetrators and their victims number in the thousands, perhaps in the tens of thousands. It is said to be influential, in that cult members infiltrate key professions and occupy powerful positions. It is said to be widespread, taking place in North America, in Europe, and in other places. Finally, it is alleged to involve rape, baby-breeding, murder, cannibalism, torture, and mind control.

Why is definitive forensic proof for this vast criminal conspiracy so sorely lacking? Would its existence be hard to prove? To the contrary, as Kenneth V. Lanning (1992) has pointed out, a conspiracy crime like SRA is intrinsically easier to prove than single-perpetrator abuse, for with each additional conspirator the chance of exposure rises exponentially, even in the presence of blood ties and death threats. We know that this is true from experience with other types of organized crime. In contrast, the really difficult crime to detect and prove is the single-perpetrator crime, especially if it involves a single person who committed the crime in his own home (e.g., incest). If single-perpetrator crimes like incest can be forensically proved to exist, then certainly it should be possible to prove conspiracy crimes like SRA.

Of course, this discussion would be academic if belief in the existence of SRA were fading away. But I recently surveyed therapists in the New York City metropolitan area while preparing an MPD/DID treatment resource catalog, and was jarred into the realization that belief in SRA remains common and that many of my colleagues seem to take its existence for granted.

Although I have never taken SRA for granted, I approached the subject with an open mind. After all, if multiple personality and the Holocaust could be real, as I know they are, then why not SRA? So I waited for our colleagues who have championed the credibility of SRA to publish a single forensically definitive case. I waited and waited and waited, and eventually I felt foolish for waiting.

I am now waiting for the ISSD Executive Council to show leadership by taking an official position on SRA. I imagine there has been no official position before now because of the belief that reputable experts disagree. But do they? There are, in fact, major points upon which the experts agree. They all agree that there is as yet no definitive forensic evidence for the existence of SRA. They also agree that definitive forensic evidence exists for various other kinds of abuse (e.g., incest). Thus the experts agree that various other kinds of abuse currently have greater credibility than SRA.

Although the experts can't agree on whether SRA will eventually be proved to exist, they do agree that it has not yet been proved to exist. And this agreement might form the basis of a consensus: All memories are psychologically meaningful, but some memories (depending upon whether the type of crime remembered has been proved to exist) are more likely to have a factual basis than others. This can be stated more concisely: All memories are meaningful, but some memories are more factual than others. It can also be stated more tactfully: All memories are valid, but some memories are more valid than others.

Memories of SRA may be valid as expressions of extreme emotional pain. Therapists' belief in SRA may be an empathic response to that pain. But if you think that SRA actually exists, then show me the conspiracy. Forensically speaking, show me the conspiracy. At long last, show me the conspiracy.

References:

Lanning, K.V. (1992) A law-enforcement perspective on allegations of ritual abuse. In D.K. Sakheim & S.E. Devine (Eds) *Out of darkness: Exploring satanism and ritual abuse* (pp 109-146). New York: Lexington Books.

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MV



Sabrina On the Hill, by Sabrina, 1990

This drawing is from a book in progress, Kisses that Scar, Tears that Heal, by Phoenix and Co. It is excerpted and used by permission.

Rather than a depiction of the actual memory, this was a tribute to Sabrina, the teenager, for surviving the ordeal my parts later entitled, *The Sabrina-On-The-Hill memory*. (Sabrina is the girl chained to "the big cat.")

This was drawn in August of 1990. August is the anniversary of The Dying Time. The Dying Time is the period of time my parts refer to when all the hills have turned brown in the late summer heat, ritual ceremonies occurred and are remembered, the time-frame that Sabrina was "on the hill," and prior to my healing, the time I was most likely to make a suicide attempt in reaction to these memories.

Phoenix & Co.

MV

Validation Does and Does Not Matter

By Lynn W.

I am resolutely ambivalent about the broad issue commonly called "ritual abuse." The whole subject confuses me, even as I "believe" certain parts of it. Those who are sure in their minds about the nature of what they term "ritual abuse" will say my confusion (shared by many in the public) is deliberately induced by its perpetrators, who hide behind the unbelievability of it all. Maybe so. But it is equally valid to say: maybe not.

Here is what confuses me:

1. The term itself. It seems to be used for all sorts of disgusting, horrific behaviors of people against humans, animals, objects deemed sacred, etc. There can be one perpetrator or many, one victim or hundreds, even thousands. "Ritual abuse" (frequently linked in the same sentence with "mind control") is often written and talked about as if the speaker or writer is discussing a clearly-identified behavior pattern that the audience understands. I don't find this to be true.

2. On one hand, it is obvious that for centuries people have done ghastly things to others, invoking the needs of religion, politics, power, control, money. There is ample, physical evidence of these horrors. Anything awful that can be done to a human being has been done before, and sadly will probably be done again. But we know about these events from the evidence. Going back to the Incas, there are objects that can be identified as tools for human sacrifice, and the rituals used to prepare victims are known at least partially by present-day researchers.

3. Today, horrors continue. News accounts galore, as well as trials and convictions, mention many of the terrible behaviors cited in ritual abuse literature...rape, cannibalism, mutilation, sex rings, infanticide, profaning of religious icons, etc. All of this goes on. It is the underbelly of our so-called civilized society. To me, this is "real." Roland Summit's report of the archeological evidence for the tunnels at the McMartin site in California (see *The Journal of Psychohistory*, Vol.21, #4, Spring '94) comes under this heading, in my opinion.

4. On the other hand...Most of the reports I've read here and elsewhere are based on an individual's body memories, coupled with visions, dreams, or feelings that are pieced together by the survivor alone (with or without the help of a therapist, or siblings, or a survivor group) to establish some kind of cause-and-effect rationale for the physical and emotional manifestations of trauma. These rarely include physical evidence an outsider could readily believe.

Trying to piece together our trauma history and make sense of it is natural. We are disabled by inappropriate dissociation, we behave as if we are traumatized, so we want to identify the trauma—and if possible, the people who did this to us. We really want to know *what happened*. But can we ever know?

Some of us can prove our abuse concretely: through court or hospital records, photographs or videos, perpetrator confessions and so on. Most of us cannot.

As I learned more about myself in therapy, I learned about memory distortion (especially *my* memory. See article in Aug. '92 MV). So while I do not *discount* my memories and feelings, I no longer say to myself, "I dreamed X, so it must have happened," even if it *feels* real. Being the editor of *Many Voices* put me in the position to see how groups of survivors, sharing details of their history, could wind up literally sharing *memories*, just as people who view the same movie recall the same scenes, and may share feelings about those scenes.

This does not mean ritual abuse memories are false. This does not mean that ritual abuse, even intergenerational ritual abuse, is impossible. But it does mean that, without compelling physical evidence to back us up, telling our "stories" in detail, in public, in books or in survivor groups, as if we are *absolutely certain* about what happened, can alter the recollections of other trauma survivors...so they wind up remembering our trauma as if it were their own. Shared memories may be emotionally comforting, but without external verification, they are not *validation* in a factual sense. This is one reason why I edit-out graphic details from material sent to MV.

Others disagree with my view. They say sharing details of awful experience gives permission to victims who were instructed 'not to tell.' Silent survivors then feel it's OK to expose their remembered history and find release from shame and secrecy.

But I worry about a process of "Can you top this?" which can snowball in survivor groups and among therapists comparing cases. If many people who are dissociative are also creative and imaginative (and I believe that), then how do they separate their creations from their realities? I personally can't do it. That's why I remain skeptical. If I put my mind to it, I can say (and feel) that darn near anything happened to me. Since there is no easy way to separate "truth" from "imagining" in the absence of external concrete evidence, I put it all in the "who knows?" category.

I try to avoid converting the dictum "I think, therefore I am" into "I think it, therefore it is real."

One friend who is convinced that multigenerational ritual abuse and mind control are common but hidden threats suggested I read *Psychic Dictatorship in the USA*, by Alex Constantine (© 1995, published by Feral House, \$12.95.) I did so, and found it to be (for me) another list of mostly-unverified news reports and conspiracy accusations delivered in a histrionic tone that does not add to its credibility. This mixture of what is verified and what is not irritates me. It is not unlike a propaganda technique, and is sadly common in the ritual abuse literature I've read. If readers know where to find convincing evidence, I hope they'll let me know.

What is most troubling to me about the ritual abuse controversy is similar to Dr. Nakdimen's concern: it provides the public and therapists a titillating distraction from "routine" problems of family molestation and physical abuse of children. It divides trauma recovery advocates into separate camps that make us less able to unite in response to media and legal attacks on responsible therapists, to change the anti-therapy atmosphere in managed-care, and so on. And how much therapy time is spent searching for verification?

So frankly, I'm stuck. I believe awful things happen, for sure. But memory being malleable, without external evidence we simply cannot know. As people who have been incapacitated by dissociation, most of us have to deal with unprovable histories, to teach ourselves to heal without external validation. We can't expect our families or therapists to "believe us" if we cannot provide documentation. But it is fair for us to expect them to believe our *pain* is real, that we are doing our best when we give confused and conflicting accounts of "what happened." A good therapist can help us resolve feelings and connect with today's reality even if we don't have photos of abuse, confessions from perpetrators, or other proof.

If we have factual evidence, we should go to the sheriff or district attorney with it. But if we don't have evidence that holds up in court, let's not spend a lifetime frantically upset by the uncertainty. And let's not christen our uncertainty as "fact" and use it as a billy club on others. Instead, let's learn to treat ourselves lovingly and get better anyway. Living well, they say, is the best revenge.

MV

MV Reader's Views of Ritual and Sadistic Abuse

This subject hit the nail on the head for me and some things we are dealing with in therapy. Many of my parts claim and show a history of ritual abuse. These are extremely difficult for me to accept and deal with, for obvious reasons: the horrendous and horrific nature of what these rituals and abuses involve scares movie-goers and pushes an entire nation in denial that these things could not possibly be. After all, the argument goes, how could such a widely-deployed systematic system of abuse and torture exist without a trace ever being left behind?... (I guess these people have not heard that they *did* find the McMartin tunnels...)

Our previous therapist was very much into validating our issues: get information from the mother, or the father, or somebody. Someone must have some information to verify and validate that some of these memories are "accurate and true." Validating something that happened over 30 years ago, in a daycare, in a different country? Yeah, right! Damn well impossible for us! This left us confused, doubting our selves, frustrated, and questioning our overall sanity that we could even think such horrific things could have happened to or been witnessed by us. False Memory Syndrome starts to float in my head...

Then we started seeing a new therapist (the other violated our confidentiality!) and an entire new way of looking at things was presented to us. I found out that there is no such thing as False Memory Syndrome, since a syndrome, by definition, is a set of factors which present themselves in case after case after case. What is happening with this movement is that victims are recanting their claims of having been abused. I then found out that the symptoms of these cases were those found in previously scientifically-sound research as part of the symptomatology many survivors show when having difficulty coping with the memories (old fears set in...) and so they recant. The research which supports the FMSF (False Memory Syndrome Foundation) movement has been shown to be flawed in some cases. I then found out that the FMSF was formed by the parents of Jennifer Freyd, PhD, (who has written an excellent book titled *Betrayal Trauma: The Logic of Forgetting Childhood Abuse* ©1996 Harvard Univ. Press.) And that one of the former board members of FMSF also was on the board of the "Man-Boy Love Association" whose motto is said to be "sex before eight or it's too late."

Beyond these facts, my therapist also presented a very unique viewpoint, in light of what I was accustomed to in the realms of therapy: *It is not the actual, provable*

facts which matter, but one's perception of their reality. Say what?

In other words, she explained to us the theory of Social Constructivism which says that each of us constructs our own world based on our views of reality, hence, a dozen people could be faced with an identical situation, yet a dozen realities could emerge. Therefore, we were told, it is the individual's perception of his/her reality which matters, not the exact facts themselves. She explained to us that she approaches memory by validating the experiences of her patients since it is their reality which they constructed, based on *their* experiences (and each of our own realities are as real to each one of us.) Then she looks at the present evidence currently in our life, to see if today's evidence in our life validates our old belief system, which we attained through our experiences of abuse. Upon seeing that past and present are different, we then proceed to reconstructing a new reality, a new belief system which will be validated by our current evidence and life. So trauma is dealt with on a cognitive basis: *this is what you believe; you believe these things because of the circumstances which happened to you as you perceived them at that time, but these circumstances are gone now. The beliefs they gave you no longer serve their purpose in your survival, so let's build a new belief system based on your current reality, so you can heal and function again.*

Jeanne does not believe in abreactive work. She believes (and we agree) it is unnecessary retraumatization. Rather, using guided imagery techniques, we are learning to go inside and work on a cooperative basis to repiece our memories so they can be processed cognitively. Wow! a non-abusive therapy process! We've never experienced that before with any of our other long-term therapists!

This is the approach used with ritual and non-ritual abuse alike. With over 20 years experience, Jeanne has accumulated many success stories. So, is it important to spend all our time being detectives and searching for facts, all the facts, and nothing but the facts? No! If you can have validation, great! But I was so hung up on validation before, that my entire recovery was on hold and suffered for it. We've spent a lot of time validating our abusers and perps in the past, now we're trying to learn how to validate *us*! It's not easy. We are learning to trust after our trust was completely violated by our old therapist. But we are trying. We don't see Jeanne to learn how to become detectives, we see her to learn how to heal, to learn how to live, to learn how to be.

Jeanne R., be patient with us. We *do* hear what you are teaching us, as you can see. We are trying to learn to trust again...A million thanks for your gentleness.

By Tribe of the Whitewolf



Is validation possible? For most of you, I pray that you have better support systems willing to back-up your life and memories than I have had.

I grew up not understanding why my sisters and brothers could remember parts of their childhood (and even adult life) when I could remember nothing. As memories came flooding back, over the years, I've received explanations from *my own* memories, not from what I have been told. I've found that the majority of what I had been told was my life was nothing more than lies. My validation comes from my memories, one wedding picture, and what doctors have found out about my body that completely contradicts what I have been told.

Part of my validation lies in the doctors' reports. During examinations, I have been told that my entire vaginal area, external and internal, is nothing but scar tissue. Only one doctor had enough guts to record that in my medical records. The others will state the fact but refuse to write it down. I have had dentists tell me the reason I have some crooked teeth and not others is from repeatedly being hit in the mouth area. My teeth are classic examples of that kind of "injury." However, no dentist will record that in my records. When I had a hysterectomy, the doctor said there was no immediate evidence as to why I had the massive excessive bleeding I had had for many years. Even after the pathologist report came back, he stuck to his story. I was able to obtain the pathologist report after another doctor told me what was in it. Not only did I have endometriosis (which I was told I didn't have), but there was also massive damage to the parts removed. There was no way for my body to function properly. I caught polio, a neuromuscular disease, as a baby. The nerve damage I have is *always* blamed on the polio because I "have no other disease or disorder to explain the cause of the damage."

Doctors will admit that it is probable that some of the damage was caused by abuse. But they will not put that as even a possibility in my medical records. The doctors say my body was consistent to saying I had pregnancies, but I couldn't prove it so my medical records state I never had children. As an adult, due to the

damage of my body, it was impossible for me to carry a child and, eventually, to even get pregnant. I was told by all of these various doctors that they did not want to get involved. That is why they refused to record the information. They all refused to appear in a court case or say that the damage was a result of extreme child abuse. They all agree the damage could be attributed to other problems, even though they don't know what those problems could be.

The only physical evidence I have (other than my body) is a picture of my father walking me down the aisle at my wedding, holding his hand in the sign of the devil. I guess that was his protection for appearing in a wedding chapel—not a church!

For me, there can be no further validation. I have no family members, regardless of how far they extend from an immediate family (i.e., mother, siblings, aunts, uncles, cousins, etc.) who speak to me or want anything to do with me. Because I entered therapy and started discovering the truth, I was kicked out of the family. For the very few who were not involved in the cult I grew up in, they're afraid of reprisals against them and their families if they befriend me or even offer support.

I have enough body damage that can be attributed to the abuse for me to believe that it really happened. Other than my memories, my wedding picture is the only thing I have that says the cult existed/exists. Couple those with all the effort my family has made in the last ten years to "keep me quiet" and prove to the world how much a liar I am. Why else would your own family threaten your life, that of your child, husband or friends? What secrets are more worth protecting? All the threats, harassment, stalking, etc., has pushed me into believing my memories. I still take some with a grain of salt until I have enough to back up the possibilities. But for the most part, I no longer have trouble believing it really happened and is still happening to my nieces, nephews, other family members and non-family members. The police want physical proof and people to corroborate my story. I can't provide that and they will do nothing without it. If any others want out, I will help if they are sincere in their desire and it isn't just another ploy to get me back.

My recovery has come at a great cost not only for me, but also for my husband, child, all the lost relationships, moves, etc. But my child also has a life and a childhood...something he would never have had if I stayed involved with my family. And one day, I also hope to have a life other than the hell I have lived for the last ten years. With the few gains and hopes I have acquired and hung onto, I cannot allow my family and the false memory believers to put me back where I was, even if I can't

offer physical evidence or other people to corroborate my life.

Cheryl, et al



Eight and a half years ago, I was hit out of the blue with thousands of memories of violent rape perpetrated on me by my father, who died when I was a teenager. These memories were like horrible movies playing on the inside of my eyeballs. Closing my eyes didn't stop them. Sleeping didn't stop them. I cried for two months, and was unable to go anywhere. By the time I was able to emerge enough to search for a therapist, I had had enough other kinds of memories to be totally confused.

After a year of therapy, I had remembered my father as an out-of-control multiple who committed countless atrocities and started exposing me, his oldest child, to these things when I was a baby.

Another year later, at a time when I was not in therapy, I found a letter on my computer from someone who said she lived in my body too, and that I was going to have to deal with that fact. She also said that she was not the only one. That was an understatement, as we now know I have over two thousand alters.

Because we were our father's only confidant, which I think is how some of his alters saw our relationship, we know he became a multiple through a one-time experience with a satanic cult. He spent the rest of his life replaying the horror of that experience, and the world is a safer place for all children without him in it.

By the time my alters contacted me and told me they were there inside me, they had already shared enough memory so that I knew my father had somehow connected with satanics again before he died, and had dragged my alters into it by threatening to take my little sister instead. My alters always tried to protect her from him as much as possible.

Now, years later, the memories each alter shares with me and my therapist continue to seem to confirm that the satanics continued to harass my alters for years, possibly as recently as half a year before the first memories emerged. Alters have shared with me what they had to do to be finally left alone. It is not a pretty story. Suffice it to say that we earned every one of our splits in the struggle to not be consumed by my father and the satanics, and in the struggle to not become like them. We are proud of what we have accomplished so far in our healing, and we want those of you who have suffered at those people's hands to know that there is a way out of even the deepest pits of hell.

The experience that saved me from the kind of despair my father and the satanics wanted me to feel came to me when I was still a toddler. I was sitting on my beloved grandfather's knee, shortly before he died, and we shared a vision. I know it was shared because many alters remember what he said about it. He described a pathway of light, leading out of blackness, and said that I was on that path. He said he heard a voice telling him that I must remember to stay on the path, that as long as I was on the path I could not be killed by any but the maker of the path. My grandfather was a Christian, and he believed this meant the Christian god; he told me this meant I had to be a very good person. He also told me how to make sure I stayed on the golden path. He said the bad people would try to confuse me or trick me into going onto one of the bad paths. The voice told him that when I am confused, I must sit down on the path and wait until I can clearly see the path of light again.

The landscape that contains this path is, of course, in my mind's eye; it is part of our visualization place, which I consider one of the most important aspects of the human mind for us multiples. I have learned from my alters that it is possible for us to follow any dark path to its logical conclusion while sitting on the light path, just by following the meanderings of a dark path with my inner eyes. Doing this is like looking into the souls of people who have chosen lives of self-damnation. I cannot see why they would follow these paths, but I know that too many do. I cry for all of them, but I will not let them take me down with them. My path leads me out of the horrors and into a sunlit world I never knew existed, when I was down in the slime just beginning to follow this difficult path. The gift of the path is that I can see it clearly, and I know that I have truly forced the evil ones to stay out of my life. This does not mean I am complacent, or that I invite trouble, but it does mean that I have been able to overcome my life-long anxiety attacks, by sharing this memory with alters who were not there at the time.

Finding the origin of our path, which it seemed had always been in my mind's eye, has been one of the joys of this bitter process of finding out the horrors that shaped the once-hidden depths of my life. I believe every person has such a path inside, though it probably doesn't look like mine. I have shared this path with several people I know who are also diagnosed multiples or who are struggling to survive abuse memories, and most of those people have told me it was useful to them. I hope it is also useful to some of you.

From Julie of Julie et al



Therapist's Page

By Colin A. Ross, M.D.

Colin A. Ross, M.D., is a past president of the International Society for the Study of Dissociation. Dr. Ross is medical director of The Timberlawn Trauma Program in Dallas, Texas, and the Forest View Trauma Program in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Satanic Ritual Abuse: Current Thoughts

In 1986 a patient began telling me about being the victim of Satanic ritual abuse (SRA). I had never heard of SRA before. I received no training about cults during my psychiatry residency, and no one in psychiatry ever mentioned cults. I had never read any books or seen any movies with Satanism in them.

Back then in 1986, in the frozen north of Winnipeg, Canada, there was nothing to read and no one to talk to about Satanism. From 1986 to 1995, when my book, *Satanic Ritual Abuse, Principles of Treatment* was published by the University of Toronto Press, I went through a long, complicated process coming to terms with SRA. What are my current thoughts?

I've probably met over 500 people with memories of SRA, though I haven't tried to keep count. So far there has not been any objective evidence that any of the events remembered by these people actually took place. In a small number of cases I have seen conclusive proof that complex multi-generational orthodox Satanic ritual abuse memories were completely false. For instance, a cult breeder proved to have an intact hymen and never to have been pregnant on pelvic exam.

A therapist's personal opinions about SRA are really irrelevant. Whatever they are, they need to be kept out of therapy. This is also true for political beliefs, preferences in professional sports, favorite restaurants, and numerous other personal things about the therapist.

My own personal beliefs about SRA are of no interest or relevance to me when I am doing clinical work. How much I personally believe in the reality of SRA does not affect my treatment planning, my choice of techniques or my interventions. I do not require or make any assumptions about the

reality of an individual's SRA memories in planning his or her treatment. The whole debate about the reality of SRA is irrelevant to the planning and carrying out of good, effective therapy. I say this as someone who has treated multiples with SRA memories to stable integration.

Basically, the only thing I have to say about SRA as a therapist is that I don't have anything to say about it. That might sound funny, coming from a person who has written a book on principles of treatment for SRA. I say in the book that there are no treatment methods or principles required for the person with SRA that are unique to the person with SRA. The treatment involves the same methods as one would use in a case not involving SRA.

Do all therapists and clients agree with this viewpoint? No. Some clients want "deprogramming." Some therapists claim to provide it. As far as I can see, no therapists have had any real training in deprogramming, no one really knows what it is or how to do it, and no deprogramming, whatever that might be, is required to treat people effectively.

There is really no intelligent debate about SRA going on in public in our culture currently. In our culture, tabloid journalism predominates. This is true in the tabloids at the supermarket but also in prime time news programs and supposedly intellectual magazines. A shouting match about personal beliefs is not a debate. Most of the so-called "debate" about SRA is little more than an intellectualized bar fight.

As someone who is trying to have a relaxing drink at the bar, I have been attacked by various pugilists. It is very curious to learn from personal experience that whatever position you take on the reality of SRA, someone will hate you and bad-mouth you. If you say that even some of patients'

SRA memories could be real, you get pummeled by the false memory patrons. If you say that some of the memories might be false, you, at best, get kicked in the shins by the believer therapists, who know for a fact that you have gone over to the other side.

From the point of view of the evangelical extremists on both sides of the "debate" any middle ground or agnostic position on the reality of SRA is heresy. All this gets pretty old after a decade.

Let's say that someone with MPD or DID (take your pick) has an alter personality that wants to go back to the cult. The host personality is alarmed and frightened, and does not want to go back to the cult. Whether the cult is real or not is irrelevant to planning therapy. Both alters, the cult alter and the host, believe completely that the cult is real. What needs to be done therapeutically?

The fundamental problem that needs to be resolved is ambivalent attachment to the perpetrator (let's say the person believes that her father is the head of the cult). As a whole human being, the person is expressing two opposite viewpoints and sets of feelings. In one track, dad is a horrible Satanist and his daughter, the patient, never wants to see him again. In the other track, the daughter longs for reconnection and attachment to dad. She believes that in the cult she has purpose, a place in life, and the attention and affection of her father, who values her skills in the rituals.

Given that the patient is an adult and this is a free country, she has a right to leave the cult or go back to it if she wants. The problem is that these two different "people" are stuck in the same body. You can be in the cult and out of the cult at the same time within the inner dissociative reality of the personality system. Unfortunately, in

outside physical reality, you can't have it both ways at once. The plan is either to go back to the cult or not to go back to the cult. Both plans cannot be successfully followed at the same time.

From a tactical point of view, it doesn't matter if the subject matter is the cult, snorting cocaine, going back to a pimp, returning to a battering spouse, or any other dangerous behavior. The same problem would arise if the two alters were in disagreement about a boyfriend. It is not the content of the disagreement that matters, from the point of view of planning therapy. It is the structure that must change. It is the conflict between the two points of view that needs resolution.

Certain tasks need to be accomplished. Both alters need to understand that they live in the same body. Both need to understand that they are in 1998, not 1972 or 1983. Often the alter that wants to go back to the cult wants to do so in 1972, and does not realize that it is 26 years later.

The therapist needs to form a treatment alliance with the cult alter, understand his or her point of view, and understand why going back to the cult makes sense from the alter's point of view. The host needs to understand the cult alter's point of view, and vice versa. The host needs to learn that if the cult alter had not participated in the rituals, the host would have had to be there. The alter was created to protect the host from having to participate in the rituals. The host and the cult alter need to understand that if the cult alter had not bought into the cult doctrine, and performed very well in the rituals, the consequences could have been abuse, torture, or death. To do her job effectively, the cult alter had to believe in the cult's doctrine.

It is evident from the fact that the cult alter is talking in therapy that she is not completely committed to following the cult's rules. She herself must be ambivalent about her allegiance to the cult. Several logical possibilities follow from this observation. First, it could be that the cult alter has complete control and can return to the cult whenever she wants, which she probably will claim initially. If it is true that the cult alter has complete control, then it is true that

she has chosen to be in therapy and therefore true that she has chosen to disobey the father and break the cult rules.

On the other hand, it is possible that the cult alter is committed to the cult and is completely against therapy. In that case it must be true that the cult alter is not in control, otherwise the patient would not be in therapy. The therapist points out this dilemma to the cult alter and asks her which scenario is correct. Most often, the alter will admit at this point that she would really like to be out of the cult and have a normal life.

Now a new problem arises. Someone higher up on the cult side of the personality system starts threatening and retaliating against the cult alter for talking in therapy. Now a treatment alliance must be formed directly with the alters at the top of the cult part of the system. These alters always turn out to be traumatized children who do not realize it is 1998. They have to be grounded in 1998, require inside safe places, and need acceptance and healing energy from the host personality, not fear and rejection.

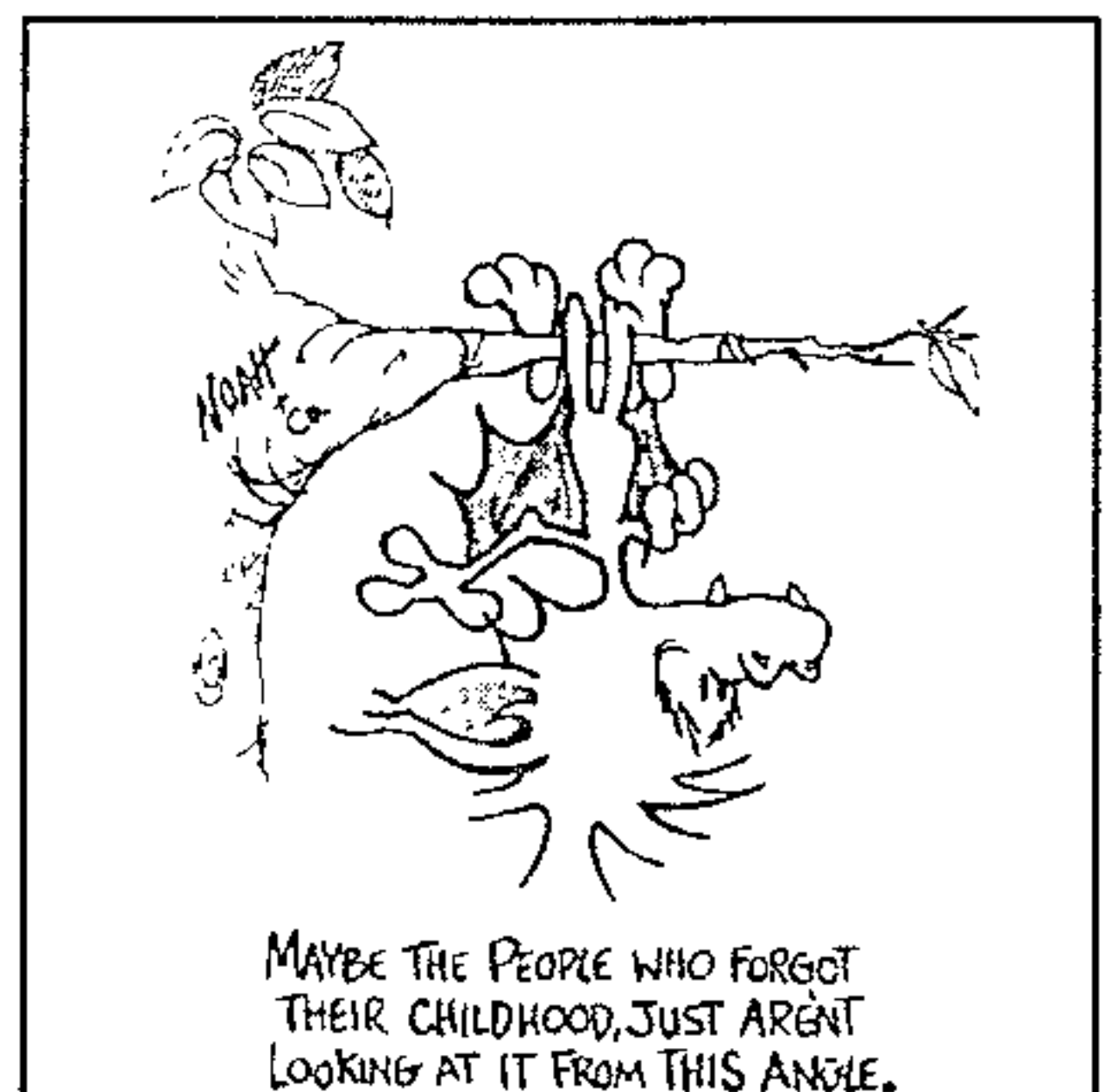
The host personality needs to understand that her dissociative barriers are helping her avoid the pain and conflict of her ambivalent attachment to the perpetrator. The cult alters are holding the positive side of the ambivalent feelings about dad on behalf of the host. They are doing so because the host cannot cope with them. The host personality needs to thank the cult alters for doing this job and then needs to deal with her own ambivalence directly without dissociation.

Nowhere in this list of treatment tasks does the reality or non-reality of SRA come into play. The task of sorting out how much of the SRA was objectively real and how much took place in the inner landscape, does not come up till the pre-integration phase of therapy. By then, the answer to the question has faded in importance anyway. Getting a life in the present and the future is much more important than figuring out what percentage of the memories happened in the outside world and what percentage in the inside world.

I have been talking about a therapy that is contained within the therapy. Anyone who wants to accuse another human being publicly of SRA involvement must accept the fact that a whole new set of rules come into play. These include the rules of evidence, principles like innocent till proven guilty, and the political realities of how such accusations are responded to in our society. I recommend that SRA be kept inside the boundaries of therapy almost all the time. Taking SRA outside therapy almost always causes trouble and yields no positive benefit. In my treatment programs in Dallas and Grand Rapids, Michigan, SRA is not discussed in groups, only in individual therapy. It might be mentioned in group, but we steer off of it and do not get into details. We handle "regular" domestic abuse in the same way—the details are for individual therapy. The reason for this approach is that the abuse details are too triggering for everyone else in the group (not to mention the person talking!)

I've met quite a few therapists who are very paranoid about "the cult." Usually their clients are not doing well in therapy. The correction required in the field is not to switch over to the non-believer stance. Everyone just needs to calm down and get back to work. The reality or non-reality of SRA is a great subject for the tabloids, but is not relevant to the planning of therapy. Healing takes place at the level of process and structure, not at the level of content. A well-structured therapy with good, clean process is what the client needs. This looks the same whether the content is SRA or not.

MV



Isolation, Truth, and Lies

By Amelia

We live in isolation and with lies in most areas of our lives. We are surrounded by people who don't understand, who don't even know we are a "we" and know nothing of the chaos and conversations going on inside while we try to maintain a conversation with them. What they hear is silence. What I hear is others talking as we each try to give our own unique interpretations of what is happening around us. People don't understand and telling them I have parts often results in judgment and misunderstanding, both of which leave me feeling weird, crazy, and very different. We also choose not to tell people about the ritual abuse for safety, as it feels very dangerous to have others know. The daily monitoring of how much truth is shared and how much we lie about ourselves for protection is very tiring. The lies keep us safe and isolated at the same time and the truth breaks down the silence and leaves us vulnerable. Both help us, however we pay a price for them and trying to find a balance between them is a daily consideration.

Most of the time in our daily life I feel that I need to hide that we are a we. I do not feel a strong need to share about the bad things that happened to us, even with close friends, but I do feel that it is important to be able to say that we have parts. This feels like a part of who "I," in the all-inclusive sense of the word, am. The rest is experiences, but this is me. If you don't know about the others or ever hear from them then you don't really know me, only the front layer of defenses. My dream of how I would like us to be on the inside is to have all of us together, still separate, with everyone just as close as is comfortable and so we can help each other and not be alone. For our interactions with people on the outside, I would like to be able to be in a room of people, and if a kid or part wanted to pop out and say something they could, and no one would look at us weird. Let the uniqueness that we have created

inside be just that, unique, not treated as if we are victims, weird or crazy.

One of the daily lies I tell is what I do each day. I have recently quit working part-time after struggling with it in different ways for many years. This is challenging as I regularly get asked, "what do you do?" For almost everyone, except my closest people, I lie. For each person the lie is slightly closer to the truth depending on how much I like and trust them. For people that I worked with, or general acquaintances, I tell them I'm a student, studying whatever interests me that day, or I say I am working, and on very creative days I tell people I do In-home Closet consultations. I also have a collection of people that are close enough to me and involved in my life enough to know that I am not working or in school. With them I get stuck telling a little of the truth. I tell them I am resting and thinking about going to school. The problem with this is that I am on Social Assistance and people very quickly begin making judgments about that. What they see is a person who can act very together and likes to go skiing and climbing and do other fun activities while they pay taxes to support me. They do not see the problems we have and how hard it is for us to do these things and keep going each day. This is the group of people where the half-truths I tell protect me from having to share the real truth; however they leave me open to another kind of judgment and misunderstanding.

As much as daily living is isolating, the worst is being with people where there is an expectation that I am not supposed to feel isolated with them. Going to AA meetings is one of those places where the whole idea is to be able to speak the truth. For me, I do not feel safe to say the truth right from the beginning introduction. The truth for me would be to say, "Hi, my name is ___ and I have a 13-year-old part with addiction problems," but I'm not comfortable saying that. So the meeting starts off with lying and hiding

and doesn't get any better from there. In the end I feel more isolated and alone than when I first went in. Being in a situation where I am supposed to be able to talk honestly, and not being able to, emphasizes the isolation I live in and leaves me feeling very alone.

As much as I would like to meet more people who have parts, I am scared. I had a very good friend for two years who also had parts. We shared a lot of our history with each other and had kids that liked to play together. Later on she found out that she had parts still involved with cult activity. It got very complicated and dangerous for me and the others that I share this body with. I realized, with help from my counselor and another close friend, that I could not keep in contact with her. I fear the same thing happening again and am very cautious about ever getting us into a similar situation.

I find ritual abuse very isolating in a way that sexual abuse is not. Before, when all I knew about was sexual abuse, I could go to a support group and share without wondering if there was somebody still involved with a cult sent to bring back members. The isolation is not the same. Ritual abuse is set up in such a way that it is risky to meet other survivors. Sometimes it makes me so mad that I want to scream from building-tops and spray paint on the roads, "I remember. It does exist!" I think about building huge concrete structures in the middle of downtown roads with my story written on it so that no traffic can go through and it cannot be ignored.

The silence that surrounds ritual abuse feels so strong and powerful, almost impossible to break. I don't know how much of their torture is threats and how much would be carried through, but I know that I do not want to take the chance and find out. There are lots of ways people become isolated in this world, and I think this is one of the stronger ones. I feel so invisible walking down the street sometimes. Sometimes when I accomplish something really great, like

getting an A+ in school, I want to yell at them and throw the piece of paper back in their face. "You know nothing of what I went through to get this mark! It means nothing. The amount of work I put in just to stay in this class — it just doesn't compare to what another student would have to do to get this grade." I want public recognition of what I have accomplished, not just privately from close friends who know. I would like the A+ to be understood in the context of my life and acknowledged appropriately.

Sometimes I feel like my life is so futile and I am not doing anything of importance. I currently don't go to work or school and I feel I am not doing any useful political work. I wonder what I am doing, and why I am wimping out. I should get it together, get a job, do something important. Then I stop and realize that I am. Mending ourselves and finding ways to live that are healthy and fun are very important and each day I live and break down the lies we have been told is a political act. In part, it is building a road for other survivors. Sometimes I try to imagine what it must have been like for survivors before anyone spoke about it. Sometimes it feels like I am doing this work in such isolation that I cannot possibly be touching or impacting on anyone else's life, and yet I know that the few people to whom I have shared my story understand better what it means to be a person with parts. The writing and art we do for *Many Voices* also gives us a chance to speak out and reach out to others in a way that still feels safe.

There is so much involved in our daily balancing act of how much truth and lies we tell. Right now, safety and

comfort for all the parts and kids who are scared is very, very important. We have to balance that with trying to have honest friendships, feeling alone, and wanting to shout from rooftops. I started writing this mostly from the perspective of our lives, and how we personally manage the isolation in our daily interactions with people and have come to realize there is more, and that it is bigger than just our little corner of the world. I also feel the need to say more than just speak our words to a few close friends. I am currently working on a large art project and am again considering when it is complete, showing it in a gallery. By using an artist name I hope to be able to find a comfortable balance between safety and speaking. By doing things that reach other people such as writing and art for MV and considering a gallery showing, I feel as if I am breaking not only my own isolation but the larger isolation that all survivors of ritual abuse exist in.

The following is a list of things that help us when we feel alone and still keep us feeling safe. I would be interested in hearing how other people manage their need for safety and their need to speak.

- * Newsletters such as *Many Voices*.
- * Talking to friends who understand as much as anyone can, who is single inside.
- * Talking to someone I know who has parts, yet is safe.
- * Writing for myself or for *Many Voices*.
- * Art
- * Staying home a lot so kids can talk and sing and we can have fun with ourselves.

MV



Shifting

A shifting, a rumbling
 moves my world ever so slightly
 A miniature, minute crack appears
 in the wall of my inner fortress...
 Letting in light,
 sound,
 fresh air...
 Terrifying
 and exhilarating
 all at once.
 I don't understand!
 Just when I thought
 I could close myself in,
 drop out of sight
 beneath a cloud of grief and pain
 Relief sneaks in
 around the pain,
 light slips in
 around the darkness,
 And I lift my head
 in openmouthed astonishment.
 What would it be like
 to be no longer crushed,
 oppressed,
 tormented and powerless to
 escape?
 Could I know power, freedom,
 strength, energy, wisdom,
 all those things
 that have seemed foreign to me?
 Foreign...or forgotten
 in the struggle for survival.
 Is it possible
 to see an end to the war?
 Is there such a thing
 as a resolution...
 or a revolution?

By Elizabeth J. Niederer

MV

MORE READERS WRITE ABOUT RA

My abuse occurred many years ago. The form of ritual abuse I was subjected to involved criminal activities; however, most of the evidence is circumstantial at best, so there is no actual proof from a legal perspective. My main goal is healing, not seeking revenge against the perpetrators under the guise of justice. Personally, I believe survivors subject themselves to more trauma when they engage in lawsuits without hard evidence. However, if a survivor remembers exact locations where law enforcement can obtain hard evidence, there is a chance for prosecution.

If I'm not mistaken, there is a department within the FBI that investigates these specific types of crimes, and I don't mean the X-Files. As a precaution, a survivor who may have participated in these crimes should hire a lawyer before involving the FBI. It would be a miscarriage of justice if the survivor were held accountable, rather than the real criminals.

In the past, my psychiatrist was harassed. His home was broken into and vandalized for several months. He even installed security cameras, but the perpetrators were never caught. That indicates the criminals' high level of expertise. This can be compared to taking on the Mafia, because these perpetrators are involved in an intricate and elaborate underground. The police were unable to help my psychiatrist, so he ended up moving away.

Even though I was never personally harassed, I moved away from my home town. Now I am in therapy with a psychologist who is experienced in SRA and MPD/DID. Fortunately, the life I lead appears normal and healthy, thank to the prior years of good therapy with the psychiatrist mentioned above. At this point in time, I'm not in a position to pursue justice. I need to heal and continue to be a productive citizen. Who knows what the future holds? There may come a day when I remember enough to do something, but for now that would be to my detriment.

By Anonymous.



My heart skipped a beat when I saw the topic for June's issue: Ritual and Satanic Abuse. So it seems appropriate to write this now. I have been in therapy many years and have done a lot of work with memories pertaining to atrocities forced upon me by my family in the name of Satan. And yet, I find myself once again wondering if any of it is true. I want to know what my *real* childhood was like. And why am I so sick as to make such things up? Do I really need attention so badly?

And the usual, "Maybe I'm not even a multiple..." Maybe I invented that as well.

I am tremendously angry with myself for implanting such thoughts—for reading too many Stephen King novels as a teenager, and stories of survivors of SRA, etc. I am very distraught over this. I have been working on this for so long. Will I ever (1) find the truth or (2) stop doubting myself? I hate myself for accusing people who may be innocent. And I have had the idea in my mind for quite some time that my father, who was supposedly high in cult status, is going to die by or in June, so have been somehow preparing for this mentally. As strange as it sounds, I find myself actually fearing the coming of June, for fear this man may die. My father's death has been a big fear for me because I find him much more threatening in death than in life (that brainwashing stuff).

It seems there are so many ideas in my mind that my therapists *insists* are not true or logical (the magical and spiritual aspects), yet I just cannot seem to get past them. Most things I can at least see "intellectually", but when it comes to the ritual/magical/spiritual stuff, I am convinced. And supposedly, if my memories are even partially true, drugs were a factor, which would contribute to the "unrealness" of it all. I've read all the material I could find on False Memory Syndrome, and it seems that my "memories" are at least partially true. The books all say the same thing: that it doesn't really matter if our memories are true or not, that we must deal with them if we believe them to be genuine. All too confusing for me/us. I guess what it all boils down to is that it seems a shame if we've cut ourselves off from a family (though dysfunctional) for reasons that only exist within our own warped imagination. And yet, all the facts are there to say that even though time distorts reality, *something* extreme happened and it had to do with satanic rituals. Maybe it's just too difficult to believe that the people who were supposed to love and protect you did everything to destroy you except out-and-out kill you. It hurts much less to believe yourself to be insane. Nevertheless, I have been at a standstill in progress, even a decline in my therapy, because of this. I have, until now, been unable to speak or write because I have felt so unworthy of health and life. I felt I have not deserved to be heard. That I had nothing to say that anyone would wish to hear. But I wrote this anyway. Maybe it's a step forward again. I've taken many steps back, trying to run. And I hope that someone out there at least can read this and say, "I know that feeling!" Thanks for listening and allowing me to be heard.

By Anita, Inc.

Why do I have such an intimate understanding of sadism and what gives pleasure to a sadist (without being a sadist myself?)

Other than my own proclivities, I have only a few potentially validating elements for the horrific images that have plagued my life. Only last week I learned that an older brother has the same scar (or is it merely a birthmark?) on the sole of his foot as I have. I'm pretty sure that at least one or both of my sisters has this too. Everyone in my family (six children) has strong reactions to needles; three of us have repeatedly had seizures and/or gone into shock after being given a needle, even when the area is numbed and no pain is experienced. My brother has required resuscitation.

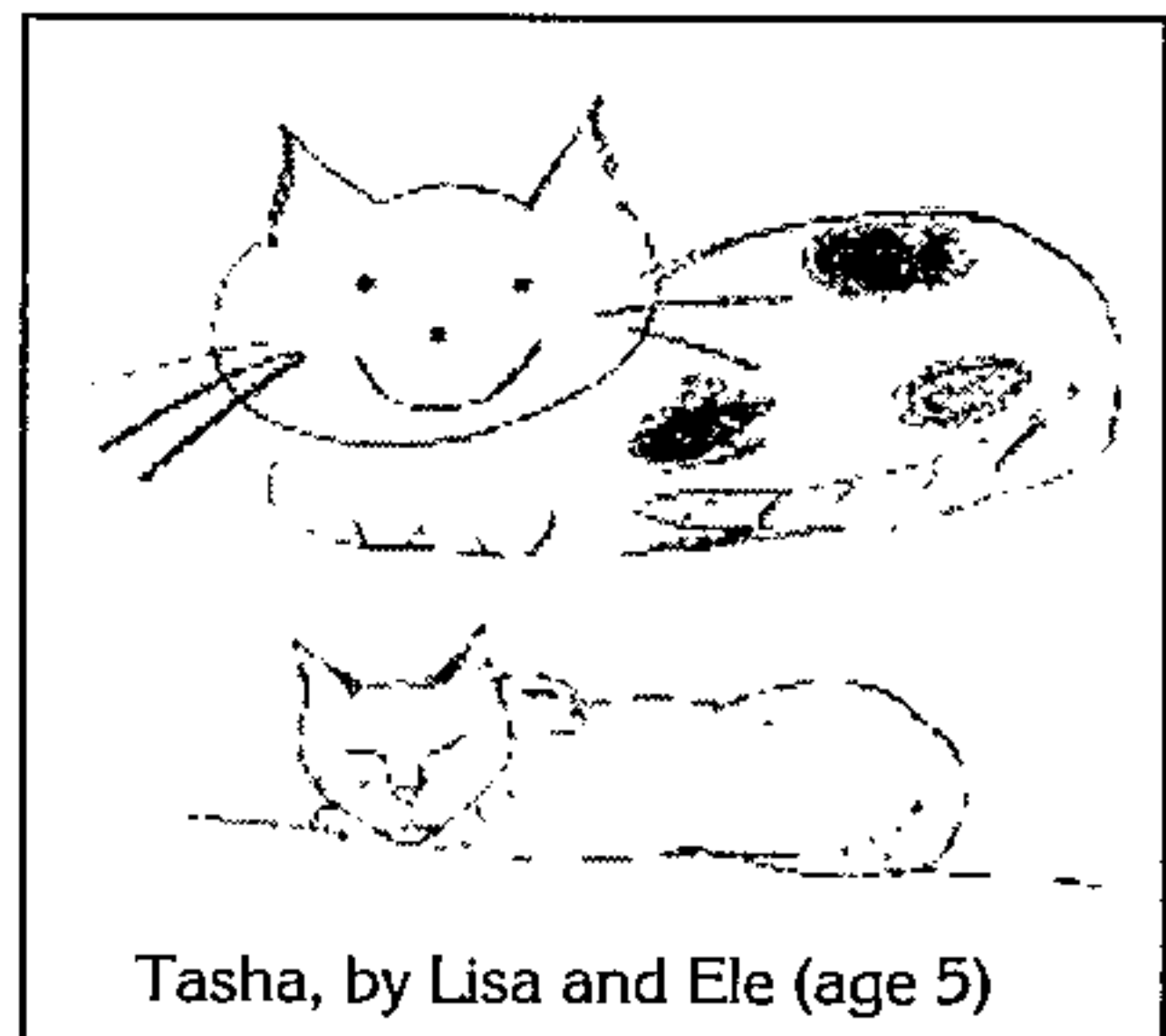
Perhaps the most troubling validation is the one I had, but lost through a friend's death, and I would like to ask help about this from readers. I am trying to locate the therapist who administered sodium amytal to a 22-year-old man named Bruce L. (last name withheld) on the East coast about 15 years ago. Bruce was a childhood friend of mine who happened to attend the same college as I. What I learned in talking with him for the years prior to his death, is that he had tried to take his own life several times, but wasn't sure why. It happened that the years of his suicide attempts coincided with my own attempts, despite the fact I had not seen him between ages four to 21. In fact, it was when I was hospitalized for suicidal urges that he died.

He had once told me of a sodium amytal test that was administered in a hospital. He indicated that the parts he recalled were too weird to be true and wouldn't discuss it.

Other than an unlikely admission by abusers, speaking with this doctor could provide a healing validation. Please contact me through the newsletter if you knew Bruce or his therapist. I'm certain my Higher Power brought Bruce back into my life after nearly two decades to assist my healing.

By M.E.

MV



Tasha, by Lisa and Ele (age 5)

Betrayed by a Kiss

His name is Bill.

He came as a minister of God. He promised to love, cherish, and understand me.

He said he "truly understood my search for personal identity."

He promised to help me reach my full potential and find the real me.

He promised me a life free from pain, hurt and sorrow.

He said that I could trust, obey, and surrender to him completely
Without fear and in doing so I would be serving and pleasing
God

Through calculated use of control, power, manipulation, position, and misuse of the Scriptures,

Bill and God soon became one and the same.

Confusion, doubt, and terror began to reign.

Bill represented an angry, fearful, and demanding God.

Bill's words, thoughts, and actions were filled with hatred, violence, and destruction.

In my world of reality, love and pain became one,
Both bringing untold pain and agony.

Life became a series of double-bind, and a no-win situation.

Instead of being my lover, protector, comforter and provider
He became my persecutor, mind controller, my judge and jury.

For he was the High Priest of Satan. He was out to destroy my faith.

His ultimate goal was to become my executioner.

We will not let him succeed. We will survive whatever the cost.

We will be completely set free even though I don't know when.

We are a wounded soldier and battle-scarred, and forever changed but
We are confident that the Christ of Calvary has already won the battle.

He has promised to be with us in our battle of breaking silence.

We will press onward against all odds.
We will finish this incredibly long journey of healing.

We will become a Victorious Survivor.

By Marty

MV

Can Ritual Abuse be Validated?

A Rhetorical Question
Answered by Charlotte

When a fifty year old woman
retires to a
foreign country for the
safety
to begin her journey
to flashbacks and
body memories
and then
naively reveals
too soon
to her grown daughter
the uncovering secrets
before the depth of the true horror is
known to her

When she sees it only as incest
before she acknowledges
the circle of onlookers
and the repetition through the
generations
and this adult daughter person
a short while later sends
over the border to this no longer safe
foreign country
in a brightly oversized oblong orange
envelope
a long detailed letter
which starts with
"And the same thing happened
to me
And I remember it now and
you were there"
signed BIG ME and little me
Then ritual abuse has sadly
but convincingly
been validated.

And then when the older woman
and her grown daughter
are left pained and
isolated and alone
alienated one from the other
each
"recovering"

or not
as the years go bye
The daughter considering the mother
dead:
the mother
helplessly accepting the loss, then yes,
ritual abuse is validated from before
and for now and after and
yes, for all the long time yet to come:

When one can read in history books
kept in public libraries
of religious persecution
at the turn of the century
in countries in Europe which no longer
exist
of groups of peasants
accused of atrocities allegedly
justifying their persecution
and then see in convincing and
detailed flashback
the relatives born and fled from those
very places
now in the supposed land of their
freedom
performing those very same atrocities
on their own children
and their children's children
and me and my daughter
Then sadly yes ritual abuse can and is
for me convincingly
validated and reminded of and
reaffirmed each holiday, her
birthday, my birthday, and in the great
daily and constant knowing
that there is nothing I can do: my
daughter has committed me to
exile from her life for that circle of
ritualized abuse in which I
unknowingly participated. But I know it
now, and I'm sorry kiddo.
Love, Mom

MV



Serenity, by Eileen S.

Partner's Page:

CONFRONTING THE ABUSERS

By Richard

There are few things more dangerous for a sexual abuse survivor than confronting the abusers. The chances of emotional and therapeutic setbacks and legal retaliation are high.

Yet, my wife recently confronted her parents about their incest, neglect, and abuse. Her therapist and psychiatrist were against it, her spiritual advisor was against it, my support group and therapist were against it, all her friends were against it...

...and I called her therapist one night and asked, "Is she nuts? This is the worst idea she's ever had!"

The therapist answered, "No, she's not crazy. I agree the timing isn't good, but we can't stop her; she's determined to do it. I agreed with her reasons, and we'll just have to help her prepare and hope it goes well."

My wife had good reasons for the confrontation. She had written a letter cutting off contact with her parents, but her brother hadn't gotten the word. When Jim (not his real name) called on my wife's birthday, she told him about the letter and in the process the whole story came out — the neglect, the incest, everything.

Jim listened and said he needed to think about it. He called two days later to say he wanted to discuss it with their father, and my wife said, "No, this is my responsibility. I'll confront Mom and Dad."

So the confrontation was coming like a freight train, whether we wanted it or not. My wife's only mistake was not foreseeing what telling Jim might mean.

"I'm going to tell them my truth," my wife told me. "Not in hate or anger or accusation, but because I don't want to keep secrets and live a lie any more."

I told her, forcefully and repeatedly, that I thought it was a rotten idea and I couldn't see any outcomes except bad ones. After a struggle I said, "Since events have pushed us here, I'll support you all the way."

For the next three weeks we didn't do much except prepare, and what we learned might be useful to other couples planning a confrontation.

Emotionally we had good days and bad days, and the bad days were more useful because we could war-game our fears. I could ask, "What if your parents start yelling? What if they disown you? What if they both storm out? What if they ask about false memories?" We had plans for every contingency we could think of.

One of my big jobs was to help my wife write the statement she would read to her parents. She did an initial dump, then we both fine-tuned it until it said precisely what

she wanted. We put the important messages in the first few sentences, in case she didn't get to read further.

We briefly considered using a facilitator, but decided against it. We recommend using a facilitator only if it's someone who knows the entire story and who everyone in the room trusts and accepts.

We even gave some thought to self-defense. Jim is a lawyer and a karate black-belt, so he could protect my wife both verbally and physically. My wife has had anti-mugging combat training as well.

"Don't block anyone's path to the door," my therapist advised. "That's a good way to get hurt." On the day of the confrontation Jim and my wife arranged the seating to make sure anyone in the room could safely storm out a door.

If the confrontation involves travel, as ours did, don't stay with the people you are confronting. This may seem obvious, but it's easy to land in old behavior patterns. Jim and his wife Paula (not her real name) put us up and, if Jim turned against us after the confrontation, we had plans for leaving as soon as a taxi could arrive.

Our most important preparation proved to be spiritual. My wife read the Bible a lot, seeking assurance of God's protection. We prayed together often, asking that God's will be done in the confrontation. We also prayed that everyone in the room would be prepared.

The spiritual preparation helped us go with a spirit of truth, even anger, but not in hate and destruction.

We scheduled the confrontation for a weekend, and for my sanity I took Friday off to pack and fly, and Monday to recuperate.

Then we flew to the Midwest, met Jim and Paula and briefed them that evening, and try to stay calm while waiting for the confrontation on Saturday.

I advise being present during the confrontation to support and protect your partner, although I wasn't able to do that. Her parents insisted that it be just the four of them, and we respected that. The up-side was that Paula and I spent some time together and talked, outsider-to-outsider, comparing observations about family dynamics.

When Paula and I got back, I found the one thing we had NOT prepared for had happened—the confrontation went well!

There was anger and tears and raised voices, but nothing vicious or violent. "I read whole thing with every ounce of emotion and looked my father in the eyes,"

my wife said, and her parents listened with no interruptions. We didn't think they'd let her get past the first three sentences.

Her parents believed her (or at least believed this was her truth) and respected her memories. They asked about the false memory syndrome, but my wife could say that she began recovering her memories while she was between therapists.

Her father claims no recollection of the incest and sincerely believes he didn't do it. But he thought about it, asked good questions, and asked, "What can I do now to make it better?"

Both her father and mother hugged my wife as they left and said "I love you."

That was the biggest surprise of all. "I know my father and mother love me, and for 30 years I thought they didn't," my wife said.

Jim confirmed that. "It surprised me, too. I didn't think they cared that much."

"The only explanation is they've truly changed and are different people than they were 30 years ago," my wife added.

In all fairness, confrontations seldom go this well. Most are shouting matches filled with anger, accusations, denials, guilt-trips, threats, and vicious emotional attacks.

My wife attributes our success to "all the prayer and meditation and preparation. I trusted this was what God wanted me to do, even when everyone said I was nuts."

In many ways, a confrontation that goes well is more complicated than a bad one. After a bad one, you can cut off contact and go on with your life. After a good one, everyone has to work hard on relationships.

It's still too early to tell, but honest dialogue with real emotion is taking place between my wife and I and her parents. They've had two joint therapy sessions by phone, and her parents flew here one weekend for two joint therapy sessions in person. My wife has told them about the ritual abuse and disassociative identity disorder.

Coming home from the confrontation, walking through Washington National Airport, my wife said, "I'm glad it's over, even though in many ways it's just begun."

MV

Sadistic/Ritual Abuse

My Views as a Therapist and Survivor

By Rev. Cari Grace, PsyD

Dr. Grace is a survivor as well as a specialist in treating other survivors. She is an ordained minister (holistic) and is founder and director of Empowerment! emotional and spiritual healing centers in Burbank and Claremont, CA. She can be reached by e-mail at DrCari@aol.com.

First, as a therapist, I have worked with a number of adult survivors of S/RA and it is very hard for me to comprehend the disbelief of their painful, horrendous memories of abuse, which abounds in the mental health community. Recently, I attended a continuing education course primarily for psychologists, and a discussion of Satanic Ritual Abuse came up. Everyone in the class it seemed (except me) talked as though the whole subject of organized ritual abuse was absurd, and some thought that any therapist who believes they are treating survivors of such abuse must be crazy, delusional, and/or incompetent. I wanted to say that I knew it was real, and that it is not a rare thing for persons to have had a childhood in which extremely sadistic and intentionally cruel abuses were suffered. I wanted to say that I knew because it happened to me too. I wanted to speak out, but I realized it was not a safe environment to do so, and it would probably not change anyone's opinion.

I believe that all it would take to begin a shift in such unbelievers' consciousness is true open-mindedness and willingness to hear the histories of torture, trauma, manipulation, and mind twisting. With willingness and openness to hear about a reality that may be different from what they are familiar with, they would find that some of the persons they are treating would begin to share their experiences of incredible pain and unspeakable cruelty that otherwise would have been left unsaid.

From the professional side, I should say one last thing. That is, don't come out as a "multiple" or RA survivor unless you are well aware of the possible consequences and have thought out carefully your reasons for doing so. It can make a lot of changes in your career and your life.

Although it is not difficult for me to believe people who come to me for help when they describe situations in which they were terribly hurt, it is still sometimes very hard for me to believe that such things actually happened to me. I ask myself, "Could the family members now know really have done those terrible things to me? Could they (in my case) really have worshipped Satan and intentionally created alter personalities in me to serve their purposes? Did they really make me do those awful things I seem to remember doing which hurt others as well as myself? Is this real or did I make it up?"

When I doubt the truth of what I have come to believe are valid memories of my childhood history, I counter that doubt with what I *know*. Joan Baez, a ritual abuse survivor, describes this struggle and questioning of our truth in her song, *Play Me Backwards*: "...I thought my life was a photograph on the family Christmas card, kids all dressed in buttons and bows and lined up in the yard. Were the golden days of childhood so lyrical and warm, or did the pictures start to fade on the day that I was born?" She answers her questions with what she knows: "I've seen them light the candles, and I've heard them bang the drums, and I cried 'Mama, Mama I'm cold as ice, and I got no place to run.'"

I will share some of the "evidence" I use to remind myself that something really bad did happen to me, and that the something was similar to what I am remembering. First of all, I can wonder, "Why would I (or anyone) make up such horrible things to torment myself with?" I can't think of any good reasons. A real strong affirmation for me has to do with a series of memories I heard some of my alters talk about in therapy, which were later validated by an outside source.

I remembered that the RA started in the area I used to live during my first few years. I described times that the "bad people" would call my mom on the phone and she would (in a trance state) take me over to the neighbor's house and then leave me there. I talked about there being big scary dogs there. I remembered that this house had a place like a garage that was not used as a garage, and that's where we would go. The alter who held these memories drew a picture of the outside of the house.

At one point in my recovery, I had a friend drive me to the place where I lived until I was three years old. I got directions from my dad on how to get to the street, but he didn't know the address. He did say that he had been by there recently and the house had been painted green.

When we got there, nothing looked familiar at all. I found a house that was green, but it did not look familiar. Then, I noticed. The house next to it looked exactly like the picture I had brought with me that one of my alters drew. Now I don't recommend doing the next thing I did, because it wasn't really safe. With my friend in the car, I went up to the front door of that house and knocked. A man answered.

He didn't look too much older than me. I asked him if he knew the people who used to live in this house. He said he had lived there since it was built. I started feeling scared. Two big Dobermans were growling and barking from inside the house. I asked him if they ever had a garage because I didn't see one next to the house. He said that it was in the backyard, behind the fence, but it wasn't used as a garage. I asked him if he knew "Gwen" (she was the lady that 'baby-sat' me there.) He said, "Yes, she is in back by the pool. Would you like to say hello to her?" I was terrified. I said, "No, that's OK," and went back to the car and left. In the picture of their house I had drawn there was a little girl (me) and a little boy looking out of the front windows. I wondered if he was the little boy.

Sometimes, even this is not enough "proof" for me. Something that really gets through to me is information I received from someone else in my family. She said that she had a "weird" memory of when she was little and staying at my mom's house. She says that the telephone rang and after my mom answered it, her eyes rolled back and she fell on the floor. My mom then got up and just listened to the caller. She then took this little girl out to the car and drove her to a place where "bad people with scary masks on" awaited her.

If I'm really trying hard to deny the truth of my history, even this sometimes is not enough. I might wonder if maybe this person in my family had ESP and picked up things that were in my head.

When all else fails, there is one thing that I absolutely cannot deny. That is the damage that was done to me. The damage caused by something so terrible that I had to split into different "selves." Many puzzling things about my life suddenly make sense when I look at what happened to me as at least a strong possibility. It explains why I was so dissociated since I was very young. It explains why I "spaced out" so much. It explains why I had such low self-esteem in spite of my abilities and achievements. It explains to me why I feared certain things that for most people were not scary.

You already know somewhere inside what is true about you and your history. The things you work hardest to deny, may well be your story that you can learn to embrace as truth. Be well. Be free.

Integration On Our Own

By Sandy for the Team

Our integrations are orchestrated by Joshua and Elizabeth, our gatekeepers and resident angels. Our system is set up in layers. As each layer heals, it integrates. In our first integration, Josh and Elizabeth told our therapist it was time, and, with her help, we integrated 60 people into one. For our second integration, Josh and Elizabeth sent the message, "It's time!" over their internal megaphone system. The issues being covered in therapy did not allow for time to work with our therapist.

So, knowing it was time, we promptly procrastinated for a week. We waited until avoidance was more painful than action.

This layer had 173 people in it. Our helpers and angels needed help juggling it all, so we used a chart of everyone on this layer to stay focused. We also wanted to avoid insulting anyone by forgetting them.

It was agreed that safety came first. We gathered all the teddy bears and dolls that represented internal people of all ages and surrounded our working area with them. Then we placed candles, given to us by safe and loving people, around the area we were going to work in. We placed our favorite blanket from a loving aunt on the floor to sit on with a cushion for our back. We played Vivaldi's "Four Seasons" CD on the stereo. Last, we prayed for our higher power for protection and safety.

The first group to be integrated were the 100 screaming, crying, terrified infants, ages 6-to-18 months. Josh and Elizabeth set it up so that 50 babies would become one baby named April, and the other 50 would become another baby named BethAnne.

We held the two dolls representing the two new babies in our arms. Breathing deeply, we all agreed we were ready. Josh and Elizabeth calmed and held each baby as we verbally welcomed them. We rocked back and forth, allowing each baby's

feelings to wash in, around, and through us. As we cried, screamed, or howled their anger, the babies went from solid form to fuzzy to faded. Then their very essence infused April or BethAnne. The two infants were then given to Celeste, an adult spiritual guide, to hold and care for until the rest of us were ready to take care of them.

By the time it was done, we were wiped out, the body was exhausted, and we had a sore throat. We took a 15-minute break to read some meditative verses and hold Angel Bear, our three-foot teddy bear.

Next, the guardians integrated with Jessica, the "up-front" personality. Jessica welcomed each guardian separately. She acknowledged the incredible work that each did and offered her respect and thanks. Jessica then invited each one to join her. The guardian named Terror stepped forward and Jessica felt every emotion Terror had ever felt or held. When the feelings passed, Terror was one with Jessica. In the same manner the guardians Shame, Hate, Anguish, Pain, and Hurt joined Jessica.

The last one was a huge monster named Rage. Jessica, strengthened by the other six guardians, greeted Rage. Jessica assured Rage that Rage was welcome, wanted, and loved. As Jessica spoke, a fog formed and the monster began to dissolve. A small breeze pushed the fog away. Shocked, Jessica saw that Rage was a terrified little girl. Sobbing in awe, Jessica held and rocked the little girl until she became one with them all.

When this was done we were beyond drained. We had a headache, an upset stomach, and were extremely dizzy. We took a two-hour break to take care of ourselves. We played computer games, walked a bit, ate lunch, and just lazed around.

Afterwards, we came back to our safety circle and began again. Using our chart of all the children ages 2-to-12, we asked them to join together in groups of twos or threes. When they were done, with a lot of help from Josh and Elizabeth, there were 15 children left.

Then Jessica approached each child, told them how grateful she was for the job they had done, and invited them to join her. As each child joined Jessica, their memories became hers. When we were done, we felt a bit dizzy and lightheaded, but happy.

(Four days after the above, we had a talk with the body's mother. She laid a guilt trip on us and, two days after that talk, we discovered the children had decided to become 12-year-old Rachel, instead of staying with Jessica.) After a short break of meditation and prayer, Josh and Elizabeth picked the four adults that were to stay. I, Sandy, then determined which of the other 34 adults and teens were going to match up to those who were staying. With Josh and Elizabeth's help, everyone agreed to the choices and we set to work.

The first adult came out and individually welcomed, praised, and hugged each person who would join her. Then the next three adults came out, one-by-one, and repeated the process. With many tear-filled goodbyes and hellos, everyone finally joined the appropriate people and we were finished.

Tired, drained, and content, we rested for a few minutes. Then the silence hit us! No screaming children. No crying babies. No internal fighting. There was virtually no one left. It was scary! Then we remembered this happened the last time we integrated. We felt that same searing loneliness the last time. This time, though, we know the quiet will end when the next layer moves forward.

MV

Letters

I recently went to my doctor for a PAP smear, and she put the instrument in me. I got so tight she could not do the test at all. A baby alter began to come out and the doctor told me I was crying. (I did not know I was crying.) If anyone has any suggestions about what I should do to be able to have a PAP smear, please let me know.

Sally B.

A reader is conducting a survey of people who suffer from chronic fatigue syndrome or fibromyalgia, who also have been diagnosed with osteoporosis. Her data will be used to help determine if chronic fatigue/fibromyalgia is a risk factor for osteoporosis. If you have this pattern of problems, please write to Linda S., c/o *Many Voices*. We will forward your names to the researcher.

I have a very limited support system (husband, child, therapist) and feel very isolated. Do any of your readers have suggestions on how to safely broaden the range of people who "know" about me? Ideas welcome, and thanks.

Marcie P.

MV

Validation! Again and Again!

By Anna T.

"You were too young to attend the ceremonies," stated the voice on the phone.

"That's not true!" I responded. "I know exactly what goes on."

My validation of being ritually/sadistically abused came after three years of denial and feeling crazy. They confirmed all the material I had described to my therapist without my saying a word. It was eerie.

August, 1991, my journey of discovering the hidden past started as a deep depression. The following three months therapy consisted only of describing my feelings: blackness, despair, hopelessness, anguish, guilt, shame, fear, feeling violated, rage and disgust with no idea where these emotions were coming from.

Mid-October. I was admitted to the hospital due to erratic behavior and to my commenting, "I was someone else and sexual things were done to them as a child." A week later the diagnosis Dissociative Identity Disorder (MPD) was given.

"That can't be," I stated. "That's caused from being abused as a child. I wasn't." I was given an explanation of what MPD is and how it works.

Within a few days I started experiencing flashbacks of sexual abuse and body memories as different alters emerged.

Soon afterward my alters started presenting fragments of material earmarking ritual/sadistic abuse. I was

unaware of the meaning at that point. After sufficient subject matter was presented, the therapist's suspicions were relayed to me.

"Your material matches people who've been ritually abused," my therapist stated.

"You're wrong," I responded in disbelief. "I couldn't have been abused in such a way."

"Have you read literature pertaining to the occult, types of cults or Satanic rituals in the past?"

"No," I replied.

"How can you draw pictures, symbols, and verbalize detailed information of ritual and sadistic activities if you haven't been exposed to them?" my therapist asked.

"I don't know," I responded.

Each week more pictures of ceremonies would flash in front of me. I thought I was hallucinating. With each story told, my therapist confirmed the material as being in line with ritual abuse. Validation!

I went to another clinic for a week of therapy. While there, my alters gave information that astounded me. Once again my stories matched other survivors the therapist has heard involving ritual/sadistic abuse. Validation!

Not until a tremendous amount of material had been presented and worked through, did our therapist feel comfortable in allowing us to read publications dealing with survivors of ritual/sadistic abuse. The accounts I relayed in therapy which I

thought were farfetched, crazy and unbelievable were described. Validation!

I had resigned to never being validated. I learned to trust my own mind and body. With each flashback, I knew it wasn't a figment of my imagination, for the existence of it came from my gut. When I finish drawing or describing in words the picture, and work through feelings connected with that memory, confirmation comes by experiencing peace within.

Even after validation, those internal messages, "Is this real? Did this happen?" continue to haunt me.

MV



By The Comrades

Books

Memory, Trauma Treatment, and the Law

By Daniel Brown, Alan W. Schefflin, and D. Corydon Hammond. © 1997, Published by W. W. Norton. 816 pgs. \$100 in US, \$130 in Canada. Hardback.

You might think, faced with an 816-page book put together by two psychologists (Brown and Hammond) and a lawyer (Schefflin) that you'd have a dull, jargon-laden doorstop. Not so. This is a highly-readable volume packed with useful information for clinicians, researchers, attorneys...and laypersons interested in the legal ramifications of memory and abuse. The range of subjects is broad and intriguing. For example: did you know that if a therapist uses hypnosis, and subsequently has illicit sex with the client, the client may be barred from

testifying in court because he/she was hypnotized? (See page 653). Or that there are at least 11 "red flag" situations that may warn a therapist that litigation or other complications may arise in a new therapy? (Page 523).

There is an entire chapter (53 pgs) devoted to the "False Logic of the False Memory Controversy" as well as a substantial number of pages covering the research and assorted arguments (pro and con) about ritual abuse. The condensed view of the authors on this subject is that, while RA reports may be mostly fictitious, some may be mostly genuine. "...In most cases, these reports represent a mixture of fact and fantasy, derived perhaps from genuine and often extreme sadistic abuse by

perpetrators, in more or less organized social groups or in loose family networks, but reported by a patient who is often prone to fragmentation and shifting states of consciousness, who easily confuses fantasy and reality, and who is highly suggestible. Thus RA reports can neither be fully accepted at face value nor fully dismissed."

I have not (yet) read this book from cover to cover. But I will gradually work my way through it, because it is a lucid, serious and well-documented treatise on issues that concern me and all of MV's readers. If I were a therapist treating trauma survivors, I would definitely buy this book and write it off as a business expense. \$100 for possible prevention is cheap when you consider what lawsuits cost.—Lynn W.

MV

COMING SOON!

PLEASE SEND IDEAS FOR NEXT YEAR'S TOPICS & ART! THANKS FOR YOUR HELP! --Lynn W.

August 1998

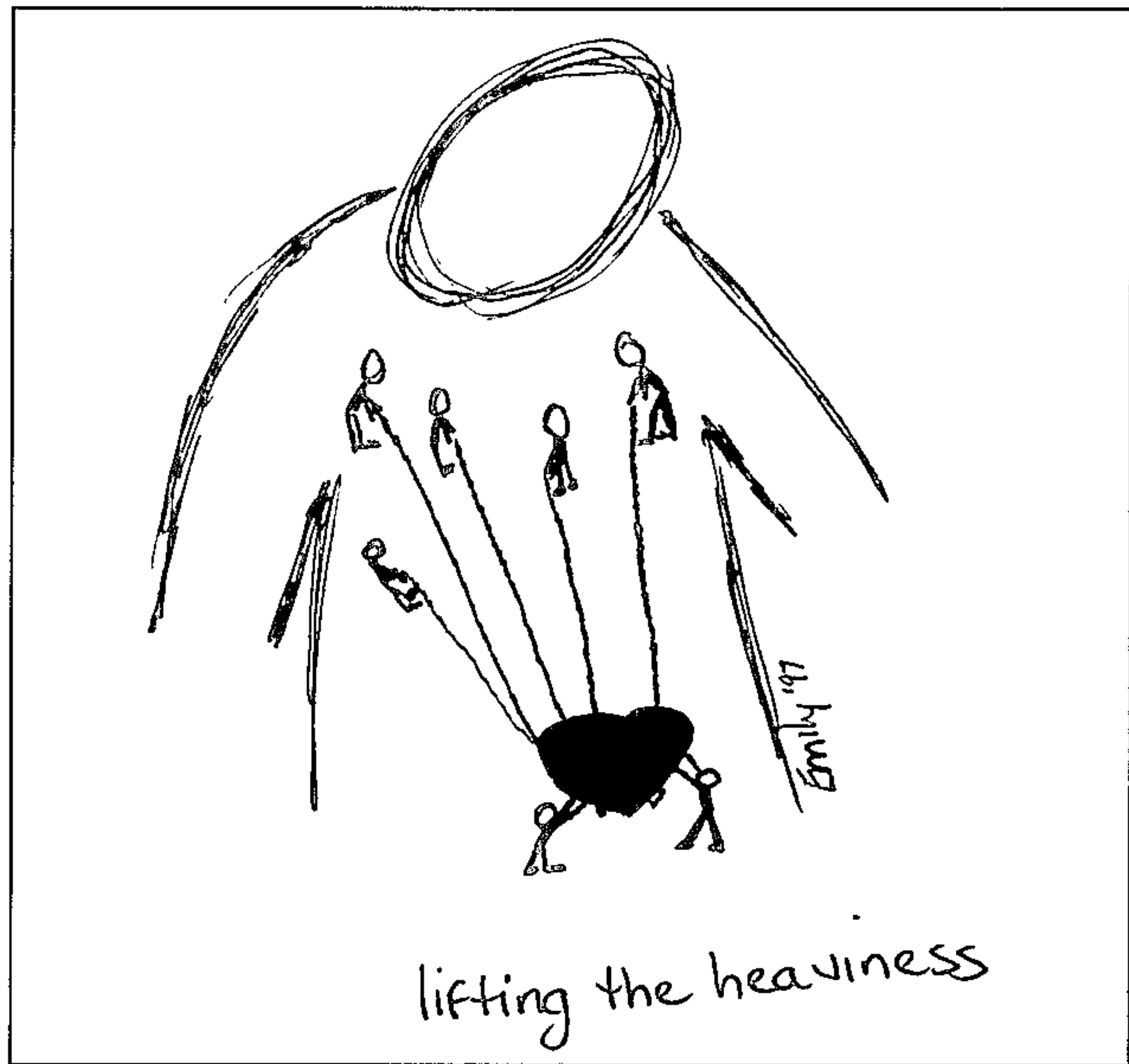
Exploring mind, consciousness and personality. Strengthening the healthy core. Structure of alters and internal systems. Measurable physical differences among alters? ART: What you see when you "look inside."
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Creative expression: how writing, art, music or other activities help you heal. ART: Healing your spirit.
DEADLINE: August 1, 1998.

December 1998

Learning to negotiate: with your therapist, your alters, your family, your boss. Being assertive, not offensive. What works? ART: Celebration of togetherness. DEADLINE: Oct. 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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