

MANY VOICES

WORDS OF HOPE FOR PEOPLE RECOVERING FROM TRAUMA & DISSOCIATION

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Creative Expressions: How art and imagination help us heal



Miakoda—(Power of the Moon)

By Living Earth

I Dance on the Faces of the Dead

To address the issue of the artistic or creative in my healing, I say this: My adoptive Navajo father reminds me of how, as a child, I found a way in and a way out through art. This is sometimes viewed as a spirit trail in relation to Navajo weaving. Or a pathway. It is a gift I am given for surviving, and passing along the pathway. It can be inspired or triggered by another, or vision or dream or tradition. It is passed along/through/by the women. It is largely hidden. That part is a personal choice, though. It is for the weaver. She knows it is there, visible or non-visible. It could be called gateway, opening, door, outlet, out of an enclosure, a mind's road. Or other things. You cannot really translate it all from the Navajo to Anglo culture. It is a body-mind-spirit thing. And the whole story can never be told. The direction of the path is important, too.

My work tends to be deeply shamanic and cross-cultural in nature. What I bring back or retrieve while traveling in the between place, I share so that others can be healed. The healing part for me is just me being and doing my business, and being connected. I am not above the rocks, the bees, animals, trees, sand, earth. I am part of the weaving of all things.

By Living Earth

MV

Singing in the Shower

By Bonnie

I can sing in the shower now. If you are reading this, you will have some idea how noisy a shower can be. I don't mean the water and the squeak of clean hair. I'm talking about sharing it with your alters. They can really cram you in and make you feel crowded.

My therapist and I discovered my dissociative disorder together. During one particular session I became very frightened as I recounted horrible memories. My alters gathered around me protectively and tried to drag me away from my therapist. I was afraid to look at them and yet I felt I had known forever they were there. With his gentle encouragement I accepted the safety my wonderful therapist provided, and together we met each one.

I knew I was able to "split off." My performances at local comedy clubs were so successful because I was able to "go somewhere else." My routines were hilarious, but unless I saw a videotape later, I had no memory of the show. Scary.

In the last mailing I received from *Many Voices*, I took great comfort in reading, "We who developed dissociative disorder have experienced terrible times." Knowing it's not my fault, letting myself off the hook, opened a door I had kept locked for years. I tell you this because one of my alters is very cruel. I hated myself for "hosting" this personality. Now I understand. He provides a safe containment for the sadism and evil I experienced. Better than being a serial killer, right?

It was time in my healing process to let my alters speak. Terrified, I regretted my new truth. With many tears, drawings, letters and patience, my therapist and I listened, learned and questioned. After each frightening session I was physically ill and exhausted. I tried to invent excuses to avoid my next therapy session. My cruel alter taunted me constantly and said it was no use. My little girl alter cried. She was so afraid. How could I go out in public now that my secret

was out? In my job as a paralegal, I deal with mental health professionals. Would they know? Had they known all along? Should I tell my best friend? My husband? Would they still love me?

Over time, I learned, as my therapist says, that I do not have a window in my head that people can see through. I do not owe confessions to people. ("Oh, by the way...") This is a private disorder, though not a shameful one.

We still have a lot of work to do. Once I found out about the alters, I just wanted them to disappear. Never mind, can't we pick another DSM number for me? What about the one I had before? ...it's not that easy. The concept of "integration" is still mysterious to me.

Let me tell you what happened a few months ago:

I did something I had been avoiding for a long time, but I didn't know why. I went to see a movie. I used to hate going to the movies. That's because I was always going with a group—my alters. I couldn't concentrate. It was so noisy inside my head, there was no way I could follow the film. Technically, I should have paid admission for each one (children's price for the little girl). Each alter had an opinion, the little girl was afraid of the dark, one squirmed impatiently, one was bored. It was awful. When I think what it should have cost in popcorn and soda...

I went to see the film "Contact", and it was so great I thought it was the best movie ever made. I went to see it again the next day. Then I realized that yes, it

was a fine film, but the real talent was mine, the talent to integrate, "link up", and enjoy the movie—just me. It was so much fun. I have seen a couple of other movies since then, just one time each. Success!

I wake up hours before I have to be at work. Now I have so much free time in the morning, I can read and enjoy the quiet of the house. You know what I used to do that took me so long? It was like getting six people ready in the morning. Deciding what to wear was a burdensome task. One of my alters is very fashionable, and she would dictate the fashion statement while my child alter would whine and not want to wear that. Getting ready for work was so strenuous, by 9 a.m. I was ready to call it a day!

One day my therapist told me about MV. I refused to even hear about it. Some time went by in our therapy, and when I first received my first issue, I gave it to him for "safekeeping." I was too scared to actually own or even read *Many Voices*. The same week I went to the movies, I read the issues I had collected and was so relieved to know the truth. I am not alone. The artwork is so touching.

I am not at all gifted in art. When I see the illustrations of other readers, it's like people can understand my soul. What a comfort! You really are out there and, like me, go to work, have a family, friends. (Any trouble going to the movies?)

My advice to people like us — "Be yourselves."

MV



The Stained Glass Connection

The brilliancy of its colors
as the fire molecules once captured
in the molten state now dance about
in solidness.

The illumination of this life giver
stimulates my soul with the energy
from atoms projected by dancing
sunbeams

Glass is Alive, and it reminds me that
I am Alive.

When my body lies frozen it speaks to
me from the art room
with a "ping" here and a "ka-nap" there
telling me it is alive.

In the sunlight a chorus of rainbows
sing to me in such glorious colors,
red, blue, purple and greens.

Reminding me, the glazier, the
instrument by which

creativity flowed to connect the
fire molecules.

Bringing into being, life created by my
female side
to be passed to the next generations.

Glass is Alive, and it reminds me that
I am Alive.

As I struggle through changes of
adaptation and recovery
I am to release the masks of the past,
finding the

unity and harmony of my very
existence...

I find my courage as I listen to the glass
so free with beauty.

I wake from my torturous narcoleptic
slumber, it speaks
to me from across the room as if to say
"Good Morning" proving it is still with
me

promising to be my lifeline.

Glass is Alive, and it reminds me that
I am Alive.

By Beverly & Girls

*(Beverly & Girls make stained
glass objects for sale. Write to her
care of MV for more information.)*



MANY VOICES needs an Angel or Two!

Please think of us when you can! Thanks very much. Lynn W., Editor.

Partners who share DID

By Barb and the Recruits

Sure enough, I have DID. I have been diagnosed with it well over a year now. Naturally, it has been hard. It also made me feel like a monster, compared to my partner.

Yet it was uncanny how very well we got along. Even in an argument it was a match to match. Aggressive to passive or assertive to nonassertive. Boundaries to no boundaries or acceptance to nonacceptance. Always it is opposites and we all know opposites attract.

Then the new twist of fate came. Only now does it make sense and those pieces in the puzzle begin to fall into place.

My partner just recently has been diagnosed as having DID. It is no wonder why we can play together. It is no wonder when I'm down, she is up and helping me, or vice versa. The greatest fact of all is we are never in the same place at the same time.

It is a continual support system that undoubtedly carries on and gets stronger day by day. Nowhere have I found such closeness in all areas.

Sex isn't a problem either, because when one can not be active, the other understands completely...therefore, giving support, validation, and closeness.

Since my partner has been diagnosed it has taken a lot of pressure and stress from me. I no longer feel like a monster or someone who is crazy. Now, thank God, we both feel very much sane, having our multiplicity to share.

However, we do have a crowded house. I have fifty personalities and she has nine and counting all the time while the numbers go up.

Sometimes it can be chaos with one who has DID. Imagine, if you will, two living together. She carries a purse every day and still lost her cigarette case for two weeks. After this time expired, she found the case—in her purse!

I have an alter who wears eye glasses. I could not find them anywhere, but my partner did.

Sometimes we forget to eat. Some nights we are up keeping each other company because sleep eludes us. Sometimes we do not know what we have done in a day's time. Yet, with both of us, we always seem to remember one or two events and piece the day together.

Some days we just don't know who is there, but we continue on with whoever is out. Then there are times when we are frightened. We cannot assure ourselves that everything is OK, but we can assure each other we are in the present and no one can hurt us! So, we have protection, too.

It may sound totally absurd to you that two multiples can live together without a huge list of problems. Yet, on the other hand, all problems are being dealt with as they arise. It is good therapy, actually. Living alone, or living with one who does not have DID, these things would take much longer to get out. It would take even longer to deal with the problems at hand.

I am ecstatic how the events have unfolded before us. We both needed this twist of fate to help us, support us, and to survive.

Creativity Helps Us Heal

"Stained glass is alive with the energy of a rainbow of colors...and the dancing sunbeams of red, blue, purple and green gives me energy, courage, and reminds me that I am alive."

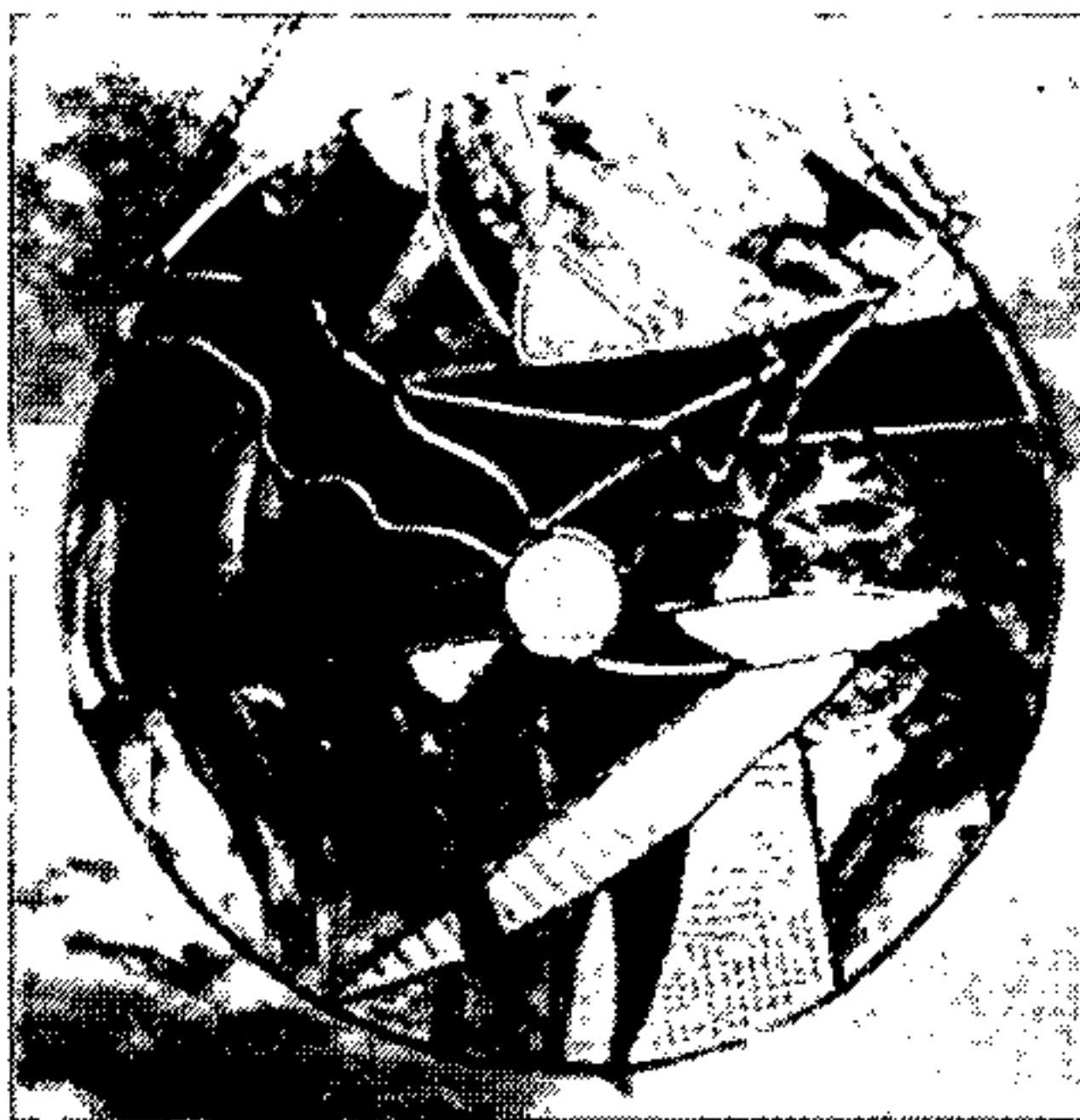
Those are words from a poem we wrote quite a few years ago. We had been physically down on the couch for over a year. At the end of the couch was/is a glass panel we call "The Aquarian." It is one of the best pieces of art that we've ever made. We looked at it as we had to lay on that couch and walk on crutches to get anywhere else; we kept telling ourselves that the day would come and we would again make stained glass. We did! It was two years that we were on that couch, but we did finally get the medical care, therapy to get off the couch, and out of an abusive marriage.

We have stained glass in almost all of our windows. We have few curtains. In some windows we just have big pieces of colored glass. We actually do get energy from the colored light. We can't imagine my life without all the colored light and rainbows. We know we would have much more depression; life would indeed be darker.

We also make fused glass, an ancient glass technique in which we take stained glass pieces and melt them together in a kiln. Our most recent adventure in glass is beadmaking, and this last month our glass buddy/best friend Pat came over and we started making glass marbles. It is so exciting! Especially when that molten ball of glass jumps out of the mold and is rolling across the floor!

We think because so much of our life and past is painful and dark, that we are compelled to create beauty. We almost have to do it. We know we get depressed if, due to all our medical and therapy appointments, we can't create. Because of that and probably because we have different girls (alters) with different ages and tastes, we make a variety of artwork. We do quilting, work with clay, garden (we think it is an artform), make dried flower wreaths, and do creative writing.

One of the best things about making/creating is that there aren't a lot of rules. There may be some technical things, but there aren't any Art Police. We were raised in a religious cult, and they controlled everything you did and said. Our father even expected us to tell him all of our thoughts. So if we want to use a certain color just because we like it, or we like the texture of this glass or that one, we can do it however we want to. One of the first lampshades we made was a peacock feather design. It had a pink zigzag strip across the upper part. Between the feather and strip we wanted to put black glass that lets no light through.



Frozen Scream

We were told by two other artists, "No, that won't look good. You shouldn't use that glass." But we used the black glass because that is what we wanted, because we wanted the pink glass to really glow. It does! And everyone who sees it always tells us how much they like it. We can create however we want to...freedom!

The glass in the photo is called "frozen scream." Like we said earlier, we feel that because of the pain and darkness we create beauty. We are able to let the pain and darkness out through writing. Well, this one is a bit different. It had been suggested to us to let our pain out via art. But we just couldn't see making ugly glass. To us, pain is ugly. This panel is actually what

a panic attack feels like. Here's how it happened:

We had been in the hospital for being suicidal, actually getting out on the expressways and looking for an "off ramp" for us and 'Clyde,' our old van at the time. After we got home, we had our March 6th day (a trauma anniversary). We had to be alone part of the evening. We were fighting that urge that kept at us to go drive fast. But we had made a promise to stay in the house. So we got out a piece of paper and started drawing how it felt. This is what we drew. Since MV is in black and white, we'll tell you that most of the colors are reds, orange and black. We don't use a lot of these colors. The clear glasses are a heavy texture that looks like frozen water. But so many people really like it. People with anxiety/panic attacks tell us that is what they see before we tell them the story. But most people cringe when we tell them the name is Frozen Scream. We kind of like that.

The image that we most like to create is the cat. We love cats. They have been our friends and comfort for most of our life. They are beautiful. We really love to make cats in any media that we are working in. A cat stands for freedom; you never own a cat, they just share your life and love.

By Katrina, with Beverly and the girls.



When my memories of torture, etc. first came out (accompanied by alters, though I didn't realize that at the time), I was compelled to write many of them down. We have hundreds of pages of text from the first few years—most written, it turns out, by teenage alters.

Then four-and-a-half years ago, a group of very young alters emerged and demanded art supplies. Until then, I had never thought of myself as much of an artist. But for several months, young nonverbal alters drew, painted, and collaged their memories, fears,

and hopes. We have continued to use art to allow the assimilation of difficult memories, to express feelings, to challenge our creativity, to ground ourselves in reality, and because it is fun. We have created over 500 works of art related to our healing.

But much of what we have done would be meaningless to me if I had not had occasional access to an art therapist during most of the past four years. She has pointed out some simple but profound truths, such as when an alter draws herself without hands or feet it probably means she feels pretty powerless. She facilitated my ability to communicate with these alters so that I was saved perhaps years of confusion and miscommunication.

For me, art continues to be among the most important of healing tools. Only a few alters have refused to try any form of art, or are too young to understand what it's about, and with those, of course, we use other ways of working on healing. But when we use visualization therapy in conjunction with art, we accomplish more than we have ever accomplished in any other way.

And we have discovered a talent we thought we did not have. We have looked at the art on display in local galleries, and know that a lot of our art is as good as or better than much of what we have seen. Last fall, an artist-friend looked through a few month's worth of our less personal art, and she told me I had enough really good stuff to put together an exhibition. My art therapist wants me to do a slide show that she can use to teach therapists and other professionals about the importance of art therapy in healing from trauma. It feels good to hear from other people that they think we are a good artist, even though we aren't ready to expose ourselves that much, and can't afford the materials to mount enough pictures for an exhibit, even if we were ready.

However, we can only do so much at a time, and we have much still-unremembered history to sort through, and many alters waiting for their turn to heal. Art does not allow me to skip steps in the process, but it does allow me to combine steps creatively, and to reach more alters

with the truths the pictures express each time we look back through the art we've created. And there is no better way to see the progress we've made over the years than to look back through tangible evidence of our step-by-step process. I learn new things about myself every time we look.

By Julie of Julie et al



There was the time for torture. Then there was the time of remembering, which was also torture, but a first step toward healing. Ultimately there was a time of decision which lead to the path of real healing. I thank my many selves for having the courage to be creative. My creativity allowed me to heal.

At first we created angry red and black scribbles on huge pages of newsprint in massive amounts. Then we ripped up our anger and stored it in numerous trash bags (too many to count). When we were finally ready to let our anger dissolve—we set the ripped up anger on fire and watched it drift away in billows and clouds of puffy grey smoke.

Then came the pain. So we sketched. And our sketches, very graphic at first, scared us. But back then everything scared us. Our shadows of the past scared us most. And we dredged up more memories.

So we journaled. Our journaling turned from fractured incomplete phrases of anguish to complete sentences. Then it turned into poetry, prose, and short stories. We wrote and wrote and wrote. We poured out our pain. It was the way we communicated with outsiders, but more importantly, with each other inside. We began to communicate with ourselves.

By pouring out our pain on paper, it removed it from inside where it had been festering for so long. The written word helped us describe and communicate things too difficult to say. In this way we finally found our voice.

One day we finally realized the gradual truth that we didn't have to live in the past. We didn't have to be

retraumatized everyday. So we continued to spew all the crap forth on paper. And we began to look ahead. And we realized that by first creating scribbles, then sketches, and then words—we had let the past pour out and we had finally arrived in the present. No longer trapped in the "there and then," we are now able to relax enough to live in the "here and now."

Sure, sometimes the shadows creep up and threaten us like storm clouds. But when that happens, we just create. We write our poetry and short stories. The difference is that now we have control over the way the story ends. We can let this beat us and defeat us. Or we can soar high and fly as we realize the worst that could happen to us has already happened, and we survived it. It can only get better from here.

By Frances (et al)



Poem

When I fell
You were there
When I was violated
You took control
When I hurt
you made it yours
When I left
you stayed and cared
In the days to come
I'll help you stand
In the days of memories
I'll hold your hand
In the days of hurt
I'll keep it mine
I will not leave again
We'll have peace of mind
The strong inside
still long to hurt me
Listen to our hearts
they beat as one
Each one important to the body
one stops and all are gone

By Sandra B.

Therapist's Page

By Pamela M. Badger, M.S., M.F.C.C.

Pamela M. Badger, M.S., M.F.C.C. is a member of ISSD who has treated dissociative clients for 15 years. She frequently makes presentations at conferences. Ms Badger is a counselor in private practice in La Mesa, California.

Therapists who work with dissociative disorder patients often find their clients faced with memories of traumatic abuse which can overwhelm them. The therapist is then challenged to find ways to assist the client to process these memories in a way which will be healing to the client and at the same time, keep the client functional. Therapists who are not able to meet this challenge will find themselves faced with clients who are in constant crisis, decompensating, self-injuring, and needing hospitalizations. Moving too quickly into traumatic material, without creating sufficient stability within the patient and strong mechanisms for the client to contain this painful material can be dangerous and prolong treatment (Kluft, 1993). In this paper I will present certain aspects of treatment of a Dissociative Identity Disorder (DID) client which illustrates this problem, and present a technique used to successfully meet this challenge.

The client, whom I will refer to as M., was referred to me after being in treatment for nearly four years with a therapist who had very limited experience in working with Dissociative Disorders. The previous therapy had mainly consisted of young alters abreacting memories of abuse which were encouraged by the therapist who was "fascinated" by evermore sadistic accounts of abuse. The result was that the system was in chaos. Little alters were in constant fear for having told, believing that the abuse could happen again at any time. Cutting alters were regularly injuring the body for a variety of reasons including anger about the abuse, guilt, distraction from the memories, punishment, and to feel some control. The presenting, adult client, was plagued by constant flashbacks and was completely dissociated from her body. She was able to manage her job by dissociating all feelings and functioning with an alter named Nothing. Additionally, her diet was very poor, consisting mainly of sweets, particularly chocolate.

My initial goal was to get the system calmed down, establish safety and trust, then do some mapping to discover the

strengths and weaknesses of the system. I called for a moratorium on the discussion of abuse memories and focused on the system. During this process I developed a strong therapeutic bond with an inner-helper alter. It became obvious in working with this alter that the system was very adept at using visualization to promote a sense of safety. However, these skills had been overwhelmed by the constant abreaction and had not been recognized, reinforced or expanded during the course of therapy.

Together with this alter we began working with these visualization skills, talking about their uses and practicing them even when the little ones were not in crisis. They had a couple of things that worked well sometimes, like putting the little ones into trees, which for them was a place of safety. We expanded on that by adding other comforting elements, like a stream, meadow, and more trees, creating a more permanent place for them to stay. This client would periodically suffer bouts of freezing cold at night when nothing would warm the body. We discovered the problem was coming from a young alter who had been left out in the cold at night. When we added a hot tub amongst the trees for the little ones to get into when this occurred, this resulted in nearly an end to the cold spells. There were two adult alters who did little more than observe. They were recruited to care for and comfort the little ones. This was difficult at first because the little ones did not trust anybody "big." We started asking that the big ones just be around the little ones until they gradually became more comfortable and trusting. Eventually the little ones allowed these two adults into their world. Now in times of crises the little ones can be held and rocked when they are upset.

Another concern was the problem of cutting and other self-injurious behaviors. This problem was not adequately dealt with in the previous therapy. Though the client had brought the problem up, the therapist did little more than to say that M had to stop this behavior, and threaten to terminate therapy if she did not stop. What this effectively did was to stop the client from talking about the problem.

One of the first things we did to begin to deal with this issue was to complete a "Survey on Self Injury" (Gil, 1993) which was compiled by Eliana Gil as part of her research on this problem. This is a very detailed questionnaire which includes

questions on abuse history, history of self-injury, details regarding types of injury, feelings related to all aspects of this behavior, and what was helpful or not helpful to the client in dealing with this behavior. Completing this survey was very helpful, though difficult for the client due to her feelings of shame and secrecy regarding the behavior. It gave us a clear view of the multiple reasons for the behavior, clues for when it was likely to occur, and what the behavior achieved. Just by focusing closely on the behavior led to some reduction.

Through the Survey we also realized that some of the cutting was happening because they were numb, not feeling that the body belonged to them, and not feeling connected to the body. We discussed the need for M to be more connected to the body and for the alters to accept and own that the body belongs to all of them. By focusing on this issue in therapy and doing body work with a massage therapist, over the next year she gradually came to accept and own the body.

I speculated that her diet could be another factor in her inability to control this self-injurious behavior. She was subsisting on high levels of sugar and caffeine and little else. I talked with her about the need to reduce or eliminate the sugar and the need for a healthy balanced diet. I shared with her an article about the importance of a high-protein breakfast (Meriwether, 1994) in stabilizing mood, reducing depression, increasing the ability to handle physical and emotional stress, and increasing energy. She began a diet of high protein breakfast and regular meals. She eliminated sugar from her diet completely after realizing that she could not stick to just a little. This was difficult for all the parts, as sugar was a great source of comfort for them, so a deal was made that if they could stay off sugar for a year and not hurt the body, they could get a puppy. The puppy is now over a year old and there has been no further cutting.

After about eighteen months of twice-a-week therapy, M was stabilized from the effects of the previous therapy. She was no longer engaging in self-destructive behavior, her diet was stable and balanced, mechanisms for dealing with overwhelming affect were strongly in place within the system, and her home support system was stronger than ever. It was time to take some steps

towards dealing with some of the memories. As much as I would like to say that I had analyzed this whole situation and came to this conclusion, I did not actually make this decision—the memories just started to come.

As we began to look at these memories once more and process the feelings related to them, the little ones again became very scared. Even with the use of all her new skills, M was being plagued with flashbacks at very inconvenient times. In talking with the system about this problem we discovered that some of the little ones felt if they didn't constantly remind the big one of the abuse, she would forget about it and they would be vulnerable to be abused again.

Around this time one of my other clients, on a trip to Washington, D.C., had visited the Holocaust Museum. She related to me what a powerful experience it was to witness the great traumas which were contained there. This inspired me to suggest to M that she create a museum inside where her traumatic memories could be contained. I explained to the little ones the concept of the Holocaust Museum, including the idea that it is important to remember the great wrongs committed, so we can be on guard against them happening again, but that it is not healthy to dwell on the trauma and constantly relive it. It is also important to honor those who suffered, but to continue the suffering only gives victory to the perpetrators. They liked this idea very much and, utilizing their visualization skills, created a museum inside. Though this museum created through visualization was helpful, they decided it would be even better to create one on the outside.

The following session I brought a shoe box, plastic modeling clay, colored pencils and paper. Over the next few weeks various young alters came out and created scenes of abuse to be put in their "museum." During this process we were able to explore the feelings and negative cognition related to the different memories. This was very valuable in clarifying and reinforcing the fact that the abuse happened in the past ("old stuff is put in museums") and that the big people on the outside were the ones responsible for the abuse. Another benefit was that we found a new job for the alters who were cutters. Though they had not cut the body in a long time, they still thought about it a lot. It was decided that they be given the important job of guarding the museum to make sure all the bad stuff stayed inside. They happily took this job and rarely ever think of hurting the body anymore. The first wing of the museum was complete.

In doing this work it became obvious there was a core belief, held in a very young alter called Bad Baby, that they were dirty and bad, like rotten garbage. I talked to them about the process of composting

and how even garbage can be transformed into useful soil out of which plants can grow. We created a compost pile in the museum by first creating the bad feeling out of clay. In this she depicted a baby who was hurt, was responsible for the hurting, and had been shamed, humiliated, and blamed. We took clay of different colors representing these feelings and mushed it together until it was a rich brown. From this brown mass we fashioned a sprouting tree. Through this we continued to process the negative cognitions and grew a big tree in the museum. Bad Baby was transformed and is now known as Baby Leaf. This completed the second wing of the museum.

The transformation of Bad Baby to Baby Leaf was an exciting one. It did not happen all at once, but by continuing to look at the museum and reinforce the new positive cognition that she was not responsible for the abuse, she gradually came to believe it. She became angry at those who abused her, especially the woman who had given birth to her, and called her bad baby, the woman they all call "the thing." Baby Leaf still felt fear of *the thing* so we worked on her feeling safe by talking about the reality of the situation. *The thing* lives a long way away and they have had no contact for many years. *The thing* doesn't know where they live. In effect, *the thing* is dead to them. She loved this idea, and decided she wanted to put *the dead thing* in the Museum. She fashioned a little coffin and made *the thing* out of clay. She processed her anger by making many biting and stinging insects and placing them in and around the coffin. This also reinforced that it was *the thing* who was responsible for the abuse, not Baby Leaf. Though this alter does not come out much any more, occasionally when they are feeling scared she pops out to check that *the thing* is still dead, in her coffin, and being pinched by all the bugs. This completed the third wing of the Museum.

I anticipate that there may be further wings added to the Museum as we continue to process memories. There are several important steps to remember in doing this or any other trauma work. The first is to be sure the client is ready and that sufficient internal and external support systems to safely process the trauma are in place. Take it slowly, process each step thoroughly to be sure that the negative cognitions associated with the trauma have been considered and reframed. Check with the system regarding any repercussions following the processing sessions, especially for any self-injurious behavior or thoughts. I have also found that it is important, especially if there is an increase in symptoms, to remind them to use the safety mechanisms we have established. More than once I have found that when they are having problems, they have forgotten about using these tools.

In conclusion, one of the most important challenges in working with DID clients is to find ways to process traumatic memories without rendering the client dysfunctional or increasing their dissociative reactions. This is best achieved by making sure there are strong support systems in place, both internally and externally, before attempting this work. It is important to have goals in mind before beginning, such as containment, distancing, reframing, and correcting negative cognitions. These give purpose to abreactions and lessen the chance of aggravating symptoms. This is not work that can be hurried; I am reminded of a saying that I learned in childhood, and often repeat to clients and professionals working with DID: "The hurrier you go, the behinder you get."

Gil, Eliana (1993) Survey on Self-Injury, research tool

Kluft, R.P. (1993) Treatment of Dissociative Disorders DISSOCIATION 6 (2/3) 87-101

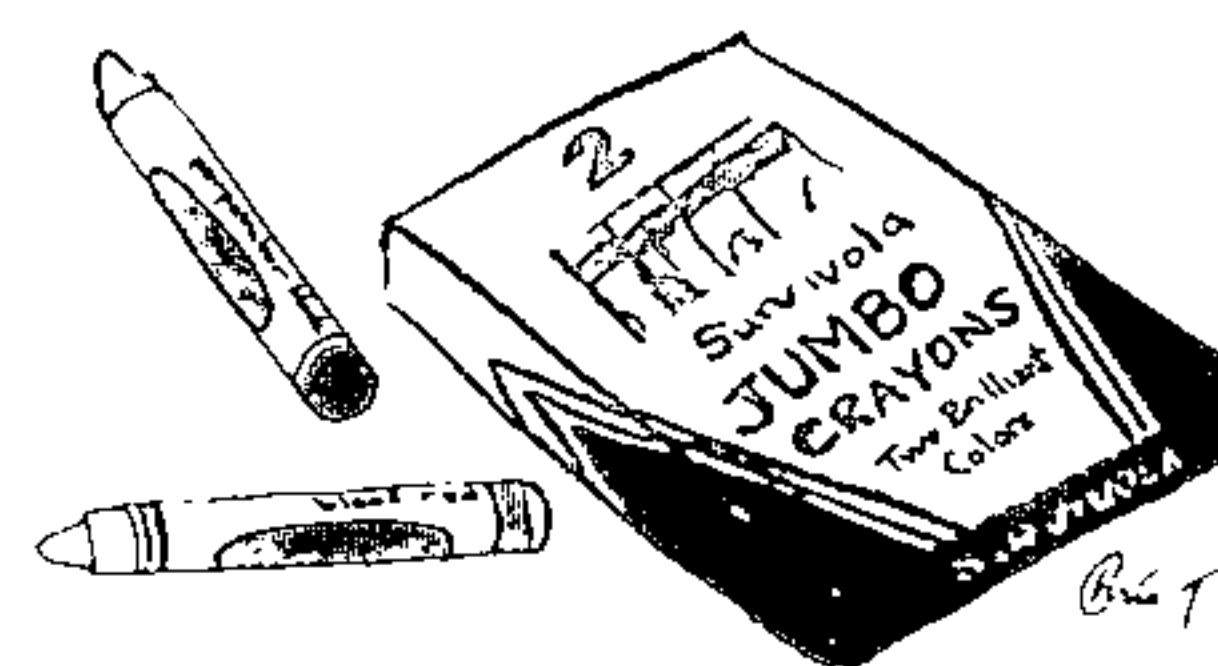
Meriwether, V.J. (1994) The Breakfast of Peace. SURVIVORSHIP 6 (5) 6-7

MV

Color

and what if i gave myself a rainbow
64 crayolas for the picking
each an expression of my fear,
my hunger
and what if i nourished myself in
color
bathed in purple scented with
dewberry
and did not criticize my body
and mySelf?
am i safe enough now to embrace
the colors
pick and choose, take responsibility
for each choice
and draw my history from the
beginning
and draw my dreams to their
fulfillment.

By sarah elizabeth b.



Partner's Page:

Doing Something About The Weather

By Richard

I've seldom been so mad in my life. My wife was checking out of the hospital where she and I had spent a frustrating week trying to get the help she needed, and failing because of bureaucratic thick-headedness.

The final straw came just before she left. A kind, competent nurse we had both liked talked with my wife before I arrived and advised her "to separate herself from people who had a vested interest her remaining sick" — specifically her therapist, her psychiatrist, and me.

Now I was walking through the ward with my wife, right past that nurse. It was one of those moments when time slowed down, and with each slow-falling step I debated whether or not to turn, drop the suitcases like a bomb, and blast that nurse where she stood.

"Who the hell do you think you are?!" The words hammered silently in my throat. "How dare you suggest that my wife divorce me? I'm the one who's sacrificed for seven years so she can work on getting well! I'm the one who goes without sex so she can feel safe! And after 'helping professionals' put in a good day's work stirring up emotional turmoil, I'm the one who still has to deal with her! How dare you suggest that I want her to remain sick?!"

The words remained unspoken. No, I told myself, my wife might have to come here again someday, God forbid. She would have to deal with that nurse, and she would be the one to pay for my outburst.

It's like that for those who love multiples. We have a lot of anger. Everyone gets angry at their spouse occasionally, or at their kids. But that's anger with a specific source, something that can be dealt with more-or-less directly. There's all kinds of information available for dealing with that kind of anger.

I'm talking about anger that's more like the weather—big and nebulous, hard to do anything about. Anger at

medical bureaucracies that refuse to believe you. Anger at abusers who may be dead, unknown, or otherwise out of reach. Anger at the necessary financial costs. Anger at not having a normal relationship.

It's tough to deal with anger like that directly, but if you don't do something to defuse it, it can whirl up like a tornado and sweep through with devastating effect.

There seems to be no information, no self-help books, about handling this background anger, so I've had to learn how, on my own, one real-world lesson at a time.

Venting helps. There should be a big sign stamped across the late Nineties, "No Whining!" But when you're dealing with problems you can't attack head-on, sometimes the only thing you can do is whine. This is a time for your therapist, support group, or other clued-in friends. Expressing your anger in a place where you can do no harm, with people who listen and at least sympathize, can go a long way toward defusing the pressure. Just having someone in our support group say, "Yeah, that's a tough one. I don't know what to do about it, either, but I know how you feel," is a big help.

Along the same line, prayer has become one of my major weapons. If you feel that "Someone Up There" is listening, the venting process works then, too. And I've seen prayer mysteriously change things too often to believe there's nothing to it. If nothing else, the active self-talk involved in prayer helps calm me down and pull things into perspective.

Reducing the pressure is an important step. If it's a problem you and your partner can work on together, deal with it to the greatest extent possible. Even if it doesn't end the problem, it will go a long way toward helping you feel like you have some control over the situation.

I also find that physical exercise helps. Anger activates the "fight-or-flight" mechanisms in our

psyche. For me, the heavy-duty stuff like pumping iron seems to defuse the "fight" mode, while a long walk outdoors seems to satisfy the "flight." And getting my body outdoors, away from the situation, seems to let my mind roam as well, making connections and finding solutions I wouldn't have seen if I had stayed inactive. Oddly, jogging doesn't seem to work as well. All the effort seems too distracting.

Some people in my support group say fantasy helps. Imagine backing those damned people who messed up your partner and ruined your life into a corner and tell them exactly what you think, complete with graphic details and truck-driver language. Imagine finding where the cult that ruined your partner's soul holds their disgusting witches' sabbaths and do a John Wayne act—kick down the door and light 'em up with a submachine-gun. Go ahead! No one can sue you or throw you in prison for what goes on in the privacy of your own skull. Personally, I find that such fantasies feed my rage instead of defusing it, but guys in our support group claim it helps them.

Like the weather, anger like this changes slowly, and there's little you can do about it. But I've found that if I can manage the way I feel about it, I'm better able to deal with situations that my wife and I can do something about.

MV



Healing Through Art

A Very Personal Journey

By Barb M.

In the beginning my art certainly showed I was new to it. Yet, in each drawing the feeling is first intense. I keep feeling, and time can pass from a week to a couple of months. It depends on the drawing and the feeling it gives. Also, I feel connected and close to each one. And just in this way, one by one, I work my way through.

The point is, I am feeling—and once through one drawing, it is over and accepted in a healthy way. We all know that the trauma suffered from abuse is stored, and one can “not feel” in order to survive. So I found myself calling my work “Feeling Art.” I also started bringing each one into my therapist as she helped guide me in ways to decipher what the message or feeling may be.

Two years have gone by and my feeling art has piled up. It also has changed, looking more professional as the memories and flashbacks become more vivid and clear, as if burning a permanent picture in my mind. Therefore, it became important to me to get the drawing as close to the real picture as possible. I draw all people. Some are the perpetrators and most of them are alters of my own.

My therapist instilled in me the need to sign and date each picture. At first I would miss a few, but it soon became habit to sign and date the drawing by the alter who drew it. This alone gave much information about my system I had not known before. Yet the biggest part is: I am feeling. Since I am feeling through art, I also put more parts together to the puzzle of my life. The best part is being able to let go because I have worked my way through. It is a very healing thing.

I have seven pictures on my bedroom wall. They have been there for a long time now. One is of a lady taking off her top robe in front of a mirror. The reflection in the mirror is just a black shadow figure, as the

window behind her has a shadow figure in it too. She gives me the assurance of safety...a reminder that flashbacks will come and feel real. Yet we have a sense of safety in picturing those images as harmless and a thing of the past, rather than some unknown fear in our home.

The second is a picture of two roses crossed at the stems: a gift to ourselves and a remembrance of beauty and love. So this feeling is good.

The third is a picture of a woman with her eyes closed and arms crossed. It shows the human aura and spiritual universal power of all life. Therefore, this holds our spiritualness very high and well.

The fourth is an Indian warrior. It isn't the thought of war, with her war-paint on. It is the thought of strength against abuse, to stand up for ourselves. It helps to continue my own commitment of breaking the chain of abuse whenever possible, concerning others as well as myself.

The fifth is a playful picture of a colorful mountain, and a self-portrait of an alter at the bottom, while another alter is on top of the mountain holding a lightning bolt. It may sound strange. Yet to us it reminds the system of the playful parts, and it is all right. The lightning bolt resembles a vibrant light and strength to us, to feel there will always be light no matter how dark things can seem to feel and be.

The sixth is a Yin Yan with a Buddha God in the middle. This Buddha represents infinite light, protection and forgiveness. This helps the system to not get angry, but forgive ourselves as well as others. The protection is a tremendously good feeling, since all our growing-up, there was no protection at all. Now I can truly feel guidance and protection because it came from the inside out, and from one of my own alters.

The seventh is a picture of a younger alter who had a near-death experience.

It shows what I call the “Life Light” of all spiritual goodness. This Life Light has seven rays all coming from and through the young one's head. All around are beautiful colors of the personal aura in spirit, and she is transfigured as if to be ready to become one with the Life Light. This reduces fear of death and discourages suicide.

These pictures have helped me to have strength to continue on with therapy and life, because they truly give me a way to face and handle whatever may come. I am sure there will be more pictures that I will feel extremely close and connected to, and more things to work through. Yet none will be like these seven pictures on my wall that have given me my start to healthiness, freedom, and happiness.

As the old saying goes, “A picture is worth a thousand words”; mine have come from the inside out and are worth far more. They are priceless, because they have given me, my selves, more as a whole. It is a dream for many of us to have a sense of self, rather than a system of parts that are far from together.

I wish to all, good luck and hope in finding your own well-traveled journey, and finding your peace within.

MV



Music

surrounds my soul,
draws me inward,
ensnares my thoughts.
sings me beauty,
gives my life
resounding balance
once again.

By Rosemary W.

MV

The Minds Smile and Nod (Inside DID and Anorexia)

By Judith R.

I am trying to contact myself. I am confused.

I must begin by contacting my body.

And I am again confused. For I cannot find my body.

I am looking for it. But there is no body.

I am pondering it. It is not there.

I am deciding that I shall look for my body with the eyes which belong to the layers of observing minds inside that live under and above mine. Perhaps one of these minds might live in a body. Perhaps I could borrow it.

I go into the place of the layers. I ask if I may use the eyes that belong to the other minds.

The minds smile and nod yes.

Where shall I begin? I shall begin with the oldest mind. After all, the oldest mind must have more experience than the others. Perhaps I shall not have to go any further than that.

But when I ask it, the oldest mind sends me on to the other minds, explaining that it has never been in a body. It has only watched one.

And so, one by one, I go into the other minds. I look through each mind's eyes to see what it knows.

I find out that indeed, some of the minds have lived in bodies. Through the eyes of these minds, I can see their bodies. But the bodies belong to them, not to me.

Some of the minds live in children's bodies. Others live in teenaged bodies. Yet others live in adult bodies.

Odd, I think. These bodies seem familiar, yet strange.

Stranger still are the realities in which these minds and bodies live. Sensing this, I draw back in fear.

And the minds smile and nod again, for they understand.

"No, you cannot see," they say, "but you need not be afraid, for although we live in the bodies of the screaming children and in the bodies of the wailing adolescents and in those of the

crying adults, we will not allow you to see."

I come away from the minds. I look down in front of me. I see a pair of bluejeans, socks, a pair of jogging shoes. I see a pair of hands, and they are not my hands.

And the minds, observing me (as they always do), frown.

"It is not good for you to do this, for what you will find underneath the clothing will belong to you," they say. "So we will take your eyes and your mind so that you cannot see."

I begin to tremble, for as I watch, the layers part just enough to let me see what lies underneath the clothing. The minds have betrayed me. It is my own eyes that look. I have never looked before.

But in this moment, my eyes can see and my hands can feel. The body underneath the clothing is not mine. It is the body of a child. It is very far away. It is a body which could never belong to me.

For, if what my eyes can see in this moment belonged to me, I would be terrified. I would be afraid that I will die, for the body I see is near emaciation.

This body is the body of an anorexic.

I am glad it is not my body. For I would never want to have anorexia.

I hear the child's scream in the child's body, and I see the child's face, twisted in pain.

And the minds, smiling and nodding, embrace me and carry me away.

I am carried, and for a while, I have no mind at all. My vision changes. The stare on the face relaxes, then freezes into a defiant, angry mask. My teeth are clenched, and my eyes are suddenly vicious. I am furious, vengeful...and very strong. My body is now different.

Of course I have a body. It is tall and muscular.

I know this change all too well. My mind is being taken away from me,

even as I try to grab it and hold it in place. My mind has gone into another mind.

The other mind has a memory. The other mind sees the body before me as it was fifteen years ago, its legs collapsed beneath it on a sidewalk. The body is skeletal. It is folded up like an old cardboard box on the cement pavement. It tries to stand, but it cannot. It is too weak.

Beside it is a black backpack which has fallen into the gutter. Out in the street lies a trail of pretzels all broken into tiny pieces.

The figure sits with its head bowed between its legs, trembling violently. With one hand, it tries to gather up some of the tiny bits of pretzels which lie on the ground, but that hand, too, is shaking too violently to grasp them.

I am watching the mind in that shaking body. I am watching the ambulance come and put that body on a stretcher. I am watching that body lose control of its bowels and its bladder. I am screaming.

The body is lying in the emergency room of St. Claire's Hospital in New York City. The mind behind the angry, defiant mask is ordering it to stand up and to leave. And it does.

And that same mind orders its skeletal body to walk back to its apartment, ninety blocks away. For that mind knows itself to be strong and muscular.

And I am watching. And I am screaming.

But no, wait. I am trying to contact myself. I must try to find my body.

And as I watch, the body before me which lies beneath the bluejeans becomes muscular, then skeletal, then muscular again. The kaleidoscope is turning once again.

An Open Letter Concerning Sexual Abuse by a Therapist

I am writing as an integrated DID and recovering sex addict. For many years I have agonized over one area of my past. I am a psychotherapist who had sex with a client.

I hardly know what to write next. The purpose of this letter is to make amends and, hopefully, help another person with DID, although I did not help my client. She was also a "multiple," which I diagnosed, although I was unaware of my own disorder. There are many reasons and explanations for what I did, related to my own history of sexual abuse and unwillingness then to face myself, but the bottom line is this:

There is no excuse for sex with a patient. I took advantage of a precious relationship, the sacred trust and bond between therapist and client. I abused my position of power and authority for my own ends, not my client's. Sex is never OK with a patient. Don't let anyone ever tell you any good can come of it for the client.

Ironically, I knew all this even when I had sexual contact with my client. I have always been aware of what I did, but I felt powerless to stop. I went against every value I cherish as a therapist. Again, this is no excuse for my behavior.

Part of my healing path has been treatment by several therapists, including one in particular. She has always observed appropriate boundaries with me, for which I will be forever grateful. She (and my 12-step recovery program for sex addiction) taught me about saying "no," being respectful and loving without being sexual, and using touch for healing, connection, and affection, not to take advantage of another human being. I have been given a gift which has been invaluable for my healing, one which I did not give to my own client.

I am sorry that I violated my patient's trust, her boundaries that I should have observed even when she was not yet capable of setting them, and her body. I did to her essentially what all her other perpetrators had done. I was no better than they.

In fact, I did something worse. I betrayed her when she reached out for help. I contaminated and damaged any future therapy with another therapist. Always, trust will be infinitely harder. How do you heal with someone who is in the same role as a perpetrator? Perhaps I destroyed her hope, her bit of faith in another person, that people could be different from all those who had mistreated and abused her. The damage goes far beyond the actual sexual contact.

To my former client and to anyone who has been abused by a therapist, I am sorry. I know my words can never make up for the damage I have done to your life.

To other therapists who have done or who are in danger of doing what I did, here are some steps I have taken so I never repeat this transgression:

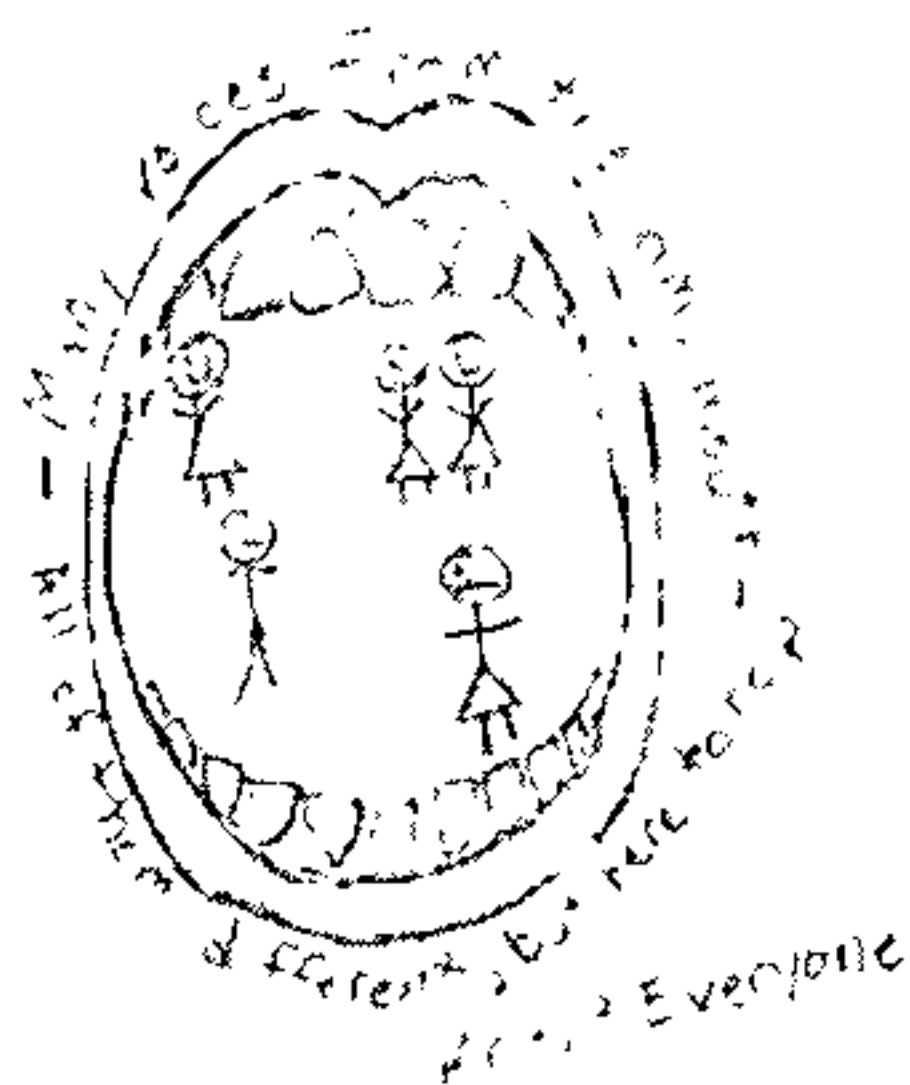
I told my supervisor, entered therapy, and told that therapist. I went to workshops/panels on ethics and sexual misconduct by therapists (which was just beginning to be discussed openly 20 years ago). However, this was not enough to "control" my inappropriate sexual behavior. Almost 10 years after that transgression, I began recovery for my eating disorder and started therapy again. Of course, sex with my client was not the only compulsive sexual behavior I had, and I was referred to a 12-step program for sex addiction. From my shame came the grace to remain abstinent and sexually sober for almost 9 years now.

Sobriety has also given me the memories and opportunity to heal from my own sexual trauma. For several years I let go of any independent therapy, working only as a co-therapist or under supervision until I could learn appropriate boundaries. I also limited the types of clients I treated, certainly not working with anyone who had the same issues with which I was grappling. I have had the opportunity to get honest with other recovering addicts, a segment of the public, and my closest family. Above all, I have made no changes in my work with clients until my therapist and sponsor have felt I was ready.

Now it is time for me to let go of the guilt of my past. I can never change what I did, but I can act to make sure it never happens again. I am learning to forgive myself. I pray that the person I sexually abused has found healing and peace in spite of what I did to her. I am sorry.

*A Wounded Healer and Past Victim of
Another Human Being*

MV



Letters

We will forward replies to these letters, anonymously or not, as you prefer. If you choose to include your return address, the recipient may choose to write back (or may not.) All contact is between the two of you, and MV cannot accept responsibility for any communication.

If you have alters coming out, who helps you with your homework or studies? How do you cope? One day I read the homework, the next day it's gone. How do you keep the knowledge that you read? I would love to hear from you. Thanks,
Angela

How do other people go on after the loss of their only (non-abusive) parent? My mother was a battered wife, a good woman, and though we dealt with a sociopath (no conscience) father, she tried to be there. We had a lot of tough times, but she always cared about me. I never told her I had a dissociative disorder. Our relationship was co-dependent; I tried to make her happy. She had primary lung cancer that spread to her brain. From the beginning to her death it was over two years, and I was a primary caregiver. I miss her so much. It is hard for my inner kids, too. I don't know what to do. Does anyone have suggestions?
By Katie-Sue

I'm asking for your help in mapping my system. I think that the basic organization of my system accounts for my parts' being co-conscious most of the time. (When I lose time, it seems to be brief bits of time I lose.) I feel quite sure that my system is structured like bleachers, like the sloping floor with seats in an auditorium, like a stadium, like a sloping bank of grass, like seats in a movie theatre, and so forth. Structures like this appear often in my dreams. Sometimes there are very few people in that setting; sometimes, many. Even though I read a lot about dissociation, I've not found anyone whose system is structured on something like seats that are on a sloping surface. I thought that if any of you have similarly-organized systems, it might help me get a breakthrough in my long attempt to map my system.

Take good care — Jigsaw

MV

Two Points of View from One Body

By Bill and Susan (taking turns)

This is a bit of my life.

The skills I have get our hands dirty, just like the old man's hands always were. I scrub the hands. Susan will be upset by the ground-in dirt, and I don't wish to annoy her. She is so helpful to me. Susan helps keep things organized, and reminds me of things that I should do. My alter Susan is a capable young woman (we aren't sure of her age). She can do almost anything that I can do, but I have more physical strength than she does. Susan says that she is "cute," and I believe that she is. I think that being cute is a state of mind. Gosh, I wish I had her energy! I wish that I could accomplish the number of tasks that she can do, in the short amount of time that she takes.

There is one huge problem with Susan. She just won't dress in the right clothes. It has to be nylons, pumps, a skirt and blouse, or a dress. I prefer to wear slacks and a shirt. The outside world just wouldn't understand if I were to wear her clothes. Susan alleges that she is a woman stuck in a man's body. I think of her as my alter, part of our "gang." This is one of the problems we must cope with.

I believe that there are five of us. Leslie (our artful alter) painted a picture that shows a head in five parts. Leslie called the painting "Us." (I love you paintings, Leslie, even though it is a little spooky to see my hand painting a picture, and having no control over it.) We don't know Leslie's gender. Leslie says that we have a boy's body, but likes Susan's clothes better. Leslie thinks that (he/she) is about twelve years old, but is so much more mature at times. Leslie is quiet and shy, while Susan can be rather bubbly, and craves outside contact. (She would love to have a pen pal!) Susan enjoyed going to therapy sessions because she could go out and talk to someone. Leslie likes bunnies, so we take Leslie's stuffed bunny to bed every night to help us sleep better.

Robert, where are you? We all know that you are there; why don't you let us get to know you?

I know that you sneak in and pretend to be me, but I am a little tired of explaining to acquaintances, "No, my name is Bill, not Robert." This really confuses the folks you've talked to; they think that they are cracking up. Isn't that a hoot? We're the cracked ones! I'd like to ask you some questions Robert, I need to know some things. Robert, how do you feel about us being married? Robert, have you made love to my wife? Did you have trouble at any of the many jobs we've had? I know that Susan has "tried on" some of our jobs for size. Did you? It's OK. I'd just like to know. Robert, you're not shy. I can tell that you've talked to the doc. Can't you leave us a note or something? Susan and Leslie leave us notes...

I said five of us, didn't I? We can't leave out the angry person. I don't have a name for you. You must have some horrible memories, to be so angry. I wish that you had talked to the doc about it. You might have felt better. I think that it may be overdue for you to share your memories. We are forty-eight, and as they say, we aren't getting younger. The old man is dead, and Ma is in another state and can't hurt us anymore.

I hope that this gets published, for others to read. I hope that we will read this, and those of us that don't communicate with the rest of us might start talking to us. I hope that others like us will realize that they are not alone. I hope that other men like me will find the courage to write about their lives. It is important to others. Men need to share their experiences so that people will realize that DID is not just something that happens to women. We are not Eve, or Sybil, but our lives have been damaged by those who used us in a terrible manner.

Bill

Hi. My name is Susan. I am an alter of one of MV's subscribers. (I see him as an alter.) Would you forward any letters from others who wish to be penpals? I have a separate address, so my mail won't bother my alter.

He's playing *The Grateful Dead* again. "I will get by, I will survive." He's fond of that song, perhaps because we have always gotten by, we've survived. "It's all right, I will get by, I will survive." We even have a "Touch of Grey" in our hair. I know that the next song on the tape will have us "Going to Hell in a Bucket." I guess we know the way; we've been there.

His father used us for his pleasure. It was my job to please him, and then he would make me massage his body. "Don't tell anyone; it's our secret." I just broke the rules. I'm not supposed to tell. The father can't hurt me now; he died.

"You're afraid of love, when push comes to shove." I guess we are. I never knew what love is. He thought he knew, but he's scared of love now. The music soothes him, my alter. The doc said that he was the host, but I'm a woman stuck with him. I'm not able to get out of this male body, and I am so frustrated. The body is male like his father's body was. I put my make-up on to hide the razor stubble, don my wig (he is balding) earrings (I pierced our ears) and one of my outfits (he has trouble walking in my shoes.) I feel good now; at least I look female.

I balance his check book for him; he probably won't get around to it. I make entries in his ledger; I write notes to remind him of the things he should do. "900,000 tons of steel" The tape is still playing. "West L.A. Fadeaway" and I'm doing dishes. I try to help his wife out. She's working two jobs. She and I get along most of the time.

"Ashes, ashes, all fall down." The stereo is still playing the "Dead." Sometimes I feel as if I were dead, but I'm not very grateful. Most of my life has been spent lurking in the shadows, not allowed to be myself. His mother

Two Views, Cont'd.

would flip out if she had ever seen her son in my clothes. (That's funny, according to another alter. She dressed us in his sister's clothes when he was little. I don't remember that.) His wife won't allow me to be myself in her presence. The doc said that she might not be able to handle seeing "her husband" in women's clothing. Perhaps not. But the doc had to retire for health reasons.

I liked going to the doc's office. It was the only time I could leave the house without getting everyone angry. I know that his wife didn't like me going out dressed as myself, even to the doc's. I feel so lonely. The doc had said that a pen-pal might help, but I haven't found any way to find one who would understand. Is there anyone that would like to be my pen-pal? I feel a little better, just from writing this letter.

Susan

MV

*The Spirit Breathes*

Healing step:

Painful!

facing, revealing

processing, deprogramming,
accepting each other inside.

healing process:

frightening!

believing, grieving,

trusting, releasing,

sharing truth with each insider.

healing manifestation:

peaceful!

relaxing, laughing,

playing, enjoying,

gifting hope to inner hurting victims.

I pause to inhale my healing spirit...

By Marj

I Drove By My Old House Today

i drove almost as if in a dream
dazed and oddly disconnected
arriving at my destination
without really seeming to begin
and there i stood
not knowing my cause or purpose
drawn backwards while standing still
being pulled without any detectable
movement
caught between two worlds
and seeing both in my mind's eye
gazing intently, looking
for some symbolic representation
of the child i had been
the pain i had endured
it stood deserted and empty
somehow smaller than i remembered
the once seemingly tall structure
once so large and overbearing
seemed to sag its eaves in defeat
as if its well guarded secrets
were now too heavy a burden to carry
the window by which i would sit
and escape within a fantasy of my
own making
was now shattered and broken
its jagged edges covered with layers
of dirt
where weeds snaked upwards
in twisted delight against the cold
panes
the silence a deafening crescendo
echoing inside my mind
i looked to the old red barn
where i once used to hide
beyond carefully stacked bales of hay
in secret nooks and crannies
only the young can find
and only the sky stared back at me
i stared at the overgrown weeds
that now inhabited the space
where our secret hiding place used
to be
i looked further beyond the house

craning my neck in effort to see
the old willow tree
where i once sought shelter
beneath her cool branches
but again, there was nothing there
she was no longer weeping for me
if i were to view it all
with the detachment of a stranger
it really was nothing more
than a tiny house left standing alone
showing the wear and tear of time
and neglect
yet things may not be what they
seem
and i couldn't help but wonder
if i were to listen carefully
would this place spring to life
and whisper her secrets to me?
if i but had the courage to step inside
silent, still and open
would i hear the echo
of my forgotten, stifled screams?
if i were to look within those tired
walls
would i see the remnants
of my childhood there?
would my secrets be hidden
in dark cobweb-filled corners
waiting to be discovered and
unearthed?
would the wind whistle through the
walls
and whisper the secrets
that you forced us to keep?
and i wonder dear father,
do you have this house tucked away
in some dark corner
in far recesses of your mind
invading and taunting your dreams?
do the cries of those children
come back to haunt you
as they are forever haunting me?

By Karma & Crew

MV



Journey Through Art

By M. M.

What role has my artwork played in my healing? I have been struggling to figure this out. It is unclear to me where I am in my healing process. Sometimes I feel as though I am at the beginning of a neverending journey. At other times it is clear that some progress—however vague and indistinct—has been made, simply by my ability to admit that *something* happened, whether or not I am ready to look at specifics.

There hasn't been a time in my life that I can remember not using art as an emotional outlet. (Then again, there are large portions of my life that I just plain do not remember.) Although many of my drawings and sculptures may appear as whimsical representations of joyous happenings, there is often a hidden meaning known only to their creator. I need to qualify this though. Those are the things that I do...this part of me called M. There is another piece of me—the angry one—one who represents both terror and rage. This part is not given to disguising feelings, and has been known to do some pretty violent renderings. Those drawings are known as the "sweatshirt people." Some strong feelings are depicted in them, including helplessness, hopelessness, despair, defeat and shame. I can see varying temperaments reflected in the different figures, indicative of my separate parts. (I do not yet enjoy co-consciousness with my internal family.)

So my artwork is not confined to one outlook, medium, or style. The different parts of me paint, draw, sculpt, photograph, scribble, and carve. For me anyway it is the process—not the product—that provides the catharsis. Drawing almost always provides an opportunity to express something. Whether it be fear, hope, pain or joy—all are given to expression in a safe and tangible way. Each part of me has something to say and does so in his or her own way. The kids draw like kids do while the older

parts create in their own ways. The subject matter for all parts is of equal importance—whether technically rendered or scribbled in crayon. Everyone has their "voice."

I can't say I always understand what comes out at the end of my pen or appears in my sketch book. I just try to accept it all for what it is. I am learning more and more about my "parts" and thus am gaining a clearer understanding of myself.

The paper listens when the world cannot—or will not. It doesn't judge us, and bears no grudges. We draw etc. not only because we want to, but also because we need to. To stop creating would be to stop breathing. Art makes us real...puts us on paper, gives us a place...a voice...makes us real.

There has been a progression of sorts over the years. Well, some progression and some is simply fluctuation. I'm sure that my impaired vision has affected my, shall I say, "perspective" on life. James Thurber said it well when he wrote, "The kingdom of the partly-blind is a little like Oz, a little like Wonderland, a little like Poictesme." (Perhaps in my case, a little like Poltergeist.) "Anything you can think of, and a lot you would never think of, can happen there...With perfect vision, one is inextricably trapped in the workaday world, a prisoner of reality."

Reality is truly a mystery to me. What with my dissociative disorder and the fact that I do not have a conscious, continuous memory—that, coupled with my poor vision which often demands imagination or guesswork regarding what that elusive thing "reality" is. It would be hard for the hawk-eyed world to conceive of the hazy, soft edges of my perception. Again, I will refer to James Thurber, who is so clear in his explanations (not to mention the things that he 'sees' are much more whimsical and lighthearted than any example I could give). Thurber wrote, "I suppose you have to have just the right proportion of sight to encounter such phenomena...I saw

a Cuban flag flying over a national bank; I saw a gay old lady with a gray parasol walk right through the side of a truck; I saw a cat roll across a street in a small striped barrel; I saw bridges rise lazily into the air, like balloons...with better vision I suppose the Cuban flag would have been an American flag; the gay old lady a garbage man with a garbage can on his back; the cat a piece of butcher's paper blowing in the wind; the floating bridges, smoke from tugs hanging in the air."

My reality has always been—since I can remember—so incongruous, so tainted, that I naturally was drawn to creating my own "reality" in pictures. On paper I could make for myself a tranquil, safe world. A world where it is safe to be a child. Safe to play in the sunshine of a peaceful life. Many of us in this world have been denied our childhood. It was stolen from us by selfish, angry people. Molding my own world, pictures on papers...somehow it has helped me. Some drawings have resolutions, when disturbing subjects are overtly or covertly depicted. Some are just purely pictures of what I wish could have been in my life.

MV





Art by M.M.

Books

Treatment of Offenders with Mental Disorders

Edited by Robert M Wettstein. Published by Guilford Press, 72 Spring St., New York, NY 10012 (800) 365-7006. ©1998. 438 pages, hardbound. \$45.

I mention this book primarily because of its extensive chapter on the treatment of sexual offenders. This portion, prepared by Howard E. Barbaree and William L. Marshall, both Ph.D.'s from Ontario, Canada, runs some 63 pages, including five full pages of references. As an attempt to evaluate often-conflicting forms of treatment for perpetrators of major sex crimes (such as rape and child abuse), the work is careful in its disclaimers. The authors note that perpetrators who continue to deny their offense may not be accepted into treatment programs, and some evaluations count only those offenders who don't drop out. This selectivity may yield "good outcomes" only because the people willing to enter and complete the

programs were initially less likely to reoffend. Treatments discussed include "organic" approaches (ie, methods to reduce sexual urges by chemical or physical means), cognitive-behavioral therapies, and nonbehavioral psychotherapy. Both institutional and community-based programs are discussed. This book also includes a separate chapter on community-based forensic treatment which may be of interest and help to those professionals working with sexual offenders.

Breaking Ritual Silence: An anthology of Ritual Abuse Survivors' Stories

Jeanne Marie Lorena and Paula Levy, Editors. Published by Trout & Sons, Inc., 1504 8-00292 Main St., Gardnerville, NV 89410. © 1998. 244 pages, softbound. \$14.95 plus \$3 shipping.

Chrystine Oksana, respected author of *Safe Passage to Healing* wrote the preface for this well-prepared

collection of survivor stories. Despite the very graphic nature of this book, a number of the contributors take a hopeful stance in approaching their remembrance of ritualized trauma. Some of the accounts are convincing, and all sound sincere. Some details cited are disputable and possibly exaggerated. (Taken at random: a child who regularly counts to one-million. This process would take nearly 12 days, at 24 hours a day, if the numbers were counted one per second with no breaks.) Yet we know that severe trauma can increase the likelihood of memory distortion, so "poor remembering" may be one more result of brutal treatment in childhood. Even without proven details, the emotions of pain, anger, and frustration expressed are clear and genuine, and the promise of recovery exists. —Lynn W.

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