

MANY VOICES

WORDS OF HOPE FOR PEOPLE RECOVERING FROM TRAUMA & DISSOCIATION

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Inside:

The Art of Negotiation Experiencing Loneliness



By Becky C.

Winter

Winter has settled on my heart
with no hope of spring
No relief from the cold, gray blanket
settling on my soul.

What does the winter landscape look
like..

- a barren, desolate wasteland
- gray and heavy
- damp and biting cold
- SILENT!

Wasn't it spring one week ago?
Will spring bloom again in my heart
and soul and spirit?

I've forgotten where the flowers are
and the warm, sun-drenched breeze...

They have to be there somewhere...
Don't they?

Maybe if I could see the possibility
of spring

I would have more strength to walk
through

the days or weeks till its arrival.

Can anyone see behind the dark
clouds?

Is the sun still shining?

Why can't I see it?

The oppressive, smothering blanket
of despair

removes even the remembrance of
spring.

The cold has caused a numbness
that permeates my being.

Where is life...

Where is peace...

Where is joy...

Spring...

I long for you to melt the bonds of
winter

within my soul.

By The Writer

MV

Witness

By Deb Strock

To be abused as a child is terrible. It is made worse when the abuser is your parent...the very person who gave you life, who is supposed to love and protect you from all harm. And when they tell you that you deserve this treatment, you believe them. More than believe them. You know to the very fabric of your being that this is the truth that they speak. You cling to that knowledge like a drowning man clings to a stick of driftwood. You look to that as you look to the light of heaven, because this has happened because you are a Sinner. You must only repent. Must find a way to be good enough so this won't need to happen anymore. If it's because you are ugly, stupid, worthless, fat, slow, then it's okay. Because you can work very, very hard to change those things. Try very, very hard to be good and pretty and smart. Because if you can do that, you can change everything. You are the one in control. And you do everything in your power to stop being so damn stupid and ugly but you know, you never can seem to pull it off. Because, as it turns out, you were a lot stupider and uglier than you'd realized in the beginning. If only you can find the strength to keep trying, then maybe one day, ugly stupid you will get it right. But you never do.

And then you grow up. And as an adult you know that you need to keep punishing yourself because after all...you are such a piece of shit...even if some people don't realize it right off

the bat. It's only because you're such a liar that they can't see through you immediately. To your disgusting center. And not only are you revolting through and through but you're pretty fuckin crazy too, aren't you? You think about suicide all the time and you have that little habit of cutting your legs and arms up with razor blades. Everyone else is so happy and normal but you're a goddamned freak, aren't you? And who the hell would ever love you? Your crazy ass is nothing but a burden to everyone because you can't even take care of yourself like everyone else does. Maybe you starve yourself, or eat until you become the disgusting pig on the outside that you know you are on the inside. Or maybe you drink and drug or just fuck every guy who will lay his hands on a hideous thing like you. See? You're bad and stupid...just like they said you were. They were right. They were right to abuse you; you totally deserved it just for being born as disgusting as you are.

As bad as this sounds though, it really can become much worse. Because sometimes the worst thing imaginable happens. Someone comes along and loves you. And won't go away. And you tell them you're bad. You try to show them how gross you are and they stay. And they won't stop loving you although you try so hard to make them stop. You swore all your life all you wanted was for someone to love you, but now they do and it hurts so bad. It hurts as much as all of those

nasty words and looks and punches put together. Because with that first love comes the awakening. That you aren't ugly or bad or stupid. In fact, you're a wonderful, caring person who is beautiful in every sense of the word. And you realize you didn't deserve it. And you have no choice but to ask, "Why then? Why did they do that to me?" And the answer comes slowly, after much denial and minimization and pain. They did it because they had a problem and they were wrong, so very, incredibly wrong to have treated you that way. You were a sweet, innocent, trusting, loving child and they raped and beat and demeaned you anyway. And the scars you carry are permanent no matter how beautiful you now realize you are. You simply need to learn to live with them, to live with the truth. Your innocence was stolen and you must move on anyway. Your parents, who you loved and depended on for everything, victimized you because they never dealt with, perhaps, what their parents did to them, or their alcohol problem, or their unhappy marriage, or whatever. You never had control. You were helpless. And the sweet growing time that was the childhood of everyone else you know, is recalled by you as a jail sentence that you had to endure. Your only crime...being a child. And now here you are, an adult, and the war is over. Now you must learn to remember, to survive and then finally...to live.

MV



The Angel of Light

I look for an angel
to shelter me
from the raging storm within,
to heal the fears of my heart.
Wrap your wings
around me.
Teach me how to fly
away from
the shadows of pain
and memories.
Give me strength
as you hold my hand
guiding my way
out of the darkest night
and into the light of the day.

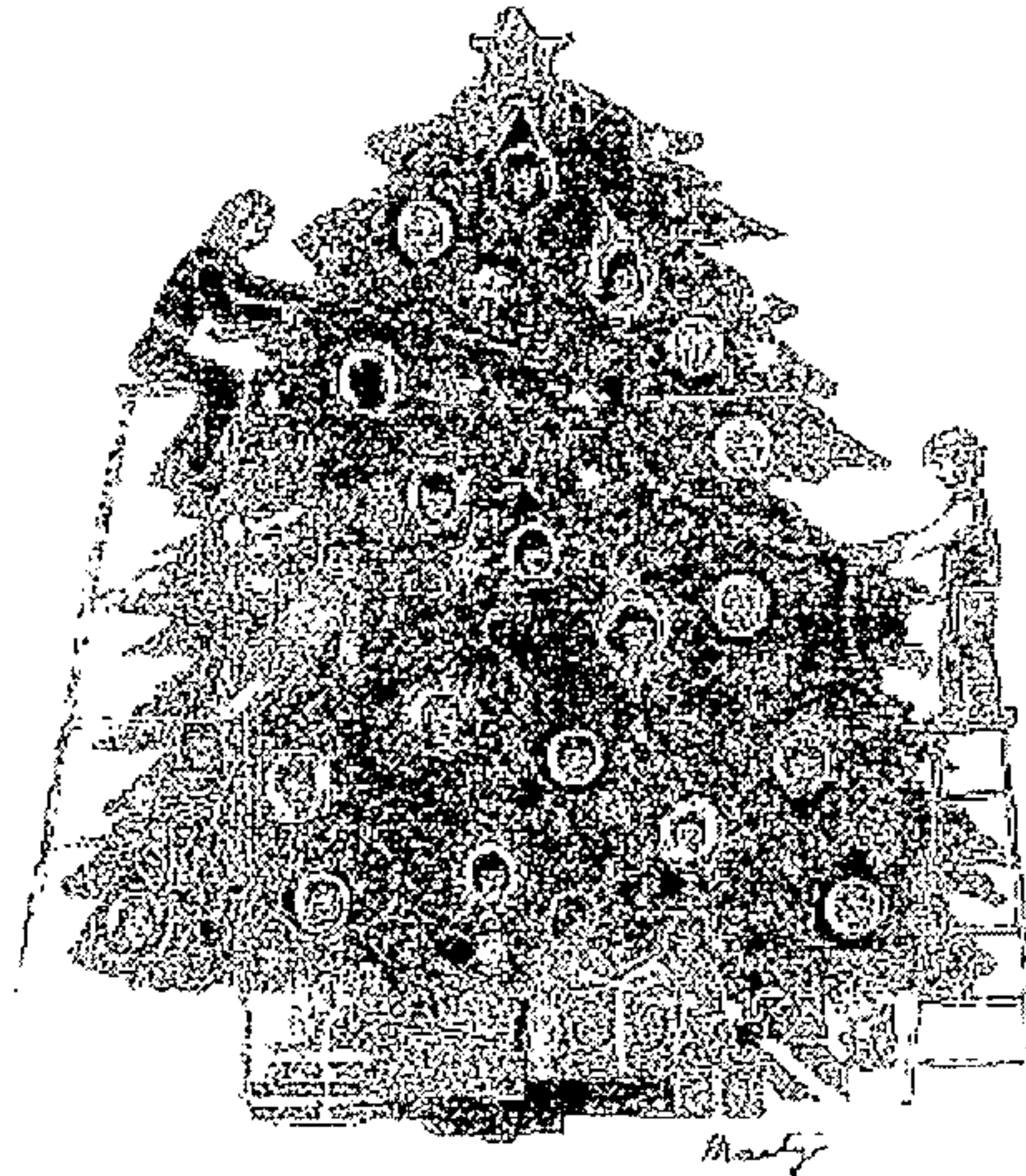
By Cherie K.

MV



MANY VOICES needs an Angel or Two!

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



Serious Subjects

The first page of the ISSD News (Oct. '98) features a report on a very serious matter. In Texas, the Federal Government has initiated a criminal trial, *"United States v. Peterson, Seward, Mueck, Keraga, and Davis,"* alleging that four mental health professionals and a hospital administrator conspired to defraud insurance companies by improperly diagnosing patients with multiple personality disorder. The indictment also alleges that the therapists treated patients for unsubstantiated and unrealistic allegations and abuses, such as satanic ritual abuse, to defraud health insurance companies.

While ISSD takes no position on the guilt or innocence of the defendants in this case, it is concerned that inaccurate information about dissociative disorders and the effects of child abuse may appear in the media. This article reminds us that DID is real (despite what you may read or hear on TV) and is well researched. There is good evidence that DID is usually a result of chronic child abuse and neglect, rather than the outcome of poor therapy. Patients with DID

often recover memories of child abuse. The position of most professional health care associations about "recovered memories" is that some recovered memories may be true, and there is no conclusive method to tell which are false. The article states, "Therapists simply have no way of knowing how much of any memory is accurate, and therefore ISSD suggests therapists remain neutral about the accuracy of their patients' memories."

The ISSD is concerned that this trial could increase the risk of criminal action against therapists who treat people whose memories cannot be "proven" by outside confirmation. "Prosecutors should not be allowed to set standards for health care," they say. You can learn more about the ISSD at its website, www.issd.org. Or call for membership info: 847/480-0899.

On a related subject, the journal *Ethics & Behavior* recently published a special issue on the science and politics of recovered memory. (Volume 8, #2, 1998- Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers, Mahwah NJ.)

It includes articles such as *Notes from a Practice Under Siege: Harassment, Defamation, and Intimidation in the Name of Science*, by David L. Calof; *Consider this, Skeptics of Recovered Memory*, by Ross E. Cheit; and *Science in the Memory Debate*, by Jennifer J. Freyd. The whole volume is well worth reading. Calof, founder and former editor/publisher of *Treating Abuse Today*, was targeted by FMSF-sympathy groups who have attempted to drive him out of practice. Despite harassment, Calof has continued treating trauma survivors, and recently received his diplomate status from the American Psychotherapy Association. His attorney (one of many Calof associates who were also harassed) received the Washington State Bar's "Courageous Award" for courage in the face of adversity. I have no idea if the FMSF signs up abuse perpetrators as members, but it seems very clear from this volume that some who promote FMSF views are (to put it mildly) "cruel and unusual" humans. —Lynn W.

MV

Fruitbats

By Jigsaw

To my new group (led by my psychiatrist) I brought my profoundly strong response to an brief anecdote about Sally in one issue of the journal *Dissociation*. One part of Sally—named Sad Sally—was plagued by *fruitbats*, the source of negative messages that played and replayed themselves in her mind, wearing her out and holding her down. Something deep inside me grabbed that name because, I believe, it corresponded to what I would hear inside my own noisy brain. Worst of all were Shame Attacks when my whole being experienced a shudder: I would feel worthlessness irradiating my whole body. When the shudder-feeling would ripple down at my flesh, I knew I was not worthy to be alive—certainly not worthy of being in relationship with any human being. During these Shame Attacks, I allowed my own sense of unworthiness to attack me. At times I felt the need to escape from my own loathed self.

In my late fifties, I was fed up with Shame Attacks. They were going to be history, I promised my system. Sally's characterization was right on—*fruitbats*—what an imaginative name for my negative introjects, for those internalized parental abusers who did a job on the self and sucked out vital juices: all value, goodness, intelligence, creativity. Time and time again, they de-skilled me.

Megs, my fellow group member, confidently said—*of course there are actual fruitbats. They suck plump, nutritious goodness out of fruits. They exist. A variety of the bat family.* Meg is a smart one.

What? I shot back. No way. That's Sally's creative scenario.

Then Megs definitively set me straight. And so did others in the group. Later that week I called my favorite reference librarian at the local library (withholding, of course, my actual reason for needing an answer) and asked: Would you mind naming for me the natural predators of fruitbats? After researching my question, he answered with a whole list, but those that stick in my mind are but two: snakes and raccoons. No way was I going to use snakes, with my strong fear of and aversion to that most suggestive reptile. But raccoons? Yes. I would use raccoons.

Our children's elementary school had sponsored an annual fair called the Raccoon Roundup, and I had a strong visual memory of our artistic daughter's cute drawings of Raccoons on poster board, publicizing the happy event over the years as she moved from grade to grade.

Raccoons and I were on good terms with each other.

So the next week my friends in group were willing to hear me out as I moved into stage two. Yes, I have some version of internal fruitbats that undermines my well-being and gives me Shame Attacks. But I reported to my group that I now had a plan to counteract them: raccoons. So whenever my internal fruitbats got on a roll and I could feel a Shame Attack coming on, I imagined raccoons playing all over wherever I was—climbing up on furniture, jumping from the ceiling to my shoulder (my raccoons have no claws), coaxing me to play with them. In short, my raccoons took over my space and displaced those wretched messages from my fruitbats. If I felt as if the fruitbats were particularly strong, I'd simply say, "*Double the number of raccoons.*" And how good it felt inside. No longer was I the fruitbats' victim. No more full-body shudders that cut me off from humanity. In place of persecution, there was pleasure. And I was engineer and architect of this internal change. It felt that good.

My friends in group approved those raccoons, and I know it made all the difference in the world to be able to process these stages, under my psychiatrist's guidance, among good friends. Then I started talking about converting those fruitbats to something else. I strongly believe in keeping every part of my system; I had promised my parts that each part will stay—although certain job descriptions and functions may be changed. No part would ever be expunged or eliminated.

I spent much industrial-strength energy asking myself: what purpose did those fruitbats serve in my childhood? I listened intently for the answer. And I journaled, drawing out the answer. I was writing-to-learn. Days later I had it: their purpose was, in a peculiar way, to keep Mother's love. For survival, I had to maintain an abiding relationship with her; my relationship with my Father was fraught with peril. On the conscious level, Mother knew nothing of what Dad had deftly programmed me to do down in the basement and deep in the barn. On the conscious level, I didn't know what was going on in our secret life. But my system knew.

My mother's unspoken message was to do well but not outshine certain persons. It got pretty dicey because she took much pleasure in some of my successes yet felt displeased about others. And I could not find the line between what was worth celebrating and what was going to be

cold-shouldered. One day she called my high school principal to tell him to take me off a ballot for an election (I cannot recall what I was nominated for) because, Mother claimed, "*She has enough honors.*" My Mother and I did not discuss this episode until four decades later.

Somehow those fruitbats set it up so I would usually not displease my mother by outshining my cousins, or my mother's friends' children. I would, however, not develop an adequately strong and individualized identity. But I could go on living. Those fruitbats made me into a very very good and terribly obedient daughter, who, in the path of life, kept marching in the dead center of the mainstream. Because that was the safest place, and safety was essential; mother's care was essential to maintain life itself. So I learned not to hate the fruitbats. I knew I needed their wisdom, tenacity and energy—but I was jolly well determined that their job description would be changed. Radically changed.

In my group while we were casting about for a fresh job description for my internal underminers (stage three) Megs happened to say: *Those cardinals in the bird feeder really are pretty aggressive about defending their territory. No meek birds, those cardinals.*

Again, Megs said precisely what I needed. The raccoons would be a change agent: those pesky fruitbats would be subdued by playful raccoons and imaginatively transformed into cardinals full of healthy self-esteem—keenly bright red birds with a steady song that pulsed like a heart. It had that radical felt sense of being right. All that powerful energy invested in the fruitbats would be creatively converted within my inner system to become cardinals to defend our boundaries, to say to those who needed these words: *I do not allow myself to be treated that way.* My core identity would develop, and I was eager to discover/uncover my full identity. (My psychiatrist repeatedly urges all of us in the group to stand up for ourselves, to be unafraid of conflict, to work through conflict with every person who touches our lives. In short, not to run away from difficult situations, as we dissociates are wont to do.)

Funny thing. I happened to find in the drawer where I keep table cloths a scarlet red cardinal made of stained glass. That cardinal now hangs in the bedroom window. One day on impulse, when I "should" have been doing paperwork in my office, I went to the Mall. I needed something tangible. At the mall, I searched for and found a charming stuffed

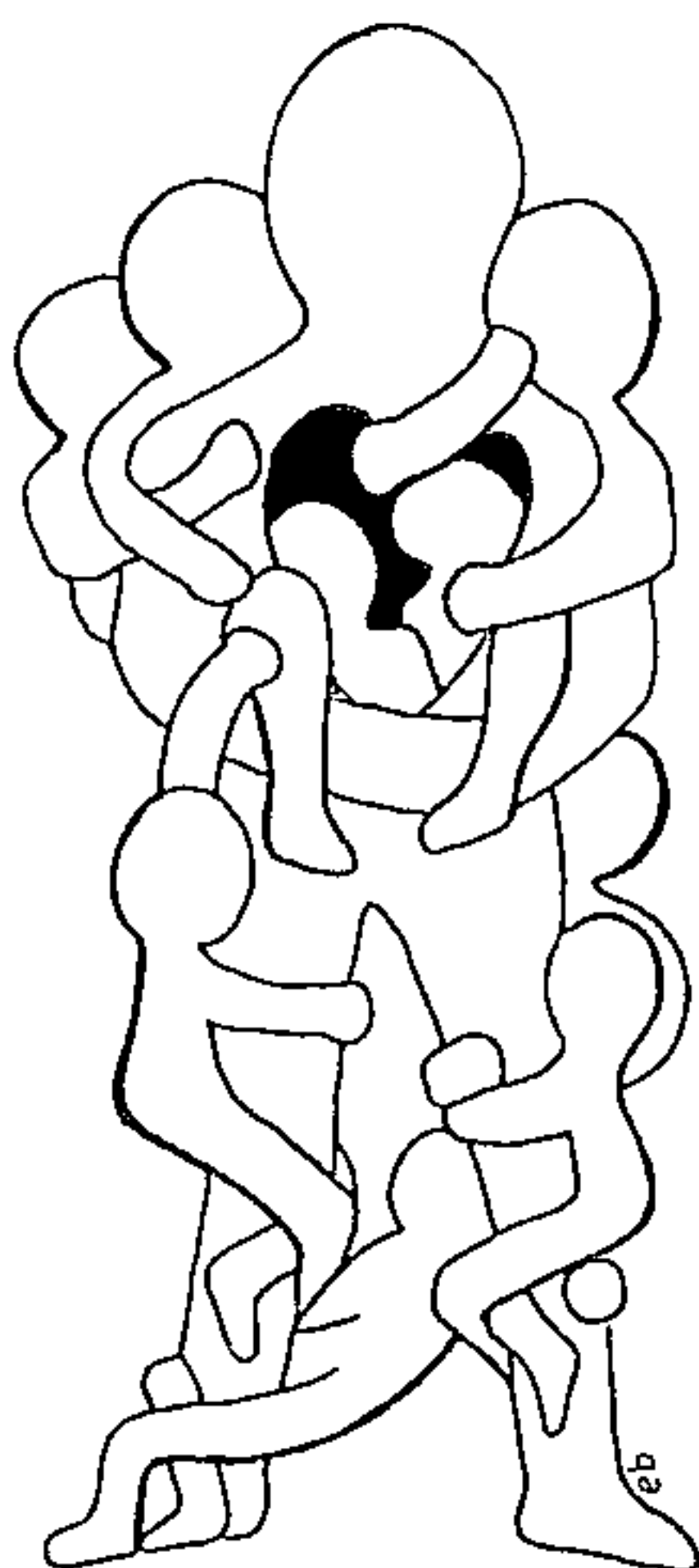
raccoon—very soft with a welcoming face, but also with a stare in its eyes that gives evidence of emotional authority. And I wanted to name this stuffed animal, but I didn't want to be ingenious in selecting the name. I wanted the name to be selected by my whole system, not just my conscious mind (stage four). So as I would fall asleep each night I would repeatedly ask myself—what is the raccoon's name?

Early one morning in the twilight zone, a name floated up—Nicosian ("nick-ah-see-an"). I heard it only once, but I heard it very distinctly. I wrote it down, making sure—absolutely sure—not to lose it. Then, still sleeping-yet-awake, I ran for a reference book. Nicosia is the capital of Cyprus, an island in the Mediterranean split into Greek and Turkish factions; Nicosian is simply an inhabitant of Nicosia. Now for this word, this Nicosian, to float up into my twilight zone is not as outlandish as it may first seem. I had recently been in Turkey and Greece; from guides I had heard the history of the area.

Tellingly, my first therapist had said that everything inside moves toward integration by negotiation among my parts. See? Negotiation: Nicosian. I felt the words play in my body. My raccoon named Nicosian negotiates now inside on our behalf. A powerful change agent, my raccoon takes my fruitbats, conserves their merits (energy, tenacity, strength), and transforms those dark saboteur fruitbats into cardinals full of energy, tenacity, and power to defend me—not undermine me

Although I still feel shame now and again, I no longer suffer from Shame Attacks.
Final Stage: My Shame Attacks are history.

MV



Getting and Keeping a Life

We have our recovering alcoholic angel Becky and our adorable 10-year-old Suzy A. to thank for getting and keeping friends.

Angel spent quite a lot of time listening to how others talked to and acted toward others in social settings, such as in the teacher's lounge before and after school. Then with Becky's help we picked four teachers with whom we knew one or more of us had at least a common interest. For instance, we picked out an art teacher who was especially kind to Becky's students and began to share Jane's interests in art, by inviting her to Gabe's (our) flower garden to do watercolor one Saturday. During this informal time she provided Jane with much-wished for art lessons, and we found out she shared our love for Middle-Eastern food.

Also, Becky took it upon herself to become involved in the teacher's association as a Building Representative. That meant others came to her for information which boosted her self-esteem. She also found a place in the State Association in the minority affairs committee. As we supported her in this, we got to go to Washington D.C., Miami, FL, and Lexington, KY. It helped open up acquaintances with people at home and across the state. It also got us "out of the house" and created a world beyond our own pain.

Suzy A. got to go to the school library to find her beloved books. Using our own rule of an adult always being with a child (co-consciousness) we could ask for information and because of faculty privileges we could check out tons of books at a time, review book-fair options before "all the good books were gone," and find magazines (old and new) for others who live here.

This helped Suzy A. to be involved with the kind librarians. It also helped all the children pursue interests.

We have learned before having MS to say "yes" to opportunities. Something

that isn't the old thinking of just saying "yes" to everything. Rather, choosing what to say "yes" to. Saying "yes" to pursue a variety of interests. Building acquaintances into friendships slowly over years. It now seems without those friends our lives would be lonely and sad. Those people are the ones who drive us to the grocery, take us to the movies or out to eat. They call us to "check in," talk, or complain. It doesn't matter to us. It helps us keep in touch with the world. One thing we learned without observing is to listen carefully, as it was a survival tool. Now people know we will listen, and have physical limitations now that puts us in a place that we're available. We also learned very slowly to trust a couple of people with our hopes, fears, and our MPD. This is never the focus of our friendship, but it can be talked about *if we want*. Mostly it was the hardest choice to share our "secrets" because we'd had friends who were also MPD/survivors of child sexual abuse. The problem after a time was that our past was the focus often. Sometimes we'd trigger difficulties for each other without meaning to. Now we can speak of "it" to a couple of people but our friendships are about more than abuse. Also we have tried to learn to appreciate ourselves by learning to occupy ourselves with interesting things. In learning to occupy ourselves we can (1) have something to talk about with others; (2) have skills to teach others; (3) have positive occupying things to substitute for negative behaviors; (4) reinforce how special and wonderful each of us are; (5) learn to be contented in our new situation (out of work because of MS, at home quite a lot, and alone) by not having our day become too boring.

Well, it's difficult to be without work, but thanks to our socialites, we'll never be without friends! Thank you for the support and letters from readers of MV.

Your friend, Becca (of Becky et al)

MV

Therapist's Page

By Christopher H. Rosik, PhD

Christopher H. Rosik, Ph.D. is a psychologist and clinical director of the Link Care Counseling Center, 1734 W. Shaw Ave., Fresno, CA 93711. He is also a member of the ISSD. A more formal, annotated version of this article has been submitted for publication.

Religious Contributions to the Healing of Dissociative Disorders

The relationship between the dissociative disorders field and the religious community has been characterized to date by a mutual apprehension. Both sides tend to be rather rigid in their separate views of dissociative symptoms, which makes sharing beneficial resources difficult. In the dissociative disorders literature, for example, the primary works by Putnam¹ and Ross² scarcely mentioned the potential therapeutic benefits of religious faith. Though Philips and Fredericks³ did address the role of personal spirituality in their writing, little mention was made of organized religious involvement.

For a number of reasons, the wall between therapy for dissociative disorders and religious faith is an artificial barrier that should be reconsidered. Recent research has affirmed the mental health benefits of religious faith and spirituality, especially among certain populations, such as African-Americans, who are more religious than the Anglo community. Serious attention to minority issues in the study of dissociative disorders cannot legitimately ignore the important role of religion in ethnic identity formation.

For many people, religion and spirituality play a central role in coping with life's most difficult problems. Religious forms of coping have been found to help uncontrollable and unmanageable situations, such as those typically suffered by DD patients. It seems logical to explore the ways religious expression may benefit people who struggle with severe dissociative symptoms.

Why does the "religiosity gap" exist in the therapeutic community? Some mental health professionals may have had negative personal experiences, or hold negative stereotypes. Religion, for some, is a private subject, and the therapist may feel intrusive in bringing it up. Lack of training is another contributing factor. Few graduate courses address religious concerns, leading some therapists to think religious issues fall outside the boundaries of their profession.

Childhood abuse justified in the name of religion, particularly in fundamentalist religious contexts, has been frequently observed in the histories of patients suffering from severe dissociative symptoms. When mental health professionals unfamiliar with institutional religious practices hear these histories, they

may overgeneralize and "throw the baby out with the bathwater," assuming that religion per se is the perpetrator of abuse. There is also a clash between the mental health community and some religious groups, in understanding the origin and treatment of certain alternative identities. Is a hostile alter a persecutor ego-state, or a demon? I have elsewhere written that this distinction is based on a world view clash that needs to be researched objectively⁴.

Such world-view conflicts, along with occasional unethical behavior among pastors and religious counselors working with dissociative patients, may lead some therapists to shy away from addressing the religious or spiritual dimension in their clients. Strict, though often arbitrary, professional boundaries may be erected between a client's psychological and spiritual issues for the purposes of containing the therapist's anxiety. Our field appears to recognize the dangers of theological *folie à deux* between religious counselors and their patients, but has paid far less attention to the possibility of a secular *folie à deux*, in which therapists and patients avoid inquiry into obvious religious or spiritual content.

Therapists who feel uncomfortable or unqualified to directly examine the spiritual concerns of their clients should at least be able to make an appropriate referral to a member of the clergy.

Therapists may find their religious patients benefit from a therapy that is more spiritually-oriented than the traditional secularized approach...such as successful treatments applying religious cognitive behavioral therapy techniques.

Because dissociative patients, by definition, have more than one "point of view," it is not surprising to learn that an individual patient may hold a variety of God images, interest/disinterest in religion, and be preoccupied with religious questions about God's nature and the meaning of personal suffering.

It seems reasonable to take a religious history of new clients. One tool is the Religious Ideation Index, (Bowman, Coons, Jones, & Oldstrom)⁵. Interview questions that assess the patient's childhood religious and spiritual experiences, present religious practices, beliefs about God, and the patient's experienced relationship with God will provide rich clinical information. This data can help determine which aspects of the patient's religious and spiritual life can be incorporated therapeutically into the treatment program. Several authors

(Bergin, 1991⁶; Gartner, 1996⁷; Shafranske, 1996b⁸; Ventis, 1995⁹) offer views on healthy versus unhealthy ways of being religious.

Once an initial assessment of the patient's religious and spiritual experience has been conducted, therapists who so desire can begin to incorporate this information into treatment. While there are many options for including patient religiousness in therapy, this analysis will discuss three prominent areas: religious rituals, religious and spiritual beliefs, and organized religious involvement.

Religious Rituals

Religious rituals often carry immense symbolic power for patients, and when that power has not been used destructively, these rituals can provide considerable therapeutic benefit for them. A universal ritual among theistic religions, for example, is prayer. Prayer has been found to have significant positive influence in treating several physical and psychological conditions. In an extensive review of the literature, McCullough¹⁰ concluded that prayer, especially prayer rich in mystical/religious experience, comforts and provides an improved sense of well-being, while it reduces stress.

Thus patients dealing with the typical hardships that accompany severe dissociation may find prayer personally helpful. Clinicians can encourage the religious patient's use of group prayer when safe and supportive persons are available within the social network. Other examples of therapeutic prayer might include having friendly alter personalities pray for one another, to increase cooperative action, or use of prayer in the therapy session, when the therapist can do so genuinely and has previously weighed the potential risks and benefits of such an intervention. Another ritual worth mentioning is religious baptism. I have heard reports of spontaneous merging of alter personalities during a baptism ceremony, which seemed to function as an effective integration ritual.

In one case, a 43-year-old woman scheduled her therapy sessions to precede a regular prayer meeting at her church. The patient had a small circle of friends at the church who knew of her DID diagnosis and allowed her to determine the sort of prayer she needed. Following occasional abreactive experiences, or the disclosure of new alters, the patient reported that her friends' prayer for her generally and for specific alters often resulted in reduced

distress, increased empathy among alters, and gave a greater sense of religious meaning to her present suffering. This involvement in the prayer meeting was both encouraged and explored during therapy, to enhance and fortify positive psychological and spiritual effects.

Religious and Spiritual Beliefs

The use of religious and spiritual beliefs in the psychotherapy of dissociative disorders can be considered one aspect of the cognitive intervention so important to successful treatment. Patients whose thinking patterns are shaped by and interpreted through religious language and belief are more responsive to counselors who utilize these concepts.

In therapy for dissociative disorders, problems associated with impulse control often interfere with treatment, for instance, when one personality acts out sexually or makes repeated suicide gestures. Patients' religious and spiritual beliefs may exert a containing influence on the internal pressure to act out in destructive ways, and the astute therapist will work to identify and support those convictions.

Consider the dissociative patient struggling with suicidal thoughts. Despite the general tendency of researchers studying suicide risk to either ignore or minimize the role of religious beliefs, many dissociators report that their religious convictions are the primary reason they do not attempt to end their lives. This suggests that inquiring about the suicidal patient's religious beliefs can play a significant role in the management of suicidal impulses. Beliefs that encourage life and underscore the patient's ambivalence about death can often be profitably explored.

Strategic and sensitive challenging of restrictive, rigid and overly ritualistic religious approaches may also assist in therapy with dissociative patients. Therapists might encourage dissociative patients with harmful religious views to consider the more nurturing and supportive notions of faith and God contained in their religious and spiritual traditions. In religious terms, such interventions are designed to bring the patient into an experience of grace. For examples of intervention techniques, Lovinger¹¹ has outlined some useful strategies for dealing with religious resistances.

Religious beliefs provide a sense of meaning and purpose in many patients' lives, allowing them to beneficially reconstruct and reinterpret negative life events. For example, a 26-year-old woman diagnosed with major depression and depersonalization disorder reported an amnesic episode where she "came to" in a nearby graveyard. Understandably distressed, she reported an increase of suicidal thoughts and great confusion

concerning how God could allow this to happen to her. Assessment of her Christian beliefs made clear that she did not ultimately view suicide as an option. This led her to remove medications she had been storing toward a potential overdose. In subsequent sessions we addressed the possibility of a DID diagnosis and her religious concerns about this. We discussed dissociation as a capacity of the mind which God had given her to survive, and observed the unity-within-multiplicity parallels found in the concept of the Trinity.

Involvement in organized religions

Therapeutic benefits of organized religious involvement are many and varied. The two I will examine here are clergy consultation and religious practice. Studies repeatedly suggest that large numbers of North Americans prefer to see clergy for their mental distress. This is particularly the case among minority populations. However, therapists are notoriously poor in making referrals to or consulting with rabbis, priests, and ministers. Some clients who are unsatisfied with brief therapy may seek help from clergy. Also, if religious needs are bypassed in therapy, the client may drop out of the secular environment to seek guidance from the community of faith.

There are four common types of clergy involvement in DID therapy. These include traditional pastoral care, educating the clinician regarding the patient's religious beliefs, providing personal support to therapists, and addressing specific religious issues which have arisen in therapy. The therapist may in turn help educate the church or synagogue support system about dissociative disorders, or coach clergy in managing the complicated boundary issues which often arise in pastoral work with parishioners suffering from DID.

The therapist may help the client explore the possibility of becoming involved in organized religious activities. This is particularly recommended for patients who identify to some degree with a religious or spiritual tradition and who are not likely to be traumatized by participation in religious practices. It is not likely that dissociative disorder patients will benefit from church-sponsored support groups led by paraprofessionals unfamiliar with dissociation. But the sense of ongoing structure, shared community, historical continuity, and personal meaning available through religious service, small group scripture study, and social involvement, can help promote and solidify therapeutic objectives.

For example, to supplement her therapy, a 37-year-old woman diagnosed with DID was encouraged to contact her minister to explore the possibility of developing a small support team from the church. Out of this discussion, a "shepherding group" was formed to provide limited but ongoing support to the patient and her husband,

especially during times of crisis. After gaining permission of the patient, I consulted periodically with the pastor regarding issues that had arisen in the support group's provision of care. The patient experienced this church support as very helpful. In time, as the patient's functioning improved, the support network was disbanded and the patient was more fully integrated into the communal aspects of the church's regular programs.

In conclusion, those who are acquainted with the dissociative disorders field are well aware of the pathogenic role religion and spirituality sometimes play in the onset of severe dissociation. However, the potential health-promoting effects of patient religiousness and spiritual experience in the treatment of dissociative symptoms has lacked formal recognition. I would like to recommend greater understanding and cross-fertilization of ideas between counselors who treat dissociative clients and clergy or others with strong spiritual orientation. Toward this end, I have previously presented one framework for understanding the intersection of spiritual and psychological issues in dissociation.¹² Training in the dissociative disorders field should include a regular emphasis on religious and spiritual issues. This should be part of the fundamental training, with specialized workshops given for more advanced discussion of the area. Assessment of patient's spiritual lives should be an expected, ethically advisable feature of early treatment for dissociative disorders. When possible, the assessment should extend to alter personalities when they present for treatment.

Research could be designed to include religious as well as gender and ethnicity considerations. Questions could be raised such as "How does severe dissociation affect spiritual experience?" "What types of religious orientations are associated with treatment progress?" and "How do the religious beliefs of alter personalities change or converge during therapy?"

I'd like to see the same sort of attention paid to the ways religious institutions and practices can prevent or ease psychological distress, as is already directed toward the abusive religious experience of some dissociative patients. And I would like to see our professional organizations and individuals reach out to religious professionals, co-sponsoring conferences with clergy and religious organizations, creating publications of relevance to the religious professionals, and encouraging clergy membership and participation in the field. It is time to let our patients know we take their religious and spiritual concerns seriously.

1 Putnam, F W (1989) *Diagnosis and Treatment of Multiple Personality Disorder*. New York: Guilford Press.
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MV

*How I spent my summer*

I survived this summer

Collapsing into a child more often
As my world became a battlefield
I, the property in dispute.
I watched my anger grow, my fears
enlarge
My coyote spirit, trickster self,
danced.

Confused my path to sanity
My safe way home lost for awhile.
I found my husband and I growing
distant,
Coming together, like a screen
saver, drawing new patterns at last
Learning from old directions.
I lived, loved, hated, feared, learned.
And then, I forgot!

By Grace, I started all over again,
All over again, this morning.

By Irene F.

MV

*Partner's Page**Fighting*

By Richard

My wife and I don't have fights. We have explosions.

Yeah, I know. The marriage experts say a couple should recognize when a problem is brewing, and agree to talk it through with a minimum of anger and emotion.

Well, that ain't how it works in real life, at least not for my wife and me. What usually happens is that an issue festers for a long time, then blows up; or an alter starts a fight; or one of us says something that pushes the other's hot-buttons.

So our fights are less like defusing a bomb and more like cleaning up after it explodes.

Arguments and fights are bound to happen in any committed relationship, and living with a multiple complicates matters. Since my wife and I haven't figured out a way to head off fights before they happen, we've had to hammer out ground-rules to govern how we fight, to make sure our explosions don't blow us apart permanently.

We take time-outs to cool off.

This seems to happen naturally, though it's not pretty. In our usual pattern, something will set off the fight, which quickly escalates to an explosion, and ends with one (or both) of us storming off. After a while to cool off, we'll come back, apologize, and start talking it over.

We both have retreat space.

Each of us needs someplace to cool off after the explosion. My wife's office is her safe room, filled with things that help her feel secure, including a bed so she can stay there overnight if necessary. I go for long walks, immerse myself in work, or retreat to my hobby room and work on a plastic model kit.

We rarely curse, swear or call each other names.

Words are weapons. There are verbal analogs to almost any physical weapon—club, rapier, needle, artillery, you name it. Cursing is an axe. It's easy to use, can be swung with great speed and force, and causes deadly damage that never heals.

We will remember that the winner must be our marriage.

This seems to be a great unknown secret about marital fighting. Too often couples become fixed on who is right or wrong, who wins or loses. My wife and I try to fight so that our future together is preserved. Not me winning or her winning, but our relationship winning.

No slice'n'dice.

Early on, my wife would slice'n'dice an argument. She would question some word or phrase, then question my explanation, until we were arguing minutiae and words instead of issues.

If you find yourself asking, "How did this get so damned complicated?" or "How the hell did we get on this subject?" that's probably what's happening. Slicing'n'dicing is an effective delaying tactic, but it doesn't resolve anything.

No hiding.

Years ago, in dormitory and barracks bull-sessions, I was warned about women who yell "Nothing!" when you ask what's wrong. Don't take the silent treatment for an answer, either. Sometimes a person needs time to figure out the problem, but anger does not age well. The longer it simmers, the deadlier it becomes. Sooner or later, it has to be dealt with.

Be up-front with each other.

My wife and I try to deal with each other in a straightforward, honest manner. There is quite enough confusion, misunderstanding, hidden agendas, and mixed messages in a relationship with a multiple without playing word games and mind games. This is especially important when one or both of you was exposed to long-term therapy and has learned some basic psychological jujitsu.

No "always" and no "nevers."

A disagreement is almost never black-and-white. My wife seldom "always" acts in a certain way, and I seldom "never" do something. So we try not to use absolute terms against each other.

No giving up.

In the middle of a long, frustrating argument, don't just give up and say, "Ok, you win. I'll do it your way." In our experience, that means you've had all of this fight you can stand for the moment and you need a break. Or it means your partner is being intractable and won't give an inch. It may be time to examine if one of you is being too stubborn, or if your goals in this argument are incompatible. You may need couples counseling to break the deadlock.

Don't quarrel or reveal private matters in public.

This is especially important in a relationship with a survivor of childhood sexual abuse, but it's easier said than done. I still wince about blowing up at her onboard a restaurant cruiser where the tables were very close together. And one

night an angry alter ruined a nice evening by starting a fight with me at a classy restaurant in Washington, D.C. So we both know the value of reining in and waiting to fight in private.

We apologize.

It might not be immediately, but we apologize for our part in the unpleasantness. This is more subtle and powerful than it sounds. It lets us look back on our fights and discuss them without lingering resentment, or feeling that something was left unfinished.

You might say, "But any conventional couple could come up with a similar list. What about the special problems of living with a multiple?" In our experience, few of our arguments spring directly from my wife's multiplicity. Most have been fairly conventional fights that we dealt with using conventional tools.

Still, her Dissociative Identity Disorder has caused several fights. The trick is figuring out, real quick, who you're dealing with and reacting accordingly.

A few times we've had arguments about something her alters have done which my

wife doesn't remember. Once, my wife (then girlfriend) questioned why I was moving into her apartment building. I told her that she had asked me to, which she denied. We argued until she became nearly hysterical. I finally said that I couldn't deal with her this way, and asked her to call back when she calmed down. Then I said I loved her and hung up.

Later she called back, much calmer. She had checked inside her system of alters and some of the teen-agers had admitted convincing me to move, without telling my wife.

When your partner is adamantly arguing something he or she seems totally clueless about, it may have been something done by another alter.

There are other times when alters pop in and out during an argument. It gets confusing as she switches sides of the argument, asks off-the-wall questions, contradicts herself, and switches emotional states from angry to confused to cooperative to placating. In that case, it's best for your partner to appoint someone to speak for his or her internal group. Or

you can request that only the person you're quarreling with remain out.

The only times I've thrown the rules out the window is when an angry alter comes out and goes for my jugular. Once, one of my wife's protective alters was convinced that I was going to leave eventually, so she launched a pre-emptive campaign to drive me away. She was skilled at verbal karate—obnoxious, controlling, mean-mouthed, aggressive, determined to monopolize the conversation and have her way. When I finally realized what I was dealing with, I had to become the same kind of bare-knuckle brawler she was. That, plus respecting her role as protector, and refusing to be driven away, finally won that alter's respect and (grudging) acceptance.

My wife and I can't claim to have mastered this business of arguing, or to do it perfectly. But we've been together eight years now (married two), and weathered many disagreements large and small, thanks to the ground-rules that we have hammered out by trial-and-error.

MV

Einstein and Me

Who was Einstein kidding, I've wondered recently, when he made his famous pronouncement that "*God does not play dice with the Universe.*" Does this assumption of an underlying, organizing principle at work in the physical world apply equally to the domain of relationships and emotions? Is there any philosophical or biological or theological concept that I might be able to brandish, in order to understand my particular experiences of growing up in a home where I was not loved, but instead hurt quite severely—emotionally, physically? Is there any redeeming lesson that I learned here, that I can point to and say "This was not totally arbitrary. Beyond the question of having survived, and wanting to help others in similar situations, is there any meaning that I can extract from this?"

Or must I be content with knowing that I survived a lot of arbitrary childhood abuse that has impacted me lastingly, yet was never directed against me as a person. I was, again, quite arbitrarily, born to a couple who were not ready to look after a child. Not that they disliked me, but I represented an unplanned hardship to them in their lives at that point in time.

So, following this line of reasoning, "Bad" things happened to me not because of my inherent lack of value, but simply arbitrarily, because of poor timing! Agh! How comforting it would be to find that, in some way, Einstein's observations applied to my past and present life. Perhaps then, I should be able to feel at home in this Universe, counting for as much as the waves and particles ruled by the laws of physics.

Sifting through my memories, looking for evidence that while some events in my life seem to have occurred randomly, others indicate that there might, indeed, exist some kind of "wisdom" out there (a nebulous term, but I, as of yet, know no more precise one!) that has, at times, warned me of danger or spurred me to action. This "wisdom" appeared, for example, in the form of repeated dreams showing me truths about a boyfriend I thought I wanted to marry—and now, years later, how grateful I am that I finally heeded that inner voice and did not pursue the relationship. Who, or what, was speaking to me in those dreams, I do not know—but the knowledge that was imparted saved me from disaster. Reflecting on these incidents provides

me with solace—restoring a sense of dignity to my life and my person.

Perhaps I'll never be able to find a transcendent purpose or meaning that helps me make sense of the anguish and terror and unfulfilled longings of my childhood. Things happen, accidents happen; this is reality. Anybody could be hit by a falling brick (a simplistic but to me very convincing metaphor for "why bad things happen to good people." Yet also, I so much want for Einstein to be right! And I am waiting...waiting for my purpose to be discovered by me. I am listening—patiently, eagerly—for that gentle voice of Wisdom to reveal that truth to me.

By Catherine P.

MV



Coping with Rejection

Telling others about our multiplicity is a challenge for our system. Obviously we don't broadcast, but learning to trust is important in healing. Trust is hard for any multiple: to share with others takes courage. It is risky, and we have spent our lives avoiding the risk of rejection.

The more multiples I meet personally, through chats in safe internet groups and through letters from *Many Voices* readers, the more I realize how many of us are here. We are so very many broken, injured people. It hurts deeply to think that we are vast in number, and so little understood. Most of what the world knows of us is through sensational and bizarre stories in the media. Many of us are afraid to trust "singletons." We are isolated in a world that could benefit from our gifts, and help us heal through acceptance of who we are.

Knowing other multiples made me feel more normal and accepting of myself. I've begun to view us as normal people who simply found a way to cope with crazy experiences inflicted on us by sick people. I am learning to trust.

In a large singing spirit circle of women, I found friends who offer love and hope. I felt overwhelming unity in the group, and was able to share myself/ourselves with several women. Many understood; some knew others with D.I.D. Some didn't understand, but offered friendship and acceptance in spite of their lack of knowledge and their confusion. The group was a huge support, through our voice in song and shared rituals, even without their awareness of my multiplicity. The acceptance by the few I trusted with my story gave me tremendous power.

But like everything else in our lives we need to be prepared and internally protected always. Of the women I trusted, one woman I thought of as gentle and spiritual surprised me by her rejection. She was present in a small group, after a beautiful spiritual ritual, when a young alter emerged. Only four people saw the emergence; I knew only about two of the women present...they helped the Little become

grounded. Having no memory of who else was present, I was afraid to ask.

During a concert a woman I respected approached me and said she was present when the Little emerged, but a concert is no place to talk. I assumed acceptance by the way she spoke. With total trust and with the idea that she was a spiritual leader (entering a seminary as a student) I wrote her about us and dissociation. I wrote because I can express better in writing, and I never have the opportunity to see this person in private. I hoped understanding would be of value to her in her future ministry. I know that multiples and incest survivors will undoubtedly cross her path again, even if she is unaware of their pain. Her understanding of us could offer healing support for so many others. I have never called, harassed, or in any way inappropriately approached this woman. In the year and a half I have known her, I never sought her out for support. Because she witnessed our Little, I felt compelled to share about Dissociative Identity Disorders from our perspective.

During a break in our next singing circle, she again approached me and said she received our letter. She found it "interesting." Again, in a public place, there was no opportunity to discuss multiplicity. I backed off, and stupidly responded with "thank you." I don't know why I thanked her. Perhaps I assumed acceptance.

Later, at home, our fiercely protective alter was enraged. She took offense to the term "interesting" and saw it as clinical, degrading, and dehumanizing. But Kit was even more furious with me for saying "thank you." Without my knowledge Kit wrote a harsh note to the woman objecting to the word "interesting" as degrading. Kit can be abrasive and has few social graces. Although in her letter she criticized the other woman, most of her letter was an attack on me for thanking the woman. She accused me of putting down, belittling myself. She said I thank people for simply letting me live. That I act as if I should be grateful not to be condemned, abused, and have the life choked out of me.

I do put us down. I often wonder when people appreciate our talents and find us likable. Kit is absolutely correct in what she wrote to this woman; I do expect the worst, and sometimes feel as if I haven't a right to be myself.

I don't like it when one of our system acts beyond the boundaries of co-consciousness, acts independently. But I suppose the protective alters have a lot to learn and to let go of as we heal. Kit has assumed the defensive, protective role all our life, and has trouble letting us share that function in times of stress. We could have mellowed the letter and still have made the point if she had included us in her response.

She provoked the first experience of rejection over our multiplicity. The woman responded by setting boundaries that prohibit any contact that could mend the relationship. Along with her letter stating she did not want to be part of our support or therapy, she stated that she would accept our presence in the singing circle only if our behavior complied with the rules of the circle. She included a copy of our policy that disruptive behavior that threatened the safety of the circle would result in spiritual council discussion and possible temporary or permanent exclusion from the group.

Her threat shocked our system. She was not a person we would have reached out to for support, and we have a successful therapeutic milieu that is strong and vital. We have strong supports and trusted friends. My original intent was to share and explain what she had witnessed when the Little emerged, with a hope she could use knowledge in her future ministry.

Our system has never been disruptive or inappropriate in public, nor do we have that potential. Our system was in crisis with her threat. Our spiritual twelve-year-old fell apart at the idea of losing her "spirit safe place." We felt anger at Kit for her secret letter and for jeopardizing our safety. We were devastated that someone we respected could find us repulsive. Fear of being critically

observed as we sing, dance and participate in our group made the circle feel unsafe. What if we sing too loud, dance too long, or cry when deeply moved by song or ritual. That entire space, so important in our life, became frightening. Who is watching and judging us, waiting to pounce?

Since receiving the packet from this person, including the return of Kit's letter, I have calmed down. This was my first experience of being reviled for being who I am. Two trusted, loving friends from the circle helped me through this crisis, explaining that there are just people in this world who are afraid of people who are different. The problem is within them, and they are the ones who must find their own healing. My friends and I sat on my front steps as I destroyed the letter and "behavior policy." My friend said, "Let it go. It is her problem, not yours. Our circle has no boss and you will never be expelled. There are people there who love you."

Still, it amazes me that we can love so much, offer our gifts, talents, and support to so many people, and have someone fail to see our beauty and love. Most multiples give more than they take; maybe that is part of our need to feel worthy. To be rejected simply for who we are, with disregard for our loving and giving, hurts us deeply.

I share this experience with *Many Voices* readers, because I want you to know you are truly beautiful in all of your aspects. Don't let anyone tell you otherwise. Don't believe them. Don't accept them as you believed the lies your perpetrator spoke to you. Hold yourself and cherish those moments of friendship with others. Don't let the possibility of rejection keep you from trusting. You can't be other than who you are. Be careful with your trust, but do trust.

No matter what a person seems to be, some people will never accept our differences. Those who are repulsed by you have their own unresolved issues and need to find their own path of healing. That is their problem, not yours. If rejection comes, cry it out and then let it go. No matter how painful the initial feelings, let it go! Let it go!

By Echo with Cathy for the Coalition for Joy

MV

Negotiating Getting Dressed

By Cathy & Echo for the Coalition of Joy

Getting dressed for work used to be a difficult and frustrating task. I would grab something from my closet, put it on, and put on my make-up, and check myself in the full length mirror. The morning scenario was always the same.

"We look fat in this!"

"No we don't."

"Yes, we do! I'm not wearing this blouse!"

We change the blouse, but Echo hates the blouse with the skirt.

I change to pants. Cathy thinks it's not dressy enough for work.

We change the blouse to dress up the slacks, but Cathy Ann says the collar is "chokey."

We select a totally new outfit...no one likes it.

By this time we are running late for work. Our hair is a mess from bouses on and blouses off, and clothes are scattered all over the room and the closet floor.

"That's it folks! We are going to be late. We are going as we are." No one is happy. Everyone is close to tears.

Always running late, never having time for morning coffee, and leaving the house close to tears motivated us to negotiate a wardrobe organization. It took time, but was well worth the effort.

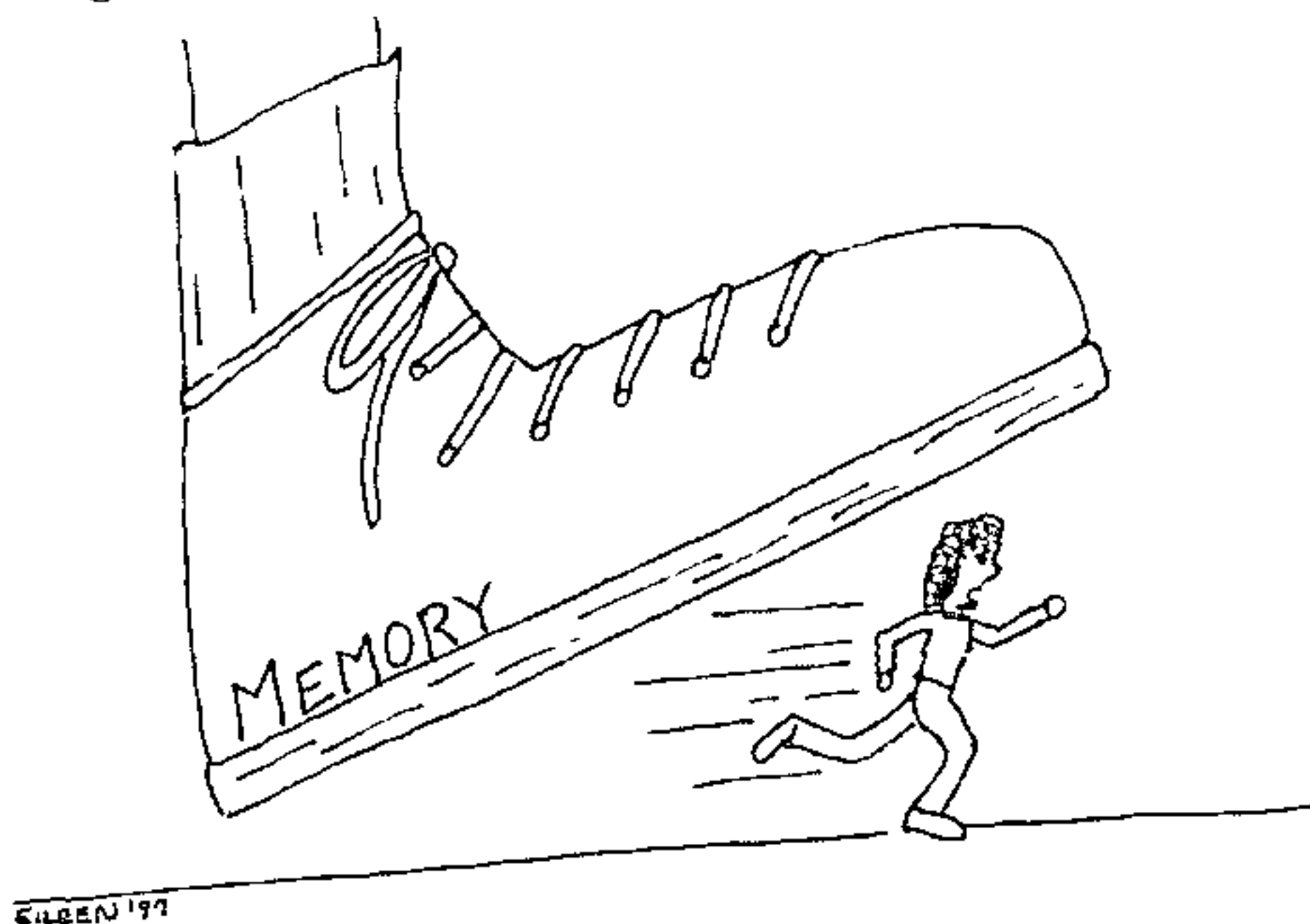
The first step in negotiating was to get rid of clothes most offensive to anyone in our system. We removed anything two alters thought made us look "fat." We got rid of clothes in

colors that offended anyone. With what was left of the wardrobe, we spent an entire afternoon trying on all clothing in different combinations and with various accessories. We determined who liked which combinations and found outfits that were at least acceptable to everyone. Then we hung each outfit—shirts, pants, blouses skirts, dresses, whatever—together with the approved accessories on hangers.

Once we had the closet arranged by complete outfits, we decided among us to rotate days of the work week by alters' choice. For instance, Mondays would be for Kit, Tuesdays for Bethanne, Wednesdays for Cathy, and so on. We hung the outfits in consecutive order so each alter had her outfit ready for her day.

This time-consuming task saved us the rushing about each morning, the frustration of morning tears. No more frantic changing of clothes or leaving the house in tears. Negotiating wardrobe organization for work days saved the mornings: no more internal arguing over clothes selection. If one doesn't prefer the outfit of the day, she'll have her turn later in the week (or the next week, because of the number of alters in our system who care about clothing).

Life is more pleasant for our partner, who never got a good morning kiss, and always woke up to the tears of the frantic dressing ritual. Now we even have time for a quiet cup of coffee before we leave the house. **MV**



The following two pieces are written by the "same" person, but with different points of view. Tell us what you think of this "discussion." Maybe you have other ideas to share. — Lynn W.

Sticks and Stones...

By Kathryn

"Sticks and stones will break my bones, but names can never hurt me..." is a phrase many of us learned as children. It is a *big lie!* All we could do was pretend that it didn't hurt, even though it really did. Somehow we feel we are stronger for not showing how much name-calling pains us. Meanwhile, inside we are seething and stuffing feelings down deep. That was then and this is now, and it is still the same. Except now, we have a label—Multiple. Do we tell the people around us we are multiple? We have a desire to be understood. We want people to know how we came to be and where we are today.

If we tell people we were abused as children, we get sympathy. We might even find a kindred spirit in someone else who was abused. We also find freedom in turning loose the secrets we held for so long. Telling opens up a whole new panorama around us. Some of the people we tell are accepting and kind. They are willing to ask questions, read books, and find ways to be helpful to us. Others react with the words, "It's in the past, get over it." They do not want the responsibility of dealing with our pain. Still others will say "Oh," then change the subject, and end up silently departing from our lives. Another is the person who reacts with kindness, asks questions, and tries to become educated. This one becomes tired of it taking too much time and energy and abandons us without a word. One of the worst is the person who reacts to the idea that our different personalities are demons (welcome to the Dark Ages!) Another bad reaction is the one who supports the False Memory Syndrome notion, and thinks our problem is all "in our head." Then there are some who like to hang around us to see what we will do next—like a trained monkey chained to an organ grinder. *Did she just switch? Who is she now? Did you just see that?* These people don't want to help, they just want to watch and turn us

into a spectator sport. Admittedly, all of us would like to see only the first scenario, but the reality is, the other stratagems seem to be more popular.

Wouldn't it be nice if the people we tell about our multiplicity would be as open and frank with us as we are with them? (And we could live happily ever after...) Unfortunately, it doesn't work that way. How do we react to these different types of people? Healthy boundaries are very important. Everyone has the desire to belong and to be loved, and this includes our inside people. We also must remember that each one of our individual personalities were created as a defense mechanism. Are we exposing them to more trauma in our telling? Could we be creating a "set up" to expect fallout? (Save yourself from the extra heartache, more therapy, and recognize what you are doing.) Look at the relationship you have with a person and evaluate what you know about them. Are they the type who tend to gossip? If they tell you about another person's problems, are they telling other people your problems too? How do they treat their own friends? Are they supportive through the bad times as well as the good? Do they have unconditional love? Are they really a friend or are we being hopeful that they will become a friend? Does this person really need to know what is going on inside of us? Am I doing this for my benefit, or does this person have a legitimate reason to know this information? Recognize that people should be told on a "need to know" basis. If they are driving you to therapy and you switch into your four-year-old, that would be considered "need to know." If you want to impress someone with your uniqueness, think twice about the "sticks and stones" fallout.

Dealing with people who have not experienced what we have endured is like walking a tight rope. You need balance. Caution should be taken. I first wanted to tell everyone and

anyone that I was a multiple. I felt a freedom in telling the forbidden childhood secrets.

Unhappily, I was not discerning with whom I disclosed these secrets. Some of it has come back to haunt me. Inwardly hoping to make myself popular by telling people I am a multiple is a wrong motive. I unrealistically thought people would flock to me because of my uniqueness. Wrong! I know of a multiple who told everyone, because she was addicted to crisis and hoped to get as many involved in her problems as possible. I had hoped that if I kept the crisis part out, it would be just as effective, but it wasn't. Instead, I became an object of ridicule and gossip. Even a close family member came up with a list of over sixty synonyms for the word "crazy." If you decide to share, have a reason and the proper motive. Ask yourself if it is affirming for the relationship. Are you telling someone because you look up to them, or because they are an equal? Are you telling to get approval or justification?

It takes a long time to undo the harm from indiscriminate "telling." Some relationships will never be the same or renewed. Other relationships may come out for the better, but is it worth the risk? If you have already told people you are a multiple, you know what I am talking about. For those of you who are just beginning on the road to healing, examine your motives for telling. Do you really want to be a center of attention (and deal with the "sticks and stones" fallout) or are you looking for a supportive friendship? You already know the answer if you look deeply inside. Take it from one who has been on the road before you. Be careful who you tell. Don't announce it from the roof tops. It will save you a lot of heartache in the long run. "Sticks and stones" do hurt. So does name calling. The uniqueness of our multiplicity does not automatically shield us from the "...names will never hurt us."

"...Names Can Never Hurt Me"

"Sticks and stones will break my bones, but names can never hurt me..." is a phrase many of us learned as children. It is *true*! How can we be sure that "names can never hurt me" if we are diagnosed with DID? We logically know that only we, our-selves, can live within the skin of our bodies. We do not need to let others "get under our skin." We need to take care of ourselves by establishing proper boundaries.

We can decide who we will allow to know that we are multiple. This knowledge really should be dispensed with discretion, but does it really matter who we tell? Not if we have our boundaries well-established. We can be proud of who we are and how we creatively endured our abuse. We can even become advocates to help others. This means restructuring our thinking so we do not feel vulnerable. Granted, this is difficult in the face of remembering our past abuse. We can feel defenseless against our memories, but we can also fortify ourselves by our choices. We can choose to be helpless or courageous.

Who is the authority on our DID? We are! So are our therapists. Will we allow someone uneducated to dictate to us how we should act or feel? Of course not! We can proactively take the stance of becoming an educator to the people around us. They can choose whether or not to accept our-selves. They can choose to honor and value us, or they can take issue. It is how we react to those outside of ourselves that helps us in our growth and maturity. For example, would we take our poorly-running car to a chef to be fixed? Would we ask a mechanic how to make a fancy soufflé? So, would we take seriously or believe something said in ignorance about multiplicity? Certainly not!

It is all right for others to take issue with our multiplicity. We can allow those around us their preferences for certain likes and dislikes in so many different avenues. It is what gives the human race its variety and individual uniqueness at the same time. If someone chooses to decorate their

home in French Provincial, and we prefer Country, we can still be comfortable visiting them. The same applies with DID. We do not need to feel we will lose a friendship just because we are different in our coping styles. Remind those we might consider "opposed" that it is okay. They are allowed an opinion. We do not need to feel hurt by opinions. We are still the same person they have always known. If we catch a cold or have cancer, it does not change who we are. Telling our inside people that choices are available is so helpful in diverting hurt feelings. We never had choices in the past. Allow for diversity and options. That was then, this is now.

The people with whom we regularly associate are relatively easy to figure out. We can usually assess how they will react (in our own minds) before we choose to disclose our DID. We can also choose not to tell. With this knowledge of choices, we can incorporate the following idea: "Does this person need to know?" We are allowed our privacy. We can tend to our own emotional needs without resorting to subterfuge for sympathy. We have an inclination to add to our emotional wellness, but pity and sympathy are not essential. It's love and acceptance that we utilize the best.

Take comfort in appreciating, "names can never hurt me." It is a rhyme from our childhood that allows us choices and freedom from the opinions of others. We survived the horrific circumstances. May we fortify our resolve to be who we are and how we are with pride!

MV



You will live in joy and peace. The mountains and hills, the trees of the field. All the world around you will rejoice. Where once there were thorns, fir trees grow; where briars grew, the myrtle trees will sprout up. This miracle in You will make the Lord's name very great and will be an everlasting sign of God's power and love!

Isaiah 55: 12&13, personalized. Angel Hope

Today I will rejoice in change

Today I will be aware of changes in my life and celebrate! Change happens through joy and through pain. This change will never leave me the same. It can lead me closer to God's ideal plan for me, if I only listen. Anything that leads me closer to God is an exciting stepping stone and I choose not to ignore it.

Autumn brings out the excitement of my childish spirit. All things seem new and full of magic. My thoughts seem cleansed and my attitudes lightened by each puff of wind blowing through my hair. I have enough courage to seek life once again. I see the hues of yellow, red and orange leaves and my heart sings.

With all new experiences fall changes into winter. Another new chance to start over and learn from the struggles of the past.

Today I will have patience with the realization that nothing is forever. I will stand firm on the promise that God loves me enough to guard over me during these times of change. I need not be afraid of a God who loves me so perfectly. I commit my spirit into Your hands.

By Angel Hope

MV

Letters

My therapist and I need help and ideas to deal with a "hostile," protective, immature, severely injured, non-trusting, gate-keeping alter.

My system was formed around age five and fully formed by age 7. It includes 8 children in sets of twins age 7 and under, with 4 alters, ages 13, 14, 17 and 26 added later and placed into the already-functioning fairy-tale system as add-ons. The host (age 7) was created separately to handle the outside world. The original child sleeps and is not yet found. After 2 years of treatment, the host remains outside the system. Peter (the "hostile" alter) considers the host to be poisoned by the outside world. A limited communication process of thoughts through a filter is established between the host and level-one alters near the system.

Although all the level-one alters are cooperating in treatment, Peter (the hostile gatekeeper) is trying to end treatment. He controls all the alters in a Peter Pan child's wonderland, keeps the memories hidden (emotions and fears come out without memories) and has threatened to kill the Doc. Peter does what he does out of a very deep love for us—he is a protector, though a stubborn, non-changing one. There is no fear of him in the system, only awe for his power and dedication. No one in the system knows where he lives. Only one (Anna) knows how to reach him with messages.

Where Peter is coming from:

1. Both parents presented a totally united front—which left no-one to go to for help. They controlled every single aspect of our life. They spoiled all we did, and we were not permitted even a frown in retaliation without punishment.

2. After leaving home, there were a number of abusive relationships.

3. All Peter learned was (a) that the outside world is pure poison and is to be kept out at all costs, including the Doc and (b) how to hide the system. All the frightened 5-year-old sees is that our safe world must not end, or we die. He has no concept of adult values or logic like respect or cooperation or trust or time—and "love does not exist." He is coiled up in fear with his back to the wall, refusing any interventions that Doc or other alters offer as just "tricks" to get him to come out of his control room, or tricks to de-rail the system. He will not accept gifts, as gifts are tricks too.

4. If he feels an alter gets too close to him, or if he perceives a threat to safety, he either puts the alter in lock-down, or shuts down the whole system, which leaves me in a horrible, confused limbo. He resists any attempts to get to know him as more tricks of a poisoned world.

5. He hides the young injured alters (and their memories) as he is still protecting the system.

My only idea is to "have a war" between Peter & Doc—bring him out to fight it out, defuse him—maybe he'll see that she means us no harm. (She is a good Doc and a kind, caring person.) I don't know if this will help or damage the system.

My Doc has 17 years experience treating DID clients, but hasn't run into this before. We need to break through this in order to progress further. Any ideas? Please...

Pat & Anne of Pat's Flock

(The following is a response to Bill's & Susan's letters in August. It's printed here with permission, to encourage more men to write for MV and begin to feel they can find comfort, understanding, and recovery.)

Regarding Bill and Susan, Sympathy for Male Multiples

First of all, I like your host's taste in music: the Grateful Dead. Music is soothing and speaks our truths in song for me also. Secondly, my heart goes out to you for feeling isolated as a male multiple. I hope more males get recognized and properly treated. You are brave to speak on behalf of your overlooked gender. There are more males out there, but many still suffer in silence. The only large-scale dissociative disorders treatment regarding males is PTSD work with war veterans.

As a typically diagnosed multiple, this body is female, yet I can see the inequity for cross-gender alters. It's easy for me to go to a football game with my husband as a male alter wearing shorts, t-shirt and baseball cap. Women can easily wear masculine clothing without being conspicuous. Unfortunately, Susan doesn't have that freedom in this society, which adds to the burden of secrecy and shame.

As for unrecognized male multiples, I suspect my husband has a dissociative disorder. He's had therapy off and on since college, and his diagnoses have been related to anxiety and compulsive disorders. Therapy has helped him, but it has never addressed his deep-seated problems. He has revealed scenarios involving his mother and brother by talking in his sleep, which he doesn't remember in the morning. He also has memory problems, such as not remembering movies we've seen. We joke that when a movie goes to video or TV, he can watch it again for the first time.

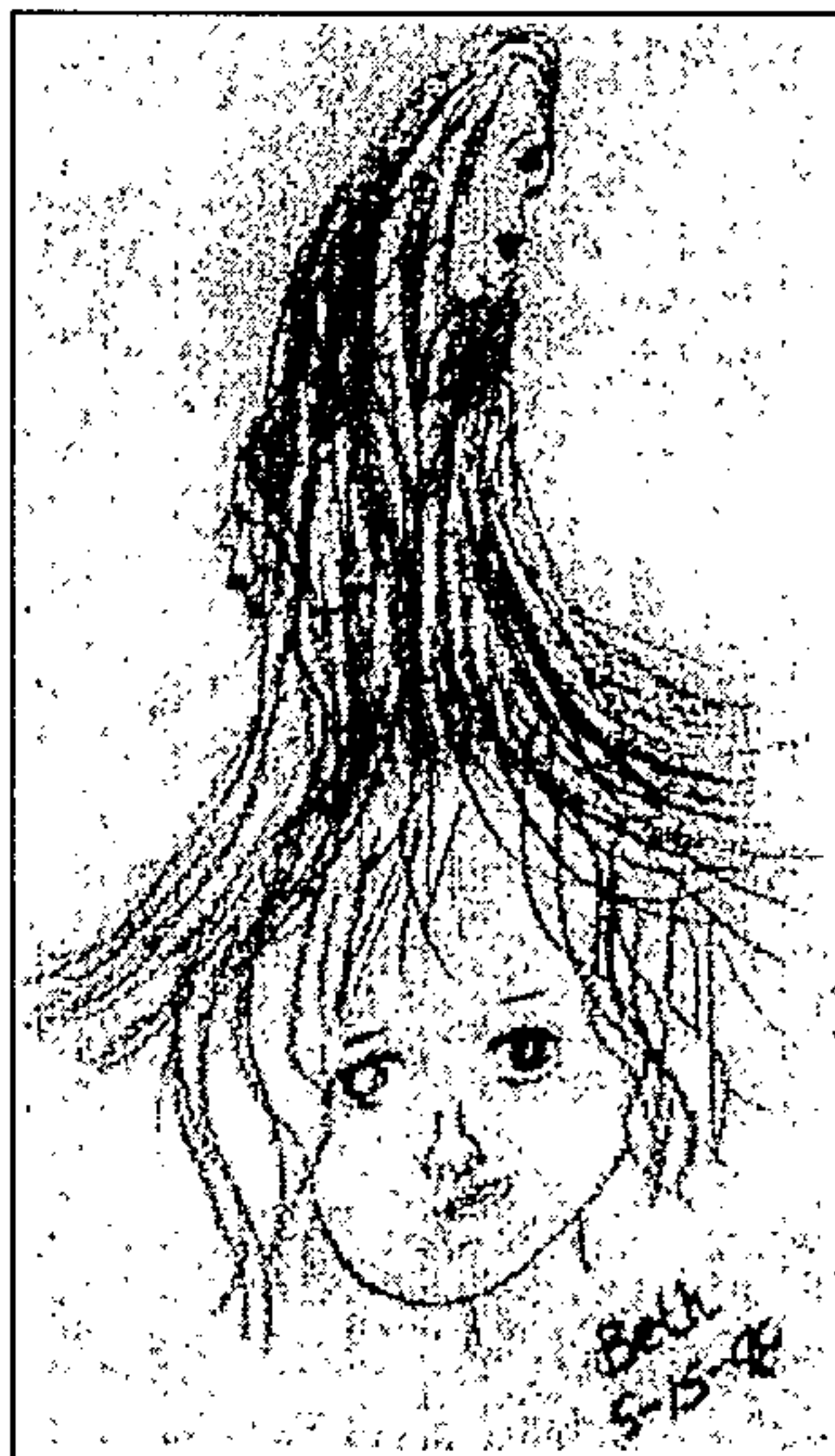
My husband may have female aspects to his personality, but the signs are subtle. In his previous marriage, he did all the cooking. Now he just puts cheese on

leftovers and throws it into the microwave if I don't cook. There have been rare occasions when I met this soft alter, who came forward and made Greek spinach pie—a difficult dish that I couldn't make. His ex-wife must have hurt that part deeply since s/he doesn't feel safe to come out much now. As for attire, my husband wears Docker slacks or shorts with Polo-style shirts, which can be considered unisex. However, when he was an active alcoholic, he wore loud colored Hawaiian shirts with jeans when we went to bars. Since he's been in AA for a number of years, there are no more Hawaiian shirts or jeans in his closet.

My husband and I get along well on most dimensions of a loving relationship. The only area of dysfunction is our sex life (some from my issues, but most from his). My suspicions are that inappropriate involvement with his mother and brother warped my husband's sexuality. He has admitted that sex and love are two separate things that he can't integrate. My husband is generally supportive, nurturing, and a good provider. He's not able to bring those sensitive qualities to love-making, so he constantly re-enacts fantasies that I find degrading. We have agreed that we will seek couples counseling when we can afford to do so, and I want to make sure it's with a therapist who has DID experience. We have enough love to carry us until that time.—Bill and Susan, I hope sharing my experience was helpful to you.

Sara K.

MV





Trying to hold together in spinning

Ghosts

The ghosts are visiting again
only this time
they have angel breath and
are a quiet wind in my mind
Been a long time
since I heard ghosts
since I closed my eyes
to see them
Imagined sighs...
they cast no shadows now
makes me wonder
if they ever did

By M. Wolverton

MV

Books

Getting to Yes: Negotiating Agreement Without Giving In

By Roger Fisher & William Ury ©1981, 1991 Penguin Paperback, 200 pgs \$11.

Getting Past No: Negotiating Your Way from Confrontation to Cooperation

By William Ury, ©1991, 1993. Bantam, paperback, 189 pgs \$9.95.

Negotiating was the theme of this issue, but we got very few submissions on the topic. I think that's partly because negotiating is a learned-skill for people who dissociate. We are much more inclined to "disappear" when faced with conflict...to be compliant and promptly give in...or else some aggressive part comes out and battles undiplomatically with "the enemy." Even if we negotiate fairly well at work, we may falter in relationships. And heaven knows, internal negotiation is a major hurdle, too. There are a number of very good books on negotiating out there. I like these because they take a respectful view of the adversary...no "stomp 'em flat" as some writers advocate. If you solve a problem using these techniques, you can probably work with the same participants in the future, which is very important if the

"participants" happen to be internal antagonists. It's also critical, as recovering people, to learn to stick up for our own needs, and simultaneously learn how other people react when confronted. Cooperation requires mutual understanding between parties, but without some training it's hard to see past our own selves, into the selves of others.

I will be a lifelong student of negotiation. It has never been easy for me. But I learned about 20 years ago how valuable it could be. There were major upheavals in the company I worked with, and suddenly I had an opportunity to literally double my income and make many other positive changes overnight...if I approached the "big boss" the right way. I went to the library, borrowed about five books on negotiating, went home and studied them cover to cover. When I met with the boss I got every single thing I asked for...every last one. It completely changed my life. And it gave me an enormous respect for the power of negotiation, even if I've not duplicated that degree of success since.

Isn't it time you put negotiation to work for you? —LW

Green Surprise of Passion: Writings of a Trauma Therapist.

By Shirley Glubka © 1998 Blade of Grass Press, RFD #1, Box 1358, Stockton Springs, ME 04981. Paperback. 82 pgs. \$12.

This is a collection of sensitive prose and poetry by a clinical counselor who began treating dissociative survivors of trauma in the mid-'80s. Glubka used writing to maintain her balance as she listened to the anguished stories, full of vivid and often terrifying imagery, emotion and pain. She writes, "*This collection takes the raw material of my life, particularly my life as a therapist, and transforms it. The characters here—both the clients and the therapist—are rooted in the real, but changed. The changes are sometimes strange, off-center. The whole that emerges is not meant to be an accurate reflection of reality...*" Instead of simply repeating what she heard and experienced in those early, traumatizing years of treating survivors, Glubka has processed and spilled it out in creative forms that resonate with the reader. Her concern for clients' welfare is evident, as is her dedication to staying healthy and centered herself, to help them heal. Well worth reading.

—LW

MV

DEAR MV FRIENDS!

We especially need your cover quality, vertical art, cartoons, and theme-related writing. *Thank you* for sharing your hopeful ideas with others! You are a blessing!

February 1999

Help for children who dissociate.
Parenting tips for DID parents.
Improving internal communication.
ART: Kids and/or Pets.
DEADLINE: Dec. 1, 1998

April 1999

What are you afraid to tell your therapist? Attachment issues.
ART: Courage and freedom.
DEADLINE: Feb. 1, 1999

June 1999

Building healthy habits, discarding others. All addictions and obsessions discussed. ART: Your center of power.
DEADLINE: April 1, 1999

August 1999

Embracing joy and laughter in our lives. ART: Cartoons and silly stuff.
DEADLINE: June 1, 1999

October 1999

Multiple Issues: seizures, Attention deficit, traumatic medical procedures, infertility, scars, aging. ART: Health and recovery. DEADLINE: Aug. , 1999

**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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