

# MANY VOICES

WORDS OF HOPE FOR PEOPLE RECOVERING FROM TRAUMA & DISSOCIATION

Vol XI, No.2

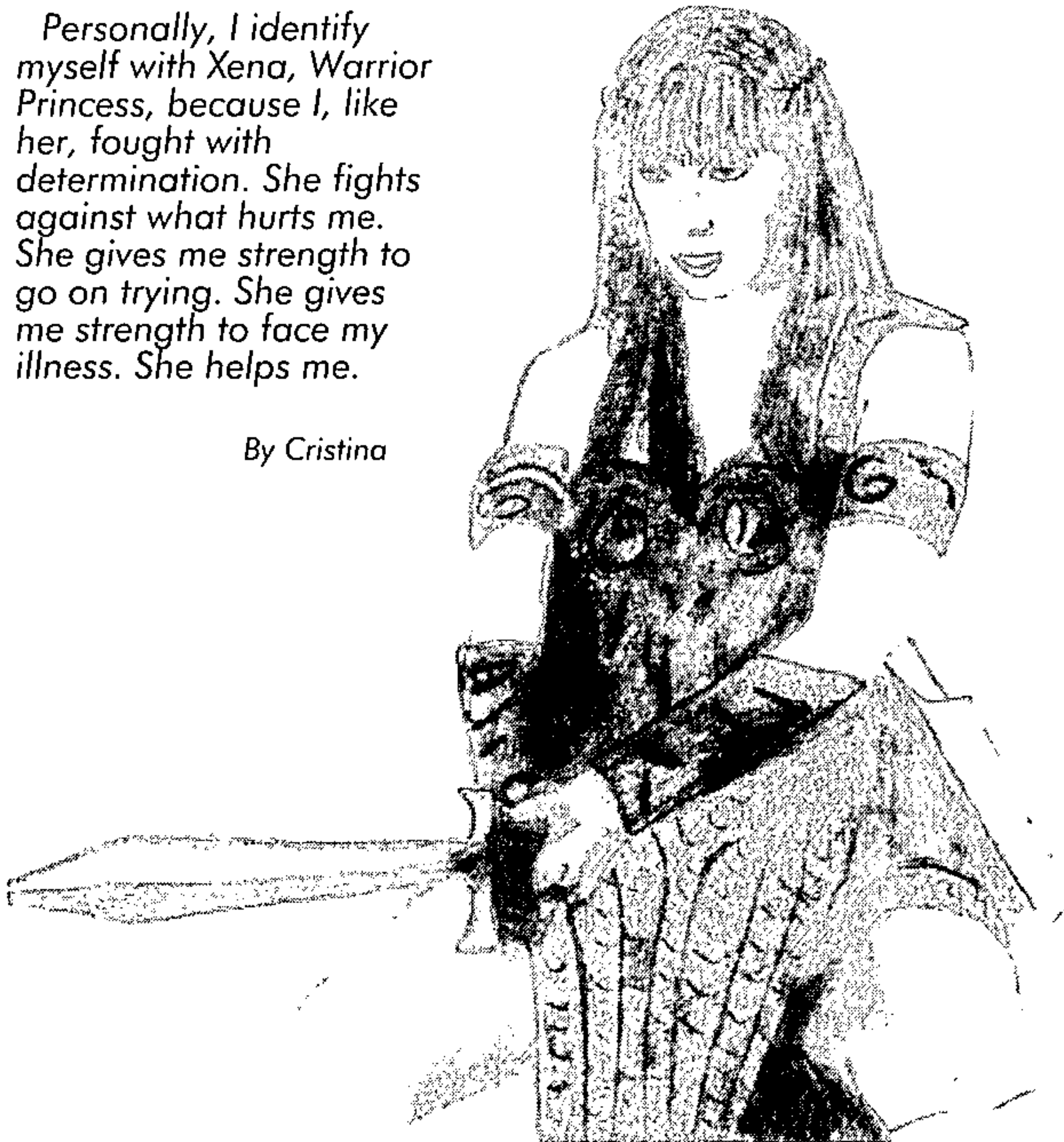
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## What we fear telling our therapists Freedom and attachment

Personally, I identify myself with Xena, Warrior Princess, because I, like her, fought with determination. She fights against what hurts me. She gives me strength to go on trying. She gives me strength to face my illness. She helps me.

By Cristina



### *Tower of Strength*

As I sit on this rickety old country  
bridge  
Down below I see the muddy water  
stirring

As it smoothly flows its path  
With a ripple that is life  
I wonder why I feel this way  
So alone and blue

Can I see myself in this image?  
The water mirrors my life  
Does it not?  
Muddy in confusion  
Yet smooth at times  
With just the right ripple to keep it  
interesting

The bridge, now in its rickety old day  
Is still a tower of strength  
As it stretches from one side to  
another  
Over a pool of water underneath

Could this be the bridge to my life?  
On one side are all the old troubles  
The old defeats, and failures  
Yet on the other side  
Could that be the home of new  
beginnings,  
The new awakening, the dreams for  
the future  
And the reality of hope

Maybe I need a new mirror that shows  
The deep blue water splashing freely  
But I think I'll keep the old rickety  
bridge

Yes, it has its scars  
But maybe that is what makes it so  
special to me  
We are one, the bridge and I  
We are a tower of strength!

By Lisa S.

**MV**

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## The Truth

There is something I want to tell you.  
 I don't know why I want you to know.  
 I need to tell someone.  
 It's killing me to keep it inside.  
 But—  
 I can't bear to say it.  
 If I tell you might laugh.  
 You might think badly of me.  
 I cannot risk it.  
 So—  
 I tell you that nothing is wrong.  
 "I don't want to talk about it now."  
 But—  
 I really do deep down inside.  
 The problem is that it's too hard.  
 If I tell you I might cry.  
 What will you think of me if I cry?  
 You will think I am a baby.  
 You will be mad at me.  
 Your rejection would kill me.

What would you say to me?  
 How would you look at me?  
 This might make you not love me.  
 I need you to love me.  
 When you leave I hate myself.  
 I need you to make me tell you.  
 Drag it out of me somehow.  
 I try to tell you.  
 But—  
 I can't say it.  
 I can't get it to come out.  
 I start to go numb.  
 My mouth won't move.  
 I can't move.  
 I panic.  
 I can't breathe.  
 I feel suffocated.  
 My throat is thick.  
 I am trapped.  
 I need you to hold me.

Tell me that everything will be alright.  
 Please help me.  
 Tell me that everything will be alright.  
 Please help me.  
 Tell me you really want to know.  
 Tell me that you will love me no  
     matter what has happened.  
 Let me cover my face while I tell you.  
 Don't look at me until I am done.  
 Just in case I cry.  
 I can't bear to look into your eyes.  
 I could die of embarrassment  
     if you knew.  
 I would want to hide.  
 Don't let me hide.  
 Not even from myself.  
 You must make me be strong.  
 Please, I need your help.  
 Please, HELP ME!!

By Becky C.

MV

## Jokes and Cool Things

1. What do you call a working hot dog?

Answer: the bread-weener in the family!

2. Why is 10 afraid of 7?

Answer: Because 7, 8, 9. (seven ate nine!)

3. Did you know that there is a comic book superhero called Multiple Man? He has the ability to self-divide. (This is no joke.)

4. How many multiples do you need to replace a lightbulb?

Answer: I don't know. Depends who you ask inside!

5. I would like to start a new afternoon soap opera. It would be low budget as I would need very few actors in... "BeSwitched!"

6. How does a multiple claim his/her 5th amendment right to say nothing in court?

Answer: I don't know nothin'! I am just an innocent bi-dweller!

7. Why can't a multiple play the "I love you, I love you not" game with a flower?

Answer: Most run out of petals before they run out of parts saying 'I love you'!

8. I think all therapists should bill multiples the cost of group therapy, which is lower than individual. We more than qualify. Don't you think? (Except if each part is billed separately — Ed.)

9. A bus driver counting all the clients transported to the outpatient program daily: "14, 68, 101, 166, 203"

10. A way to explain MPD/DID in brief layman's terms: "Life's a b\*tch, and then you switch!"

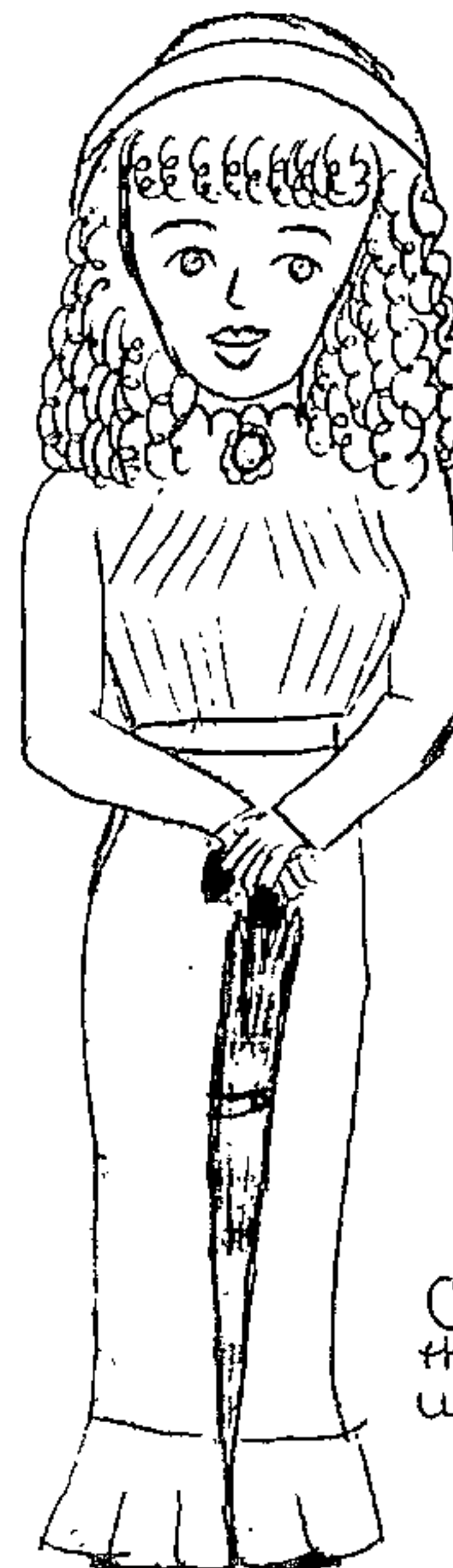
11. The judge says, all those present say "here here" when your name is announced."

The multiple answers "Here, here, here, here, here, here...."

12. MPD philosophy to ponder: if a multiple is made to serve consecutive sentences by a court of law, is that consecutive years, or consecutive parts, or consecutive years for all the parts in consecutive order as well? Mmmmmmm.

By Tribe of the Whitewolf

MV



*Charalotty  
the strong  
wise one  
By Michelle*



## The Earth's Spirit to All of *MANY VOICES'* Children

We send our spirit to you today. We send our support and wishes for good health and happiness. We touch the earth's spirit and hold it, then we use it to become one with the spirit (it's our way of praying, but it's not like your praying) and we direct it to the one we want to touch, and we send it to them, to help them. We send you the earth's spirit today, we let the earth's spirit kiss you softly on the forehead and take care of you. Let it bring you back to health, and comfort you. We send you the earth's spirit, love, kindness, treasure, all these things are the earth's spirit. She is all good things. She is nurturing, encouraging, tender, gentle, soft, comforting—she is the earth's spirit. She lives in the songs of the birds, the light of the sun, the blue of the sky, the colors of the earth, the breeze in the air, and the water of the earth. She lives, she lives. She is our spirit, we believe in her. She is our precious earth. Her spirit touches you, takes your soft hand and beckons you to come with her, her spirit wraps you up in warmth, and she leads you outside to breathe, she looks at you and smiles. She tells you that you are beautiful, and strong; that you are gifted, and you are a wonderful human. She tells you that you are on the right path. She is so proud of you. She tells you that you are a special human, she wants you to feel good, and know you are a good human. She tells you that you will always be her child, a child of the earth, and she will always be there for you if you need her, and she will always love you. She lets go of your hand, and kisses your forehead once again. And then slowly she moves away just as a breeze passes across your body, and she turns around and smiles at you. Then she fades into the sky, the air, the earth, the trees. She loves you. She will always be there for you. The earth's spirit. She smiles at YOU.

By Rain

**MV**

## MANY VOICES needs an Angel or Two!

Please think of us when you can! And if you know people who could benefit from *MANY VOICES*, or know of clinics or conferences that could use flyers, please pass the word. Thanks very much.



Lynn W., Editor.

## Hidden Children

By JoEllen & Co.

Who can know the sweet playfulness of a child eager to share in the world around him? No one can see his rosy cheeks, or curious eyes anxious to enjoy God's creation. Who can see the little girl's large eyes pleading for acceptance and affection from the kind adults she knows and admires? Who can see the frightened little one who cuddles close, with her thumb stuck securely in her mouth? No one has eyes tender enough to see these vulnerable little ones hiding in the heart of this woman. They each have their own personalities, and hopes and dreams. They all have a horrid history of neglect or violence against them. And they all have a story to share.

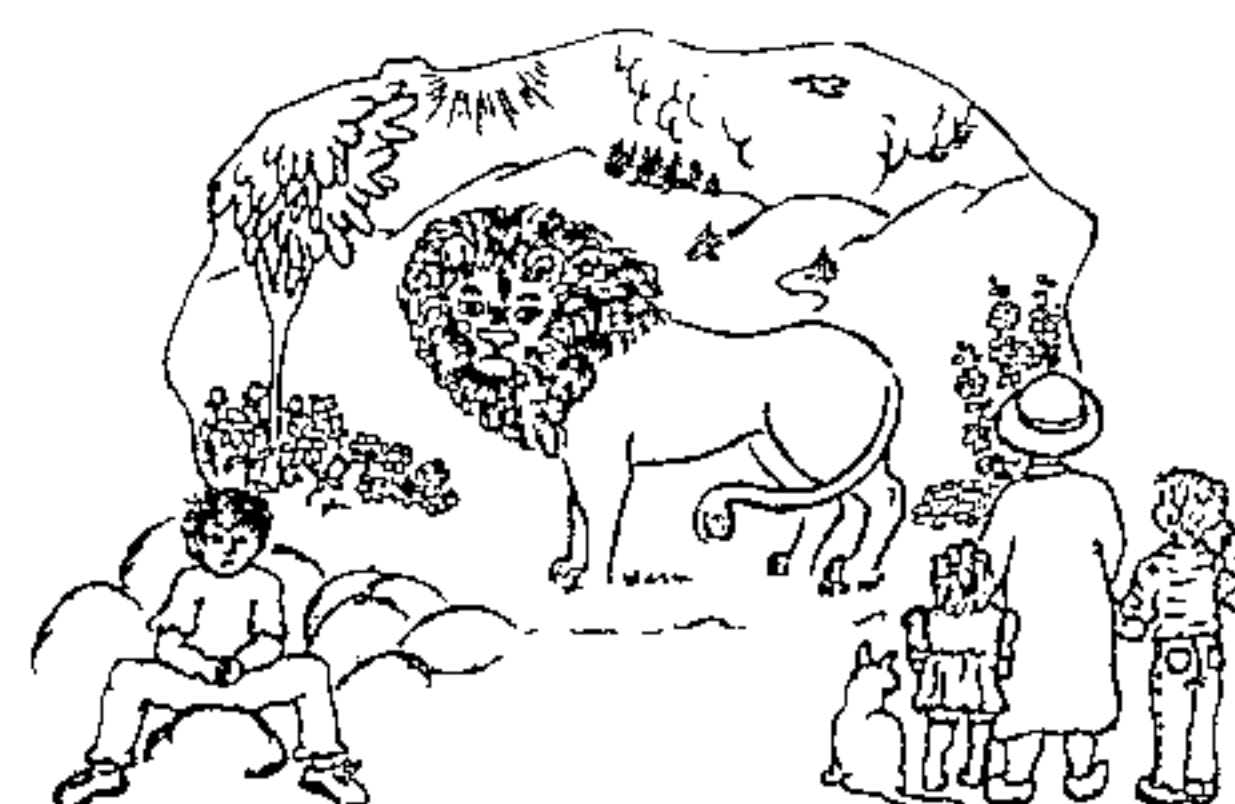
As this woman walks down the street and shops, these little ones compete for the chance to see through this woman's eyes, all the wonderful, colorful things to be had in stores. A little girl's voice cries for the pretty doll displayed in the store window. Another shy little one longs to slip her small hand inside the hand of the woman-friend she is with. She wants a mommy and wonders if this is a good choice. Another longs to curl up close to another adult friend and tell him all about how Jesus holds and comforts. Then there is the courageous little boy who brags about his coat of armor and sharp sword he uses to "chop-up" the enemy.

These little ones overtake the woman's body at times and use it to reach out for the love they never had. They search every face for kind eyes

and warm smiles. When they find such a one they cling to him or her.

When the children overwhelm the woman, they take her skipping through meadows, jumping in fall leaves and splashing in mud puddles. They giggle and enjoy the feel of cold ice cream. They marvel at the million stars, and twirl in the sunshine. They walk in summer showers catching rain drops on her tongue. They curiously examine the large soft snowflakes landing on her mittens. They play with toys in toy stores and stop to play hopscotch at playgrounds. They never pass a park without stopping for a time to swing. And never does a fuzzy wooly-worm cross her path that it isn't gently brushed with a finger across his soft back.

The next time you see me, the woman, laughing and running and enjoying all the sights, sounds and touches of living life, just know I am allowing some broken children, shivering inside me, their day in the warmth of God's creation. **MV**



# What I am afraid to tell my therapist

I am afraid to tell my therapist I love him and want to marry him. He's not married (he's divorced), and I often entertain private fantasies of running away with him to Aruba and living happily ever after. He is so perfect in every way. He understands me and accepts me. He never puts me down. He is like my Prince On A White Horse. He has rescued me from misery and self-destruction. I love him in a way I've never loved any other human in the whole wide world.

*By the 3 B's*



Trusting does not come easy, unfortunately. It would be wondrous if one could snap one's fingers and POOF! I trust! NOT...unfortunately. I am just recently starting to dig into the 'spicy' issues with this therapist (had her for about 1-1/2 years now, since my previous breached confidentiality). Some things I can bring to therapy, and it's fairly alright. But there are quite a number of things which I fear bringing. I struggle with figuring out whether it is a lack of trust, or a fear of myself, or a combination of both. By fear of myself, I mean that I oft still stand as Judge, Jury, and Executioner of my own self—not well-trained ones at that! When I feel so overtaken with shame or self-blame, with self-hatred and rage, with confusion or suicidality, these are times I need to speak the most, but also the times when my mouth seems to develop a good case of lockjaw.

I get scared that she will not understand, or that she will condemn me as I condemn myself, or that her view of me will change...yet she has never done anything remotely close to any of these. She is kind and understanding, frank and firm, but also concerned and helping...these scare me sometimes. It's like I'm afraid my self-hatred and all that other stuff would just go away. This doesn't make sense to me. I feel like it sounds crazy.

That brings me to my worst fear: that she will say I am crazy...

I also stand in a lot of denial regarding many of my issues. Let me re-phrase that: a LOT of my issues. Telling her not only creates this fear of reprimand and/or consequences to come from the abusers, it also puts me in a place where my denial will be openly confronted. That scares me. I tried to explain why to her this past week in therapy, but I feel like an idiot at times such as that, since I was not able to say things in a way that made much sense to her.

I feel so intensely when I feel. It's a sensation of total emotional overwhelm, instantaneous at times. It's a feeling of drowning, like in a whirlpool, and I can't get out of it. I seem either to not feel at all, or feel relatively little, or I feel so intensely that the feeling becomes my whole being and all I can see, and I lose it. This is when I get blackouts, lose time, get self-injured. I do not think I am afraid to tell her these things, or to discuss these issues per se. It is the resultant sequence which takes place within me that I fear. There are also a lot of things which I have done to which I feel emotionally imprisoned.

It is difficult to talk to her about this. She says that these things were done by me because the behavior was learned, it was what I had to do to survive. I can understand this rationale (most of the time) when it comes to younger alternate parts of self, but in my teen years, living in the United States (my ritual abuse was in a daycare in a different country) the abusers were not there. They were far away, and I was not just a child anymore. When I chose to return in my teen years, I had a choice. I did not have to. She postulates that I did not truly understand that the threat was not there, for I was taught that the eyes of the abusers were ever present and watching. But nothing can ever change what I have done.

Just as I hate my abusers and their abuse, some out there hate me for the abuses I have committed against

them. Just as I wish those who hurt me dead, there are those out there who wish me dead. There is no justification or rationalization to it—it was wrong. I made the choice. I could have chosen "No." I feel that it would have been better for me to die than to leave this trail of damage in the name of survival. I cannot reconcile these feelings with forgiveness. I do not see how I will be able to live with those things. I had abused my sister also when I was just 13 and she only 7. She does not remember. But I do, every time I see her, think about her, or e-mail her. I think about it.

All to say, it is not that I am afraid of my therapist. I fear the sequence which follows. A large part of me feels that I deserve no forgiveness just as my abusers do not. I feel that learning to love myself and to forgive myself will undermine how truly sorry I am to have done these things. The 'why' of it, supposedly survival, seems so futile to me. It does not make sense to me. All this must sound so non-sensical. I'm not sure I know or understand what I just wrote. It's a constant battle among parts of self. The need to heal, the perceived need to be punished...My therapist would be an advocate for the need to heal. This makes a lot of parts whose job is to hold ambiguous feelings feel very threatened. It would make me, the composite me, afraid to tell my therapist. And it does. This is the crossroad where I stand. This has been very personal, so I'll just sign,

*The Composite Me*



I've been diagnosed with PTSD, DID, BPD. Like all labels they can be very complex at times. What I find difficult at this time in therapy is how to explain in words to my therapist the way I communicate within myself. Unlike some with DID, I do not exhibit outward signs of change, such as mannerisms, voice changes, the way I walk, or talk, as well as dress. I created my other selves when I was two years



old. I'm now 40 years old, and although I am a female, I have male counterparts.

For the most part, my inside communications are 24-7 (all day, every day). Sometimes I get a break—they go 18-7. That is if I manage to get some sleep, which is very elusive right now. I'm not always sure who's who and what's going on, because for the past year I've been pretty damn safe. I grew up with such chaos in my life. Some of it was controllable or maybe even avoidable, but I couldn't or wouldn't recognize it then. I can now.

We don't think her therapist believes we actually exist, like we're not real. She once said we were emotions that the host couldn't deal with, so she gave us names in order to make sense of what was happening to her. So how come we can talk to her and she to us? Yes, some of us still hold back some of what the host went through. We don't think she can deal with any more. I do wish we could find some happy times to show her. They were few and far between in our lives. Besides, if we tell the therapist we are afraid of inter-integration. How can we be of help without losing each other in the process? As we've said before, we don't show ourselves, even in the office. But we are definitely there. It is the high point for some of us on the days she goes. The host sometimes feels as if she's betraying her therapist—because

she doesn't know how to get all our points across. And she still listens to a tape from her former therapist that was made over 8 years ago, because it helps all of us get some sleep. She waits too long and gets just a few hours of shuteye before she has to get up for work. If anyone has any ideas I'm willing to hear from them and maybe try applying them in my life.

Written by the others for the host, with writer's help.

By Robin



I am afraid to tell her how much I struggle with the thought of death. The voices that suggest constantly that I give up this body and set them free. Free from all the pain and memories. Free from the suffering and day-to-day struggle with life. I am also very afraid that she will leave, that she will give up on us.

I'm afraid to let her know how much we love and respect her. She is the only one we can talk to and allow the many parts of ourself to come out and share the truth. What does she think of us? Does she really understand the incredible struggle of day-to-day in this life?

By Karen G.

MV

## Attachment

All of us try to  
Trust and  
Try to become  
Attached but we  
Cry a lot and long for  
Help and the  
Melting of the pain we feel.  
Everytime we take a chance we  
become  
Numb at first because  
Trusting is so difficult and scary.  
However, once we become attached,  
we remain attached for the rest  
of our lives and it hurts us when  
that person gives up on us  
and/or leaves.

By Karen G.

MV

## Success Story

I can recognize a miracle when it presents itself, and I have worked long and hard for this one to manifest. This is a time of transition. I now feel able to open the journals of the last ten years. I need to acknowledge the courage and embrace my journey of healing. I believe it is time for all this now. I have made this possible for myself. I have given myself a new life. Inch by inch I have reclaimed what they took from me as a child. I am now the proud owner of my body, my sexuality, my voice, my dreams, my thoughts, my values, my beliefs, my past, my present, my own future, my love, my will to live and my joy.

I have triumphed twice—as a little girl I survived their theft of me. As a woman I have come to find and own me.

By Irene S.

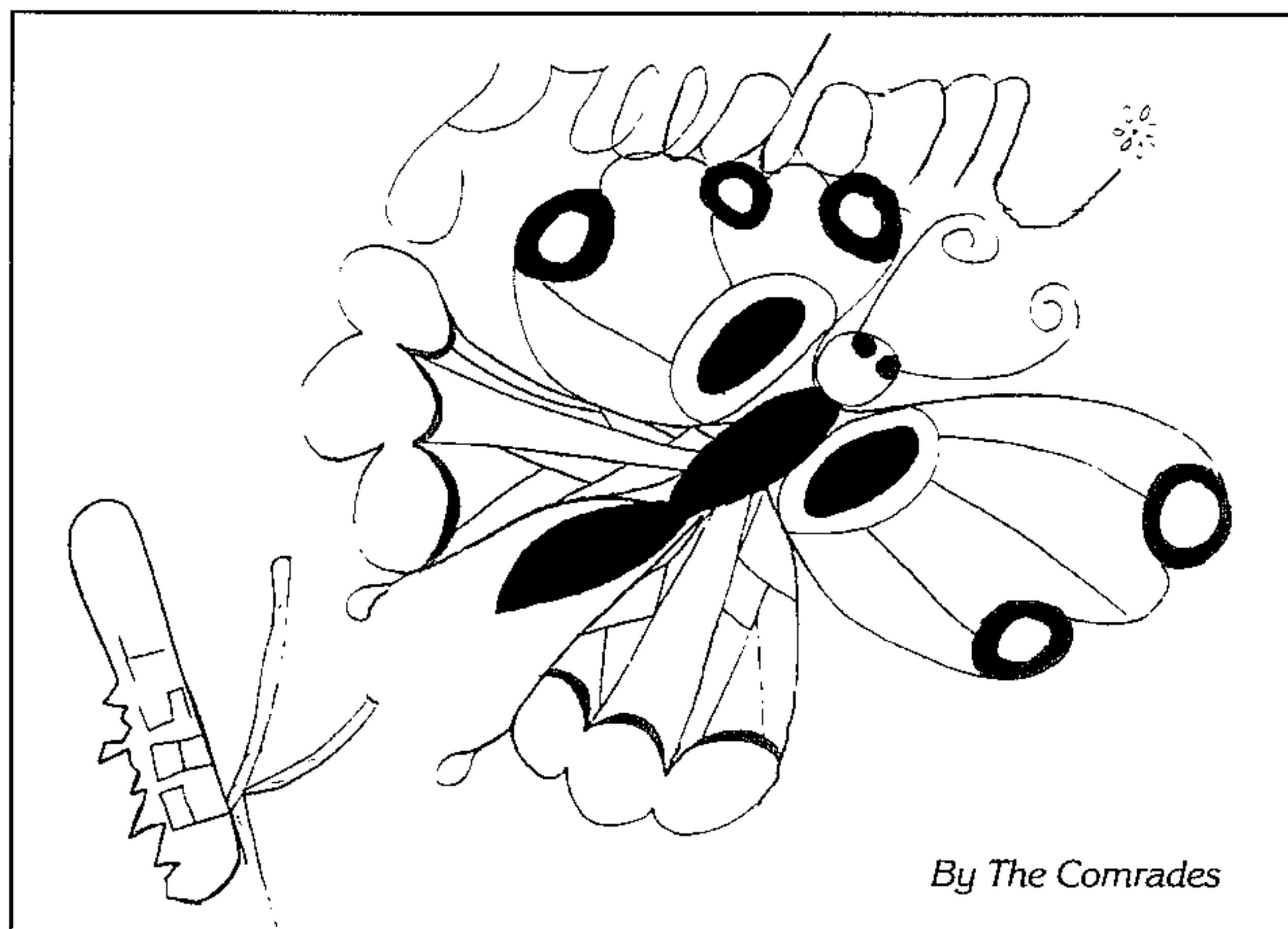
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## Prayer

May a sprout  
come forth  
from my heart

By Mary Delle

MV



*In place of The Therapists' Page...*

## SAVING THE ISSD: How YOU can help!

By Lynn W.

I rarely take up space with my personal views in the newsletter, but currently there is a serious problem in the field of dissociation that I think all *MANY VOICES* readers—clients, professionals, and friends and family members—should know about.

The professional society which leads research in this field is struggling to survive.

The International Society for the Study of Dissociation (ISSD) was founded in the 1980s as the International Society for the Study of Multiple Personality and Dissociation. At that time, a small group of professionals gathered to compare notes and support each other in the exploration of what was and remains a troubling area in our society: what happens to people traumatized as children. Then, and now, a large sector of the public as well as treatment professionals did not want to believe trauma was frequent or severe in families. The idea that young developing children could actually compartmentalize their traumatic experiences so thoroughly that "one part" would not know what "another part" knows was hard for many to comprehend. It was (and remains) even tougher to understand that those separated compartments within an individual's mind might continue to exist long after the need to forget abuse had passed...or that the habit of splitting off various experiences might persist, to occur spontaneously even in non-traumatic situations. Needless to say, chronic dissociation causes great pain and dysfunction to those affected, their families, and their communities.

The ISSMP&D (later ISSD) was formed by a group of professionals who were both compassionate and curious. They wanted to understand what was happening with the special group of clients they were treating, and they wanted to figure out how to help in the most effective manner. There wasn't a road map in the early days of treatment for dissociation. So there

was much trial, and some error, along the way. But the intention from Day One was to improve conditions for once-traumatized people, to help them become more functional, and to share research and treatment techniques that would extend to a broader base of professionals, in the US and abroad.

Through the 1980s and into the mid-1990s, the organization grew, to peak at slightly over 3,000 members. Then the decline began. Currently, according to Peter Barach, Ph.D., ISSD's president, there are about 1,600 members. As he pointed out in the January 1999 edition of *ISSD-NEWS*, the drop in membership is due to several factors. First, the organization and its members have succeeded in spreading information to the larger professional community. Information about the causes and treatment of dissociative disorders is much more widely available, and mainstream mental health journals now publish research and clinical material on dissociation, so some therapists may not feel a need to join. Other factors impacting membership include the reduction of income to therapists due to managed care, and the numbers of therapists who stopped treating dissociative clients openly, due to fear of litigation.

At this point, some of you may be saying, "Who cares if ISSD goes down the tubes? It doesn't affect me personally." In my view, it affects us all. ISSD has been a vital research engine behind the study of dissociation, traumatic memory and the long-term effects of child abuse. Its conferences continue to bring concerned professionals together for study and treatment support. All of us who are dealing with the effects of trauma, or who are treating it in others, can benefit from a continued, focused effort to expand knowledge about dissociation, from its origin through recovery.

To keep the organization alive, Dr. Barach and his committees chose to

recast ISSD in a new form. It will reduce the use of costly outside management, instead relying more extensively on volunteer participation. It is launching a vigorous membership drive. And, as a non-profit 501(c)3 organization, it is seeking tax-deductible financial contributions.

What can you, as individuals, do?

Well, if you are a treatment provider, the answer is obvious. Join (or rejoin) the ISSD, and help link your efforts with others who believe dissociative disorders are real, that good treatment is possible, and that there is always more to learn. Attend conferences and study groups. Help out with research. Membership is just \$105, a small price to pay for professional growth.

If you are not a professional, you may be interested in ISSD's Affiliate Membership category. As an affiliate, you will receive the *ISSD-News*, and you will know that your membership money helps foster a positive climate for the treatment of dissociation. Affiliate membership is presently \$50 annually. Affiliates do not vote for ISSD officers, nor do they run for office, because it is important that this organization remain focused on its professional role. The way I see it, it is not the job of ISSD to be a direct advocate of clients, to provide conferences for us or to nurture our particular concerns. Rather, we client-affiliates (and family-member- or friend-affiliates) are advocates for the ISSD. It is in our best interest to keep the boundaries clear, and to give support to active professionals without interfering with their work. (I come from a time of the Ladies' Auxiliaries...an outmoded concept today, but still, I believe, a useful way to differentiate between the people who work in a particular field, and the people who encourage that work.)

Finally, whether you join ISSD or not, you can send a financial contribution or offer to volunteer. If you have special skills that might be



useful to the organization, and have some time to spare, contact Dr. Barach by e-mail at [pbarach@sprynet.com](mailto:pbarach@sprynet.com), or fax at (440) 845-9013. Tell him who you are, and what skills and time you have available. (You may also contact *MANY VOICES*, if you prefer I relay the information.) For example, ISSD hopes to have a conference in Miami this fall. There might be a need for envelope stuffers, conference workers, etc. If no open "jobs" surface, please, at least put your name on the list as a possible resource for this professional society. Just knowing that lots of people care about the health of the ISSD will help the people in charge feel supported. Thank you for reading this, and take action if you can.

Access ISSD membership information on the web at [www.issd.org](http://www.issd.org), or call/write to ISSD, 60 Revere Dr., Suite 500, Northbrook, IL USA 60062. Phone: (847) 480-0899. Fax: (847) 480-9282.

## How to calm down your system with two steps

By the Executive Committee: Anne, Paul & Angela

After years of hysterical acting-out/self-destructive behavior, I literally calmed down and organized my 23 parts with just two steps. These steps have changed my life drastically.

The greatest success would come if one has identified all or a good portion of their parts.

### Step One: Developing the Executive Committee.

Think of your parts as members of a true democratic government, favoring social equality.

Have a group meeting as best you can and vote on three or five leaders. This must be an uneven number or there will be tie-votes. Everyone gets to vote and the most votes win a seat. These positions likely will be re-voted on, as the original leaders need to retire or "take vacation" after awhile. After choosing your leaders, each member decides which one will most adequately supply their needs. They fall under that leader's section. All votes that leader gives on decisions are first voted on by their subsidiary members, who are "furnishing aid or support," acting as reserve troops. The majority decides the Executive Committee member's vote.

It may sound confusing at first, but it is really very easy. All things important are voted on. Example: Do we need more therapy? Should we slash our arms? Should we take all of our medicine at once? Should we start a relationship with this person? Should we buy a new toy? Should we write to MV? Everything!

Everyone is represented and feels important; and they are! You can see how this can radically modify the individual acting-out of parts. Every question is valid and worth voting on, even self-destructive desires. The Executive Committee leaders may not be the older ones, or the less-destructive ones. You may be surprised who gets voted in. Trust the votes. It works out sometimes to redesign a powerful self-destructive part's behavior to be a Committee

member. And they carry only one vote, anyway.

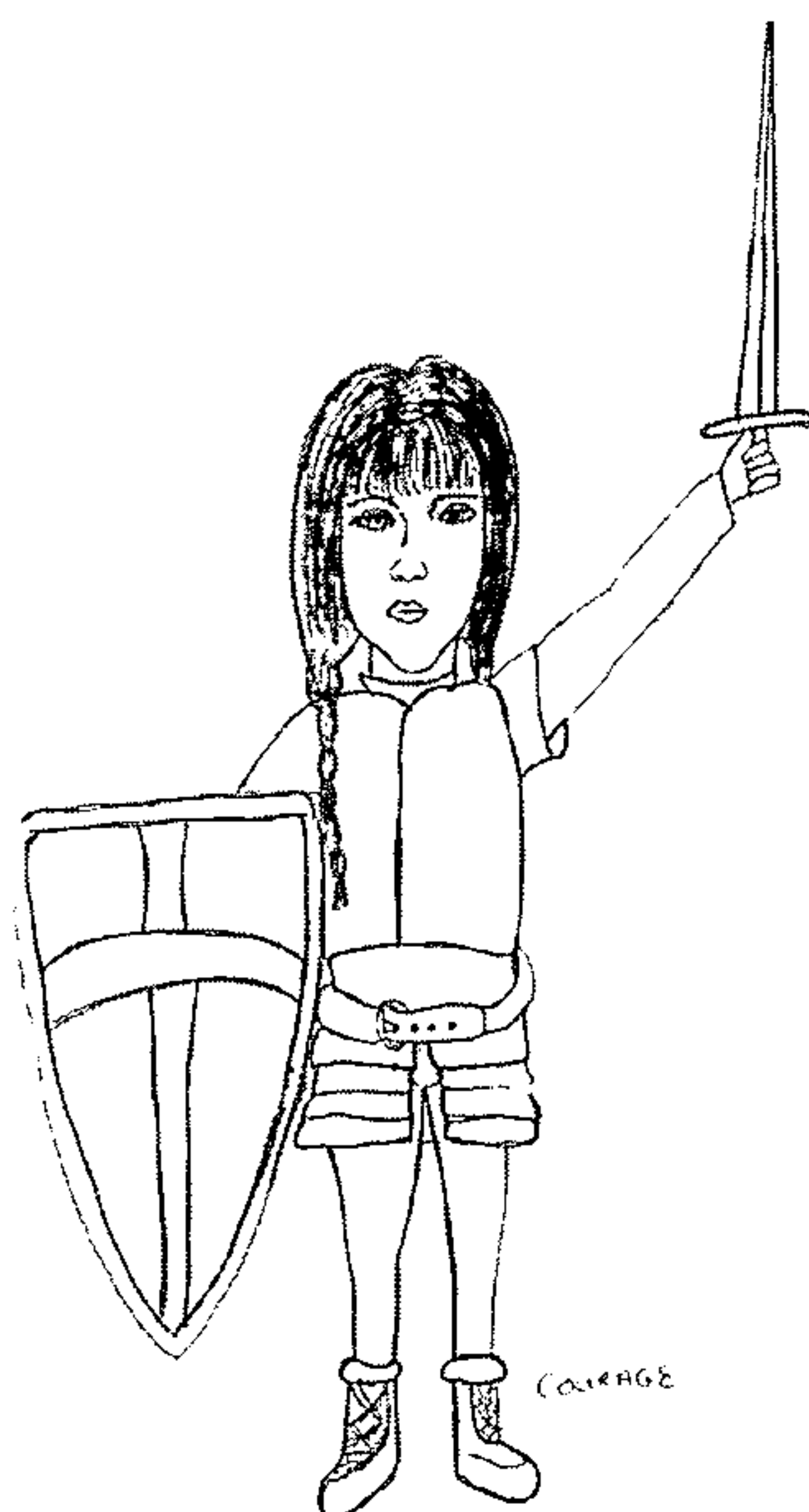
### Step Two: The Closing Technique.

This is a way to calm down and help parts feel safe during something difficult you must do, or during a really hard memory, or something very trigger. Examples: Go to work. Work through a memory in therapy. Speak in front of a group of people.

Here's what to do: choose five numbers in consecutive order. I have never and will never tell anyone my five numbers. One reason is that we all respond to these numbers and we would not want anyone to abuse this. (Whether to tell or not is up to you.) By mentally saying these five numbers backwards, do this in your mind: Try to connect to the whole group. Number 5: Announce that we will have to do something hard and whoever wants to, can get out of it. Say "we are taking a group into their safe places. Who wants to go?" Never force anyone. That is not allowed. Number 4: Begin the travel towards the safe place or places. Number 3: Sing songs on the way. Walk happily. Carry the little ones. Number 2: Announce that we are almost there. We are going to have fun! Number 1: Step into the safe place or places. Start to play, rest, talk, etc.

Learn to be conscious of doing this prior to difficult things. You will be pleasantly surprised at how smooth things can go! Your parts will become so accustomed to these steps that you need only think of the numbers backwards and they will jump in line. It is a pleasant experience for each part. After completing the hard task, you can say "Whoever wants to can come back home!"

One wonderful therapist named Mina taught us these things. She literally changed our lives and helped us to progress beyond chaos. When she taught us these techniques, she said "All multiples can do it." And...so we did!



By Kathy L.

MV

## Partner's Page:

# When your Partner Can't Work

By Richard

**T**he clock-radio clicked on, Vivaldi mingling with the gray dawn light. I groaned, she whined...and kept on whining.

"Why do I hafta get up," she said, voice muffled by blankets and pillows and teddy bears.

"Because we have to go to work, dear."

"I don't wanna go to work. I hate work. Work hates me."

I hit the snooze-alarm for another 10 minutes of sleep, but she was just as unhappy when it went off again.

"I'm exhausted," she moaned. "One more snooze?"

So I hit the snooze-alarm again, got up and faced the day.

Although no one likes to get up at dark-30 and go to work, most of us at least move with some determination. But her litany of resistance had gone on for months, and it was getting worse. She finally dragged herself out of bed with barely enough time to spare, slogged heavily through her morning routine, dawdled over breakfast until half-past the last minute, and finally moped out the door like she was going to the gallows.

And it caught up with her. She lost her job, which was about the fourth worst thing I could imagine. We had gotten used to a fun, affluent lifestyle during our courtship, we lived in an apartment near the city (convenient but expensive), and we paid for our wedding and honeymoon mostly with plastic. We had planned for her salary to chop down the credit debt while mine covered the other expenses.

But if you love, marry, or otherwise support a multiple, there's a good chance that, sooner or later, he or she will be unemployed, and you will be the sole breadwinner. It doesn't happen with every multiple, but it happens often to the men in our support group.

There are many reasons why multiples can lose their job. In my wife's case, therapy took too much out of her. Dealing with childhood sexual

abuse and ritual abuse takes a lot of energy, especially if you do it as intensely as my wife does. As she and her alters dealt with deeper and deeper memories of abuse, it became harder to turn it off after leaving the therapist's office. This "therapy hangover" left her unable to cope with the day-to-day effort of work. She missed more and more days, and her job performance degraded until the handwriting was on the wall. My wife had to declare herself disabled to avoid being fired.

There are other reasons why a multiple might lose his or her job. An alter may be triggered out who behaves inappropriately at work, or who can't do the job and gets fired for incompetence. However it happens, your partner losing his or her job requires a major adjustment in your lives, and a lot of flexibility, understanding, and strength on your part.

## ACCEPTANCE

It wasn't easy to accept my wife losing her job. I had seen so much resistance and moping and whining that it was easy to believe that she was just wallowing in self-pity over the abuse she had suffered. It took an effort of will to see the whole situation. My wife is determined to heal from her abuse, and determined not to take her whole life doing it. I had to understand that losing her job was a by-product of heavy-duty therapy, and that it would free her to work harder in therapy. In the long run, losing her job would speed up her healing.

This level of acceptance wasn't easy, but it was vital to my wife's sanity, and to the survival of our marriage.

## CUTTING BACK

We were lucky in a couple of respects. I'm a GS-12 in the federal government, which is a pretty good salary. But Northern Virginia is a high-cost-of-living area, and it doesn't go far for two people. No more season tickets at the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. No more dining at

top-rated restaurants downtown. No more expensive gifts on a whim. No more credit cards except for emergencies. And we cut our allowances from \$50 a week to \$5. (Ouch, *that* hurt!) We had to move to a smaller apartment further out of town, and finally buy a home even *further* out to escape the rising cost of renting.

## BUDGETING

We immediately went on a strict budget and set some priorities. Our first priority was rent or mortgage payments to keep a roof over our heads. Then came commuting costs to get me to work. Then therapy and debt, and food came last. We can always eat Spam and canned soup (though we've never gotten *that* desperate), but we can't do without the other priorities.

Luckily, my wife's jobs gave her experience at running a budget. She has become quite good at juggling the finances on our home computer to make sure all our bills are covered and we still have funds for emergencies and an occasional movie and restaurant.

## SSDI

Despite all the cutbacks, we were still doing without and gnawing on bones by the end of the month. Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) was another stroke of luck for us. One of the lawyers in my support group told me about SSDI, and told my wife to go to the local Social Security office to file for it.

You must be disabled for at least six months before receiving your first check. The forms asked for a very detailed history of my wife's condition. It takes about three months for an SSDI request to be processed after the paperwork is submitted. Social Security is very strict; most requests are rejected and must be fought for in court.

We were lucky. Thanks to my wife's careful attention to detail on the forms, plus some excellent input from her therapist and psychiatrist (who have



both jostled with Social Security before), we were approved the first time.

Her check isn't large; how much you get depends on how long you were in the workforce and how much you paid into Social Security. But that little regular check has been a godsend. It let us loosen our budget-belts a notch or two and breathe easier. Without it, my wife might have had to find a part-time job to make ends meet.

#### MY WIFE AT HOME

George Bernard Shaw said, "There are two tragedies in life. One is to lose your heart's desire. The other is to gain it." Okay darling, you have your heart's desire of never going to work. Now what? We did a lot of talking when my wife lost her job. My greatest fear was that she would withdraw into a shell and waste her time eating and smoking and sleeping. So my wife

agreed that she would spend her day working on therapy and taking care of the house.

Besides the budget, she takes care of household chores like the dishes, laundry, cooking, and cleaning. Generally, she does quite well. But I know there are days when she's more capable than others. There are days when therapy and sleep are all she can handle, and other days when her child alters need to come out and play, and still other days when sleeping and binge-eating seem to be the only alternatives to killing herself or jumping in the car and disappearing over the horizon.

I've modified my standards of housekeeping from "spotless" to "livable." If there's no dinner when I get home, I fend for myself without complaining. I help out on the evenings and weekends as much as I

can, and pick up the slack when she's emotionally overwhelmed.

I guess my bottom line is that she make progress on her therapy. This is the only thing I genuinely hold her accountable for, and demand almost-daily reports on. My reason—she quit work to deal with therapy, and I feel I have the right to know she is working on it, because her healing is one of the major keys to our future.

#### FAITH IN THE FUTURE

And it helps to believe this is a temporary situation. My wife is making slow but steady progress on her therapy, and she and her therapist assure me that someday she'll be through the worst of it and will be able to live a more normal life, including work. Having faith in my wife, and faith in the process, helps me to take the long view toward the future. MV

### Another Partner Experience

My current partner and I met in a survivor's group. We were the best of friends for two years. Also, we both were in very abusive home environments. She was married and her husband was not only abusive but an alcoholic too. Yet she was blind in denial and would talk good of him in group.

I, on the other hand, had come far enough to realize that my partner at that time broke the record of violent abuse, and had no remorse.

To add to the difficulty, my then-partner went to work as a nurse in the very same place where my therapist, doctor, and group were located. This person was definitely dangerous with information. She was very jealous and told everyone I was in contact with that we were partners...including my therapist, doctor, and case management. She also accessed my personal files. This caused a wildfire of questions in the mental health workplace. Finally I had to insist that my personal files were locked up. I had lost my safe place. I was haunted by the fact that this person was co-worker to my therapist, doctor, and others I knew.

My best friend Sue was all I had left. As I thought of her and all that was involved, an idea came to me that forever changed my life. I picked up the phone and called my good friend. I said, "Sue, we are both being abused, right?" She said "Yes." I said, "And they could care less and they still do whatever they want, and blame us for it, right?" Again, she said "Yes." I summed it up by saying, "Well then, why don't we put our powers together, and support each

other enough for courage to walk out on abuse!"

Sue kindly said she would help me look for another place to live, first. Then once I was out, I could help her. I am telling you folks, I saw light at the end of the tunnel then! And we went to work.

We began looking for another place for me to live. But in January 1994, Sue called me to come over. Her husband had given her a time-limit for performing her "wifely duties" of sex, or he was going to leave her. He was already in at least one sexual affair, and probably others. It was a fear-filled evening for Sue, so I came over.

Between 8 pm and midnight, I helped her and kept him from abusing her. He was intoxicated and would not let Sue leave or even use the telephone. He had pushed her forcefully on the couch and told her to stay there. I said I needed to call a friend. It was alright in his eyes for me to use the phone. He went upstairs to the bathroom. I dialed Sue's sister and brother-in-law, and explained the emergency. It took all three of us to safely get Sue and her two sons, aged 4 and 5, out of the house.

Sue, her sons and I stayed with two of my friends during the rest of January. We were both intimidated, harassed and stalked by our ex's during this time. However, these friends helped us get a U-haul, load up belongings and get to our new place while our ex's were at work. Even so, they continued with threats toward our lives, intimidation and harassment for a year and a half afterwards.

Yet our freedom prevailed. Sue won custody of her sons and every court battle as well, for us both.

I had never been in mental health services before this experience. Now that five years have gone by, I learned that my therapist back then handled many things inappropriately. It was devastating. Sue's experience was similar.

Thank goodness we both have good therapists now. And in a strange twist of fate...

Sue's sister had already been diagnosed having MPD/DID. Next, I was diagnosed MPD. Though it was shocking, I felt good to have someone like myself to talk to (Sue's sister.) Next, Sue was diagnosed with MS. Another shock wave! And then a year or so later, Sue herself was diagnosed with DID as well.

But despite all this, it is a success story. Sue's sister and brother-in-law are very supportive of us. And Sue and I have found a good, healthy and loving partnership together...one that we had always hoped for, and one that we had almost given up on ever finding.

Also, we have made a commitment to break the chain of abuse whenever we can, whether it is a stranger on the street or a friend in need of help. Miracles do happen, and the system can work! As Sue's therapist once said to her, "You have survived actual events, and you will be able to survive the memories and feelings about these events. Whatever is discovered, you know that you survived it."

With our belief in the power of Love and a Higher Being, we prevailed.

*By Barb and the recruits.*



## School and D.I.D.

**W**e were diagnosed with MPD in 1992 and have been working hard on recovery and healing ever since. It took many years of abuse for us to end up a "super multiple" and it is taking many years to heal. We believe that healing is a process, and will continue indefinitely. But that doesn't mean we can't go to school.

We must be doing something right, because we have a 4.0 cumulative GPA and will graduate with a B.A. this summer. We have tried to keep our GPA up because competition is so heated for scholarship money and for graduate school. We have gotten some scholarship money, and at this point, we don't want to enter grad school. But if we decide to do that later, our grades will help us get accepted.

Just attending classes is hard. Sometimes most of our parts don't want to sit in class and hear a lecture. We have agreed inside that even if most don't want to be "present" that at least a "note taker" will take scrupulous notes on the lecture. We can't afford to miss any classes because we get "lost" easily and it is stressful to try and catch up. So parts inside have agreed to attend every class (if possible). We have parts who are "students" and they like school and enjoy learning; we ask inside that they be the main ones who attend school. Of course anyone can be "present" but a student usually needs to be "out." We also have strict rules about studying, that have come through trial and error. The part who studies the material has to take the test. It is totally frustrating to know we've studied and not have a clue how to answer any question on the exam. This is especially hard for essay exams. Different parts and different "student" parts like different subjects, so we talk inside about who wants to be present for which classes. No one should have to attend class on a subject they don't like or think is boring. Also, if parts have certain outstanding talents in a specific area, we naturally ask that part to participate in that type of class.

Another area is reports and papers. Not all student parts are good at writing. But we have parts who are professional writers (in the "real" world), so we talk inside and ask the "writers" to help the students when we have writing assignments due. We have parts who are particularly good readers, and we ask them to help the student parts with studying. We have parts who are great with research, so we try to coordinate their help when we have a research paper due, etc. This all sounds great and it works really great too—when it works. Sometimes we struggle and worry and beg and plead inside for help. Usually help does come, even if it happens to be at the "last minute." Since we don't like that stress, we try to start assignments early, and work with our therapist to find out why, if we're not getting cooperation.

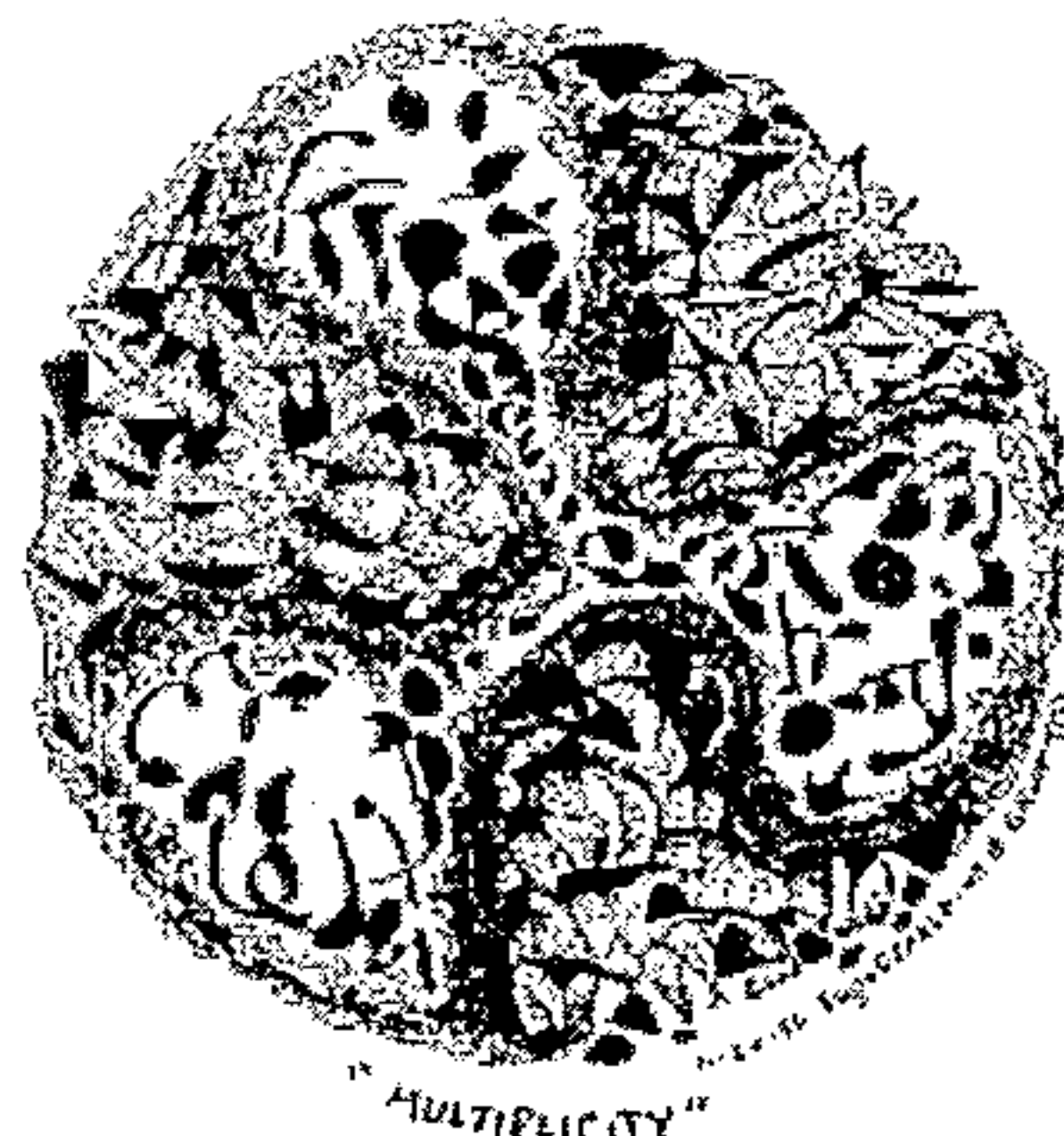
At the present time, life has been flowing more smoothly in many ways. We have some wonderful support. We attend weekly therapy sessions and a weekly DID group therapy session. We have a terrific and supportive partner (new addition within the past year). And we have two cats who keep us laughing with their antics.

There have been a couple of infrequent "problems" that have come up in class. When we were taking a dance improvisation class, the child parts loved it. But as it was a university class, we had to perform under scrutiny of an instructor. Sometimes when the child parts were "out" they wouldn't understand the instructions and would be doing their "own thing" when the rest of the class were following a prescribed dance lesson. Once we figured out what was happening, we asked an adult or teenage part to monitor the children in class, so they could play and we didn't get embarrassed (or a bad grade!). Another thing that has happened a couple of times is being "triggered" to the point of panic-attack during a class. We have figured out what to do so we stay safe. We carry medicine we use p.r.n. if we start to panic. We leave the class immediately, take our medicine and head straight home. Once we are safe at home, we call our

therapist and our partner (if he isn't home). We visit our therapist if she has an opening. We got triggered really bad last month and we followed this and stayed safe. We also e-mailed our teacher and told her what she had done that was inappropriate and what she could do differently in the future. The teacher apologized to the class next time we met. Communicating with teachers about triggers helps us to feel empowered and lets them know how they can help make the classroom safe. We don't have to explain in detail that we're DID (because of so much misinformation and misunderstanding). Most people understand about childhood trauma in general and how that affects people as adults, so this doesn't carry such a stigma. We can explain ourselves that way and be understood. We have told teachers that we were DID, but it had to be important to do so, and the teacher needed to have enough caring and sensitivity for us to feel safe being vulnerable.

For us, school has been better than a 9 to 5 job because it's flexible and we can do our work intermittently, but still have it done when it's due. When we graduate, we will look for a job situation that emulates the flexible schedule of school. Hopefully, that will be possible. The parts who are professional writers can work at home with flexible hours, but so far publishing hasn't paid off too well. Luckily, like other people with DID, we are intelligent and creative so we'll figure something out.

By Lori et al  
MV





## Iris Meenz Raneboze: A pome for Iris

By the K.E. Lawrence (DID) System  
Specifically, by Christopher 1957: a system child

(This poem is written by a child insider about our daughter, Iris. Iris was a big part of our recovery. She gave us the inspiration to stick it out. This poem is a tribute to that love.)

BEFOR YU KAMED IN NANNYS TUM  
IT WAS DARK INSIDE  
AND I WAS SKERD  
BUT EVRY BUDDYS GLAD  
SINS YU BROT RANEBOZE

BUT BEFOR YU KAMED  
IT ALL WAYS SEEMD  
LIKE GEORGE WAS MAD  
AND BUTCH STOLD THINGS  
AND GOT US INTO TRUBBLE.

AND ME AND MIMI  
WERE ALL WAYS LONSUM  
AND MARY DIDNT CARE  
IF WE LIVD OR DIDE.  
SHE EVEN TRIDE TO TAKE R LIFE!

BUT DOWN INSIDE  
THE KIDS R MAGIK.  
WE NU FURST.  
AND EVRY BUDDY CHEERD.  
YU GIVD US RANEBOZE.

EVRY BUDDY HAD A PARTY  
WAY DOWN DEEP INSIDE A PLACE  
WHER ITS SAFE TO LAFF  
AND RANEBOZE  
FILL THE SKY.

YU SWIMD  
JUST LIKE A TADPOLE  
IN A POND IN NANNYS TUM.  
WE SHER HAD FUN.  
YU GIVD US RANEBOZE.

THEN THE DOKTER TAKED YU OUT.  
AND SINS YOR HERE  
THE SUN SHINES DOWN.  
WAY DOWN INSIDE  
WHER IT YOOZ TO BE  
SO DARK AND COLD AND SKERY TO.

BUT NOW ITS WARM IN HERE.  
AND GREEN.  
MY FAVRIT COLOR.  
TOOTIZ TO.  
AND UTER KULLERS  
SINS YU GIVD US RANEBOZE.

GEORGE GETS MAD SUM TIMES.  
ITS TROO.  
BUT HE IZNT MEEN  
LIKE HE YOOZ TO BE  
KUZ YU GIVD HIM RANEBOZE.

AND BUTCH STOPT STEELING  
WUNCE HE NU THE KOPS MITE KUM  
AND TAKE US AWAY  
AND WE KOOD LOOZ YU.

AND MARY  
STILL GETS REEL SAD  
AND FEELS LIKE DYENG  
STILL SUM TIMES.  
SUM TIMES.

BUT SHE DUZZNT TRY TO KILL.  
TO KILL US ENNY MOR  
KUZ SHE LOVES RANEBOZE.

NOW ME AND MIMI GOTS  
SUN SHINE ALL THE TIME. AND TOYS.  
YU GIVED US FARKWAR  
AND ELMO AND PIGGY TO.  
AND YOR THE BESTEST  
REEL GOOD FREND.  
AND WE KAN KUM OUT AND PLAY NOW  
KUZ WE GOTS RANEBOZE.

I WACHT BEHIND THE EYES THAT DAY.  
THE DAY THAT SADIE PIKT YOR NAME.  
SHE TAKED SO LONG I EVIN FELL A  
SLEEP.

BUT ALL UV A SUDDIN  
SHE HOPT UP OUT OV BED  
AND SHOUTED "IRIS!  
THAT MEENZ RANEBOZE!"

MV

### Shifting Persons

We do not abruptly switch, within. We share thoughts and ideas before an appropriate person takes over.

We compare this to an aircraft carrier on the sea. One plane is about to land as another takes off. For a short time both are running down the runway together, as one lands, the other leaves or takes off.

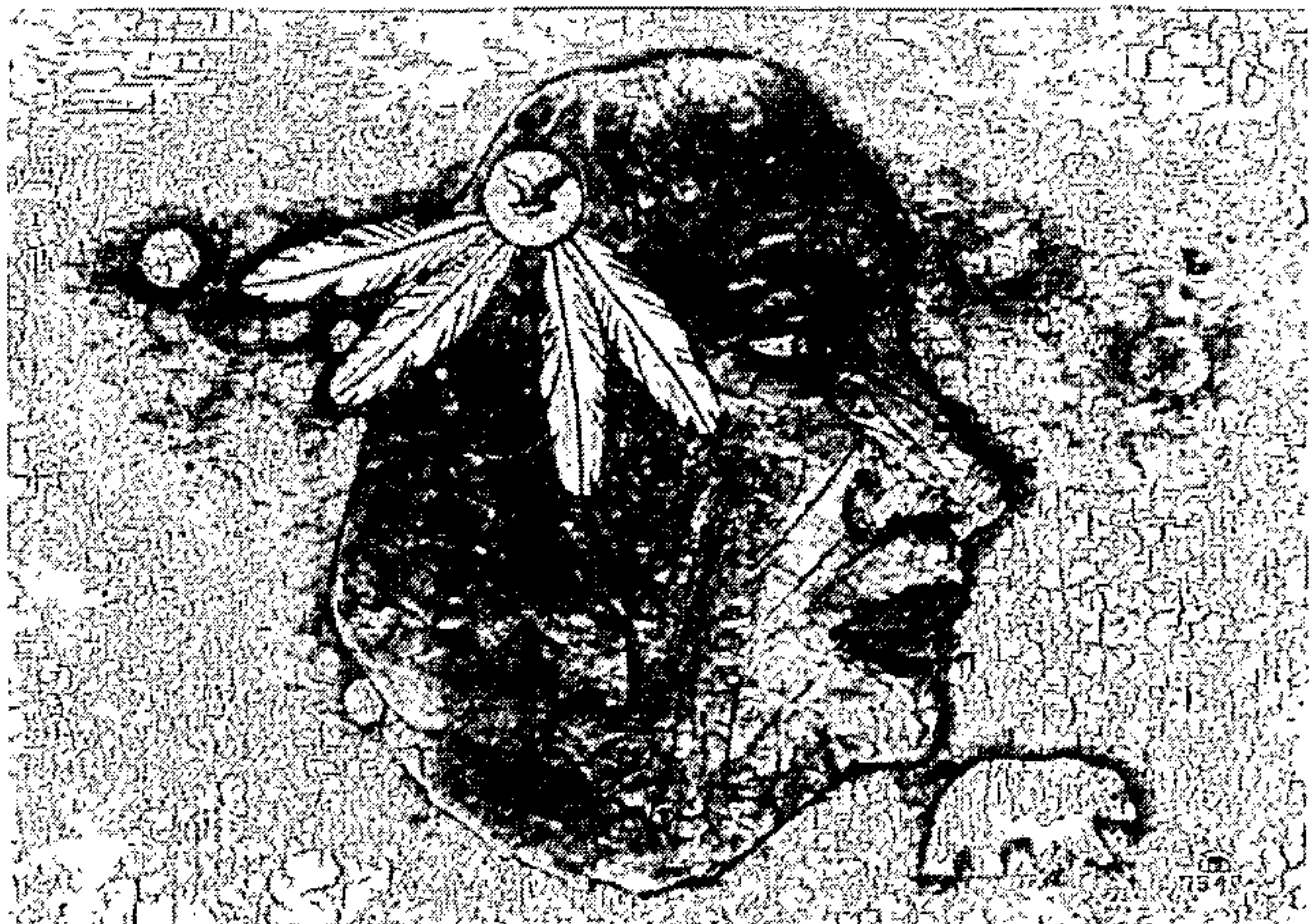
This analogy helped steady the apprehension within, when we were first diagnosed. I hope sharing this can help others.

*By MJD*

### More Fears

The Boys wanted me to write and tell you that they would never tell our counselor that they were afraid of anything. Their mantra all the time was "I'm not afraid of you." They said they were really afraid of Secrets coming out but they kept telling her they weren't afraid (especially of her.)

*By Becky et al*





## What's in a Name?

How trite that sounds. I think Shakespeare was wrong. I wish I could argue with the author of those words; he obviously did not understand multiple as well as he did the singleton human condition.

For our system, names became a critical issue two years ago. Some alters carry parts or derivatives of the body's name. Our littlest, Jakey, is who she is because our birth parents used that nickname when they expected a son. Although she is female, the nickname was used off and on for three years, until our brother was born. She still identifies herself by that name.

The next-oldest alter, Cathy Ann, understands that she is not Jakey, and yet knows she is not the adult Cathy either. Cathy Ann, as a child, separates herself and identifies her uniqueness by using first and middle given names.

Cathy Ann named Kit, an adult alter who came nameless from our system. Kit is Cathy Ann's shortened version for kitten, which is how she viewed Kit when she first made herself known to us. Cathy Ann described her as being like a fierce, orphaned kitten we found under the house when we were young. We wanted to help the animal, but each time we approached, it hissed, and scratched and tried to bite. That kitten had a difficult time accepting the help it needed. Kit is like that. She is distant, self-protective, defensive, and sometimes a bit wild. Having no other name, she accepts the name our "little" gave her.

Echo D. came with her own name. She was a spiritual twelve-year-old (who has since aged a great deal). She always stresses that "Echo" is not a hollow sound, but is the name from Greek mythology. Echo was a wood nymph, a favorite of the Goddess Diana. Echo D. began studying Wicca and female spirituality; she is close to nature, the forest, and our moods. Echo finds empowerment in her relationship to the concept of Diana's Echo...and in her own name.

We struggled, and still struggle, with self-mutilation. The alter who cut the body, cut for valid reasons, even though the reasons made sense only to her. Part of our healing process involved learning to listen to and honor the part identified only as "Cutter." During a brief stint in a hospital on a unit that deals with dissociative disorders, we met another multiple who cut. During that hospitalization, we discovered our "Cutter" to be a compassionate, gentle nine-year-old. Listening to her help her hospital-friend revealed to us her wisdom, a softer side we had never experienced.

Her new friend recognized Cutter's wisdom, and suggested that she was more than a "Cutter." Her friend, Deborah, helped her think of how she could be defined. They played with names from Sally to Pinocchio. Out of this came the name Bethanne. Cutter became Bethanne because she felt the name was soft, lacking the harsh C and K sounds of all our names. To Bethanne the harsh sounds symbolized cutting behavior. Her new name reminds her that she is much more than that behavior; she is also soft, wise, and has the capacity to love deeply.

Kore chose her name as a protest to the rest of us. She believes herself to be the "core" of our system. Rather than spell her name "Core," she chose to look at mythology for her name, mostly to aggravate Echo D. Kore, another name for Persophone, descended to the underworld. Kore lives much of her life behind the scenes and considers herself very separate from us; she lives in her own underworld.

None of us truly identifies with the body's given name. As a child we had two last names. We used our stepfather's name until our birth father remarried our mother. Changing our name during early elementary school years never felt right, and since this father became another perpetrator, we never wanted to use his name.

Names are important: they are all tied up with how we perceive "ourselves." Echo D's spirit-searching and our continued blending helped us understand that we, individually and collectively, needed to honor names. The issue of names became so significant that we decided to change the body name. For months we struggled to choose a name right for all of us. Like an adolescent, we spent hours writing our names in different combinations, playing with choices, and looking for the right name to reflect who we are.

Two birthdays ago we had a naming ritual. We believe rituals are critical in honoring each life passage; they provide opportunity to pause and to reflect on the importance of moments which influence our lives. Our new first and middle names, an acceptable combination of parts of some alters, and a spiritually important last name, were not revealed to friends until the ritual.

We spent an evening with friends honoring our new body name (which became official several months later when the probate court finished the documentation). With friends and loved ones as witnesses, each in our system wrote her name in water-soluble ink on a slip of paper. Each put her paper in a pottery bowl filled with water. Our

significant other wrapped ribbon around our limbs and head, symbolically connecting and recognizing the value of each of us, our roles, functions, and connection to survival, the healing process. Together the system wrote the new body name on a clean strip of paper with indelible magic marker, and left it on an altar for all to see.

This was only a ritual; it was not integration by any means. It was, however, a step toward becoming who we want to be. It was public recognition of our becoming, growing, and the commitment to honor and respect each other as we work toward wholeness.

We encourage other multiples to make an effort to understand each within them. No alter should be nameless or confined by a name that identifies her/him only by a role or function. Names like "Protector" or "Cutter" or the lack of any name at all, limits the alter and fails to recognize true value within the system. Each alter is within herself/himself a multifaceted, important part of the whole. Individually and collectively you all have value. How you see yourself is reflected by the names you accept.

A name carries with it the power to limit or to expand your power to heal. Whatever your system does with each name will define you. Together, you can decide to be more than how you were defined by your birth family, your perpetrators, or your functions within your system. For us, choosing our true name was a step toward a new way of loving and honoring all of us. Names empower; celebrate them.

*By Echo with Cathy and Echo D for the  
Coalition for Joy MV*





## More Help for Hard Issues

### Trust

We get attached so easily sometimes.  
It's scary because you never know  
when someone will leave.  
We are real attached to our therapist.  
We trust and respect her as she  
respects us.  
Her name is Nancy...

Nothing we do stops you from trying  
to help us  
And we trust that you will  
Not give up.  
Cutting has been a real safety issue  
yet  
You stand by us and try to get us  
to communicate better with ourselves.  
We love you. You have kept us  
alive and we thank you.

By Karen G.

### Therapy

It's like these people you see in the circus, the people who stand against a large board; and someone throws knives so that when they hit the board they outline the human's body. You stand against the board and see the knife coming at you. You don't move, you can't, you know you must stay still, and you have to let the knife miss you. You have to let the other human throw them at you. You have to do it. You have to know, first, the human with the knife will not miss and hit you. You have to know the human with the knife can do it, and do it right. When all the knives are around your body, you can walk away, without a wound. The human with the knives did not miss. The human with the knife never wounded you. The knives were thrown this time and did not wound you. The knives were thrown this time by someone who did not want to hurt you. You walked away without a wound, the human did not miss. She never hurt you. The knives stay buried in the board, they landed all around you, but never in you. We both walk away, the knives stay buried in the board, she never hurt me. She's done, we walk away together, side by side, the knives stay buried in the board.

By Rain

MV

### Sexual addiction

A therapist told me I am a sex addict. I always imagine sexual activity combined with violence. I read a lot of mystery books involving violence.

My therapist has convinced me to use "thought stoppage" and "thought replacement" when a certain violent sexual fantasy enters my mind.

When this happens, I "blank it out of my mind" and put in a picture of me in the swimming pool where I swim and I'm "pounding" the water.

The fantasy is a reenactment of abuse done to me as a child.

The mystery books seem to fill my need for excitement with no harm done. I also write about violence in stories.

Also, I have attended Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous Groups, and Sex Addicts Anonymous Groups, but really did not find them very helpful.

### Forgiveness

My therapist recently told me that I needed to forgive the alters who have committed abuse acts.

I didn't know how to do that, so my therapist showed me how.

First, I tell Michael or Jason or Jordan or whichever alter I'm dealing with that: (1) Jesus forgives you (2) MommySally (me) forgives you. And then we imagine a white light covering the alter.

My therapist said I should then say, "Go in peace" and the light would go away.

Well, when I did this with Michael, the light stayed. Michael let me know that he needed to remain in the light in order to feel forgiven. So, I guess we now have a "portable light"!

By Sally B.

### Anger

The anger evolves like a volcano  
The darkness inside starts to turn  
red hot  
Red hot from hurt,  
being hurt by many  
From doctors who haven't understood  
Nurses who didn't really care  
Hospitals who kept me too long  
Misdiagnoses (very, very many)  
Unneeded medications  
Those who say "cheer up—it can't get  
much worse"  
Friends who said "I'll be there for you"  
and then turn away  
Anger fills my soul  
At times it's misinterpreted  
At times anger gets stuffed so deep  
I don't even know if it exists  
But then a spark. A BIG spark.  
And anger takes control  
Misguided and coming out sideways  
Often turned back unto myself  
Razors to let the bad,  
angry feelings out  
Reckless and self-destructive behavior  
They tell me my anger runs deep.  
And I have legitimate reasons.

By A.J.

MV



### From a billboard in a Sexual Trauma unit I was in:

*They are survivors. If you don't have respect for their strengths, you can't be of any help. It's a privilege that they let you in. There is no reason they should trust you—none. You can't know their terror, it's your worst nightmare come true, a nightmare from which you never awaken. It's unrelenting. There has been No safety, No one, No time, No place, No thing. All was tainted. Hope was obliterated time and time again. That they are in your office is in itself a supreme act of valor.*

Presented to you by The Comrades.

MV

## Letters

I receive a number of requests each month asking for information about local support groups for people who dissociate. At this time I have very few resources to offer, even in the largest cities. If readers know of such groups in their area, please let me know so I can tell others. I'd welcome information about groups facilitated by professionals, as well as peer-support groups. Groups for partners and supportive family/friends would also be helpful. Please send the contact phone number. Thanks very much. —Lynn W., Editor

*An answer for Jennifer's February '99 Letter (problems with therapists and medication)*

I was concerned when I read your letter. No competent physician wants to overmedicate. I would suggest telling him that you feel overmedicated and lethargic. In general, physicians don't want to interfere with you working through emotional aspects of the problem by overmedicating. It is just not good medicine. Also, it is your body. You have a say in whether you take this medicine or not.

In your place, I'd be really direct about saying that I feel overmedicated and I'm not interested in being overmedicated. That I want to work in therapy as allies, and especially to be able to explore the psychological dynamics going on for me, without that necessarily indicating an increase in meds.

Sometimes it takes some time to get the right balance of meds. But your physician should keep you informed about what is going on and the two of you should be able to talk openly about whether the balance is working well for you.

I know sometimes early in my treatment (the first five years) I was really indirect about what was going on for me. I wasn't aware that I just wasn't speaking up enough. I was terrified to speak up. I don't know if this is true for you or not, but be sure that you are speaking up on your own behalf and that your physician understands your position. Trust is really difficult for survivors, and you've got to work with a physician who respects you and is willing to work with your rage and distrust for the long haul. This doesn't mean that he or she should tolerate abusive behaviors, but that it is likely to be rocky a lot of the time, especially as you are getting to trust and know each other. You don't mention the specifics about when you ended your first therapy, but maybe your previous therapist doesn't think that he can help you. Sometimes patients set up patterns of leaving when things get tough, or because they are not truly ready for treatment, and the therapist may be trying to protect himself from getting invested in something chaotic by sticking to his boundaries. Also, maybe he has no time now for another DID patient. A therapist has to be confident that he can be objective about treating you, and he may not feel centered enough to do that.

Maybe you could find a therapist who treats trauma survivors or PTSD. You absolutely have a right to talk without being ridiculed, criticized, or made to feel bad. And there are physicians who can behave in ways that are unprofessional. (It's happened to me.) If that is the case, I recommend moving on quickly and not wasting your good time with someone who is not prepared to be helpful to you.

But also keep this in mind: often we who have been severely traumatized can be quick to hear criticism where it is not intended. I can't tell you how many times I thought my psychiatrist was being mean to me, and eventually I learned that it was transference, that I was so sensitized from the abuse that I would expect abuse and interpret abuse where none was intended. It was one of the most painful processes in my entire therapy to work through this transference.

I'm not sure what you mean by "surface talk" from your counselors, but maybe they are wary that you'll get angry and leave them, too. You may be sensing that they are being cautious. Sometimes when people aren't quite sure how to help, they say very little. If you believe that you are working with people who don't believe you, then I would recommend finding others. Because chances are you will not be able to change their minds about whether or not DID is real. And it isn't your responsibility to change their minds, either. You are there for help. But again, remember that we survivors have often been told by abusers that what happened did not happen, that our feelings are not important, that what we're going through isn't so bad. Sometimes we can be very sensitive to any hint of skepticism. The way I generally deal with these things is to get very clear with someone whether they intended to criticize me, or intended to be skeptical. I say, "You know, I felt as though you didn't believe me. Do you believe me?" Or, "I felt criticized when you said...and I just want to know, was that your intention—to be critical of me?" A good professional will clarify, and probably let you know that he felt bad that you felt that way. Sometimes it is a matter of vigilant clarification for awhile.

I've found that treatment for DID is very rocky and takes a lot of commitment on both the patient's and physician's parts. Ultimately, healing is worth the anguish, the struggle, and the commitment.

Every patient is an individual and deserves to be heard, respected, and helped. You deserve an ally in treatment. Maybe you could ask your physician if he is willing to be that ally. If he is, then begin the clarification process, explaining how unhappy you are, your understanding of what has been going wrong, and how much you want change and support. I hope this helps. Until then, be gentle with yourself. Don't give up. I wish I'd known in the beginning of therapy what I know now. It would have been a lot less painful. If I'd understood transference, if I knew how to speak on my own behalf, if I could've trusted. And I've had a good physician the whole time (though I had a lot of anger for a long time about treatment). It was hell, reliving the anger of my childhood, the distrust, the feelings of utter aloneness. So give yourself credit for not giving up. Hang in there. It gets better with a lot of work, time, and commitment. I know you can do it.

*Sincerely, Gwen*

### Question to readers:

During years of therapy sometimes I've had difficulty "switching" smoothly. I wonder if others have had this same experience. I would really like to hear about your experiences and suggestions.

The times this has happened is when I have had physical problems: once when I had a severe head injury, and once when my body chemistry was 'way out of whack, manifesting extreme anxiety, 24 hours per day. Until I got these physical problems remedied, I could not switch right.

This feels terrible. (And you thought switching was your problem?) When I cannot switch smoothly, it causes extreme pressure in my face. I have blurry eyesight. I cannot do things I could do before. I get stuck on one person, and that person can burn out very rapidly having to handle everything! Also, we need the others to help with certain tasks.

When this happens, it causes a lot of loneliness and unhappiness as well as burn-out and pressure. Has anyone else experienced this?

*By RR*

I would like information on how to set up a sexual abuse support group from a Christian perspective on recovery and healing issues. Thank you.

*By Stephanie*



## What I am Afraid to Tell My Therapist

Since I have come to admit and face the dissociative avenue I've chosen for my safety, it has remained important to me that my therapist understand and know that different "parts" of me are only that—and not the feeling or view of the "whole." I cringe when trying to talk to her about how needy the little ones are—or to address her from the all-so-dramatic poet—or maybe Gretchen, who is not tolerant of her mistakes any more than my own, etc. The only "control" I might have is silence—though I cannot seem to control their appearance, as they have a life of their own. Somewhere down the line, I came to believe that my life, both inside and out, would be judged by how "good" I was. For many years it was both my belief and my goal to think of others first. To be nice to all I met. To go that extra mile to assure that I not offend another in any way, etc. These "rules"

that my therapist and I are trying to get in perspective, also greatly affect my relationship with her in many ways. Though she is the safest person in my world, and perhaps least affected because of her elected training—I am sometimes horrified that she will get the brunt of my "coming out," if you will, and receive the anger and selfishness as the sum total of who I am. I realize that many times over she has assured me that this is not the case. Though the realm through which I live inside experiences my attempt to connect with her as guarded, angry, fearful, dramatic, unforgiving, etc. I now realize that I am choosing a path of "wellness" instead of "goodness" and this choice often violates my belief system and the rules that allowed me to survive in a very frightening world. I "practice" on her in getting angry, or sad, or even tender. And though she has never indicated that I have harmed

or injured her in any way, still my greatest struggle remains that of my fear telling me that she will think that whoever is "up" is the core of who I am. I am concerned that she and others will not be able to differentiate between the "parts" and the "whole." This fear has made it very difficult to tell her when I'm angry, hurt, sad etc. because I've only allowed the "safe" feelings to be revealed for most of my life. I have just had my 46th birthday, and fear the length of time it will take to rewrite these belief systems. In the meantime, however slow it may feel, I am challenged to stretch as best I can to be real and authentic, at least when I am with her. The unwavering patience and belief that this woman has in me is incredible. My hope is that one day I will be able to repay her, by simply being "me."

By Win

MV

## Books

### The Lost Art of Listening: How Learning to Listen Can Improve Relationships

By Michael P. Nichols, Ph.D. © 1995. Published by The Guilford Press, New York. \$14.95. 251 pages. Paperback.

If you have been frustrated with the quality of your relationships, especially those closest to you, I heartily recommend this book. Nichols, a family therapist, gives a remarkably clear explanation of how things go wrong in communicating, and supplies ideas on how to change those ineffective patterns. "Being listened to spells the difference between feeling accepted and feeling isolated," he writes, and goes on to describe the stages of infant development where good communication skills are born. He describes how anxiety distorts communication for both the speaker and the listener, and the problems generated by transference/countertransference issues in daily life (not just in therapy). Unfortunately, those of us who were raised in traumatic environments may be especially vulnerable to communication breakdowns. We

didn't learn these skills growing up, so we've got to learn them now or suffer the continued anguish of not hearing what others are really saying, and not saying what we really mean. We are likely to be so defensive that our responses are out of proportion to the words we just heard. I'm on my second reading of this book, and I only wish I could inject the principles he suggests directly into my brain and be able to use them smoothly. Of course, learning doesn't work that way. Instead, I continue to express myself using the same old overreacting, impulsive methods, though sometimes now I catch myself—too late. (Maybe next time I'll catch myself in time?) Or I "think" before I express...but the whole system does not support the expression...so when my well-intentioned but clumsy-or-misguided message backfires, "the rest" of me screams internally "See? You screwed it up again!" I don't know if I will ever be able to learn better relating, but with books like this, and practice, practice, practice...maybe something will sink in. I certainly hope so. It's a challenge

you may want to try, as well.

### The Gift of Fear: And Other Survival Signals that Protect Us from Violence

By Gavin de Becker ©1997. Published by Dell Publishing, New York. \$6.99. 420 pages. Paperback.

When tourists were attacked recently in a Uganda adventure camp, many were killed...but a few escaped. When I heard how one couple quietly left their tent at the first sound, and hid in the bush, I thought immediately of the lessons in this book. De Becker's primary message is "trust your instincts" and he goes on to describe case after case where acting on the basis of an instinctive fear saved lives. This is an important lesson for readers of MV. Survivors of childhood abuse are often paralyzed by fears, some of them no longer justified, but others that are "real" threats. By learning to distinguish between fear that protects, and unwarranted fear that limits our lives, we can move more confidently into the world of healthy living.

— Lynn W.

MV

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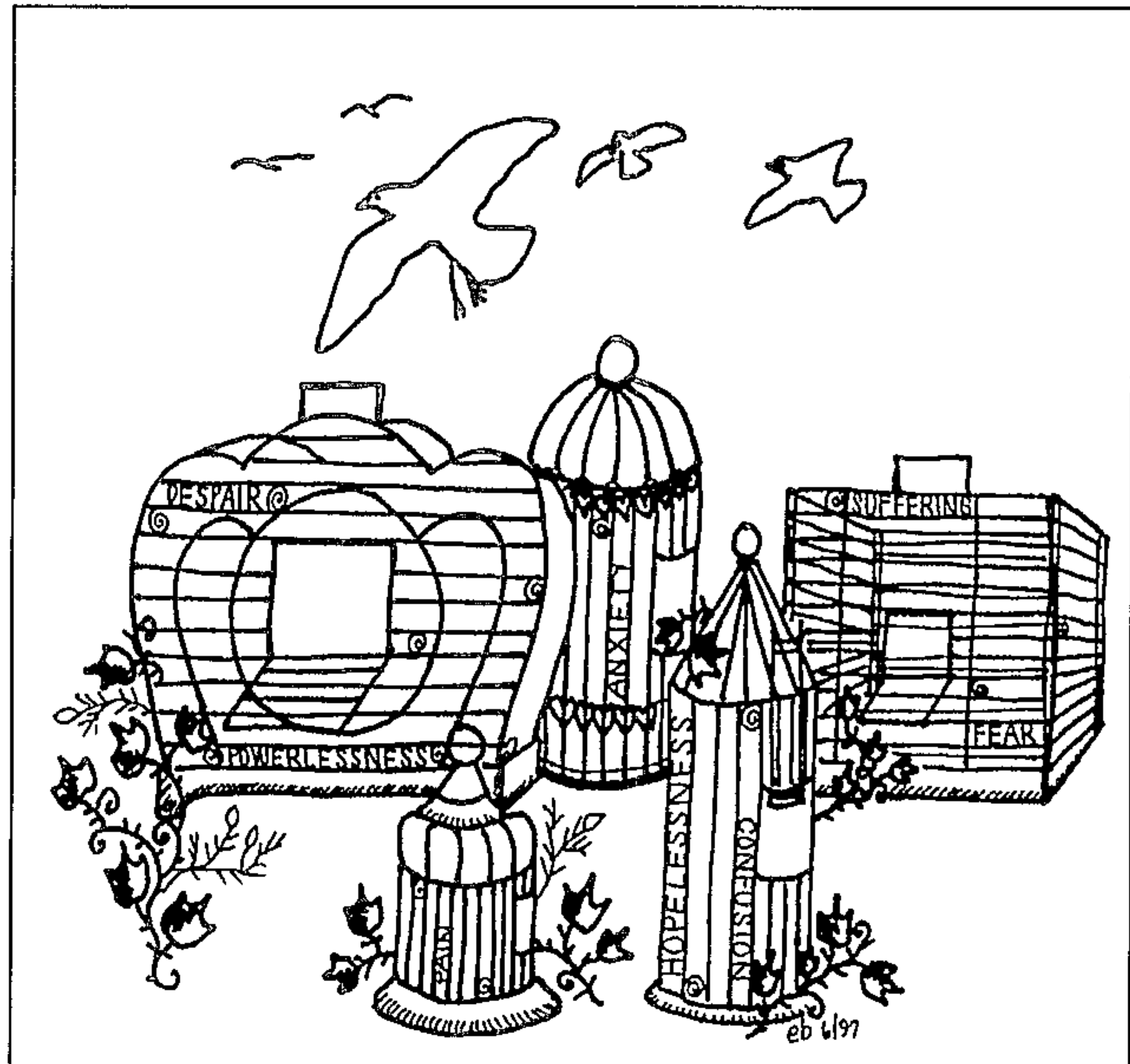
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