

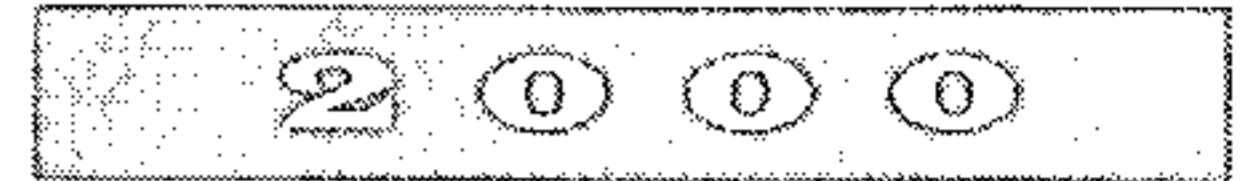
# MANY VOICES

WORDS OF HOPE FOR PEOPLE RECOVERING FROM TRAUMA & DISSOCIATION

Vol XI, No.4

August 1999

ISSN1042-2277



## Embracing Joy & Laughter!

Plus: Next year's themes!

### February 2000

Gender issues and dissociation. Different-gendered alters. What healthy sexuality means to you. Do you require a therapist of a specific sex? Why? ART: Accepting all yourself; accepting others. DEADLINE: Dec. 1, 1999.

### April 2000

Creating a safe, comfortable life: alone and with others. Building support networks. Therapy or special interest groups. Choosing appropriate friends. Releasing toxic relationships. Healthy boundaries. ART: Friends and fun. DEADLINE: Feb. 1, 2000.

### June 2000

Medications & D.I.D. How they help (or don't help) your recovery. Safety issues with meds. Pros & cons of "natural" medications and alternative healing methods. ART: An image of healing. DEADLINE: April 1, 2000.

### August 2000

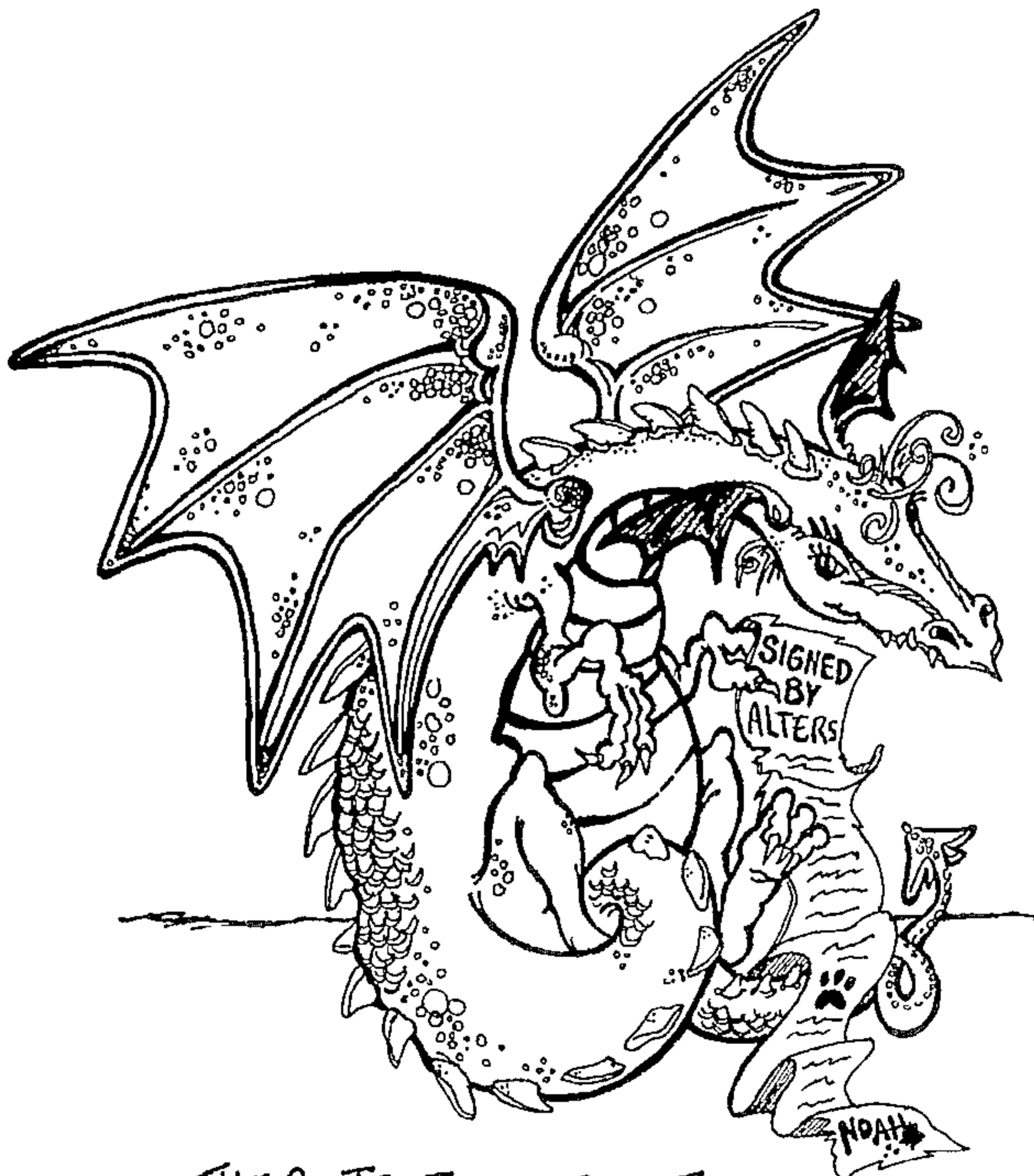
Been there—Done that! Share what you have vowed to *never* do again! What you will do *instead* of "that thing". How you changed your behavior. ART: Your proudest accomplishment. DEADLINE: June 1, 2000.

### October 2000

Mental health legislation. Your concerns about health insurance, HMOs, hospitals. Pros & cons of going on "disability"...and how to get back to work when you're ready. ART: Structure your day for healthy living. DEADLINE: Aug. 1, 2000.

### December 2000

Tough therapy problems. Did you resolve them *without* dumping your therapist? Did you have to 'move on' to someone else? Pros and cons of 'working things through' when the going gets rough. ART: Your 'perfect place' for therapy. DEADLINE: Oct. 1, 2000.



THE CONTRACT WAS TO NOT DISSOCIATE INTO ANYMORE ANIMALS OR PEOPLE. NOTHING WAS SAID ABOUT DRAGONS!

MV

# Humor Hodgepodge

By Katrina of Beverly and the girls

**A**s I have been thinking about what I wanted to write about humor, I have been also recovering from a very extensive surgery. I have had depression and changes with my alters during this time. It occurred to me that I was too depressed to write about humor. Now that is either very funny, or very sad. I decided to think of it as funny.

So part of my focus was to research about the physical and psychological changes that occur with humor/laughter. I will tell you about those, but in search to find humor in my life (especially when depressed) it occurred to me that I do have some humorous stories to tell. Like, if I had a video camera I would be \$10,000 richer! And the best joys in my life—my cats! And a story that falls under...“some day this will be very funny.”

## If I had a Video Camera I would be \$10,000 Richer!

### Story #1

One of my cats had an injury about two years ago. It affected her walking and bladder. For the first year, many times when I picked her up, pee would shoot out. I started calling her “Miss Pee Fountain USA.” When I pick her up I hold her on her back like a baby on my arm. She’s only 7 pounds. So I have learned to aim her butt real well!

One morning, the two cats Miss Suzanna (the injured cat) and Gov wanted to go outside. So I had unlocked the kitty door and lifted the flap for them. Gov, being the gentleman, sat patiently while Suzanna started through the kitty door. Well, somehow she got stuck halfway through. There was this little white kitty-butt with two back legs dangling, and pee shot out, hitting Gov! He shook his head as if to say “what the—?” and took off for the front door!

### Story #2.

One morning shortly after I had moved into my house, and before I’d ever lit the bathroom heater, I was cold

and decided I would light it. Now I had been working half the night with a partner at the studio getting ready for an exhibit. So I had only about 4 hours sleep. (With my Narcolepsy + lack of sleep = strange perspective.) So anyway, I was down lighting the heater.

The cat was right there down by the heater with me (as a cat will do...very curious, you know). Well, when it finally lit it did so with a Woosh! and I looked over and the cat’s whiskers on one side were all curled up to his face! I felt so sorry for the cat, but also it was so funny-looking! I picked up the cat and was sitting on the toilet (buck naked) at 6 AM laughing my \*\*\*\*\*off! It woke up my (ex)husband, and I’m sure it was quite the sight!

## Someday this will be really funny

### Story #3.

When I was quite a bit younger, I went through a time of being unemployed. I was very, very broke. I used to bake my own bread in those days. (This was in the recession of the '70s). I was signed up with a Temp agency. One day they called. They had a three-day assignment for me. It was in a bank. And I sat in a room with several other women counting \$20 bills, putting them in bundles, and taking out the old tattered ones to be shredded. Of course they had one-way mirrors all around the room, but I just sat there counting the money thinking...“Someday this will be really funny!”

Now if you have laughed at anything I’ve said, here’s what has happened in your body. Studies show that laughter can have a positive effect on your physical well-being and on your ability to deal with pain. The brain releases endorphins which are the body’s natural pain killers.

Laughter has many effects on your body, including these:

- 1) Breathing: increases your breathing rate, which increases the amount of oxygen in your blood.
- 2) Muscles: provides limited muscle conditioning and relaxation.

3) Cardiovascular system: causes a temporary increase in your heart rate and blood pressure which aids the delivery of oxygen and nutrients to tissues throughout your body.

4) Laughter can also temporarily increase the concentration of immunoglobulin A in your saliva, which helps your immune system. Some lab tests show there is a measurable decrease in a person’s stress hormones, including epinephrine and dopamine. Measurable activity in the immune system is still present the next day. Laughter activates T-cells which help organize the immune system’s response, to fight tumor cells, viruses and infections. Even the brain is affected during laughter. It is amazine to note that there is a change in brain wave activity...only if we get the joke and laugh!

Psychologically it is said that laughter is an affirmation of our humanness that breaks the ice, builds trust, and draws us together in a state of common identity.

Dr. Bernie Siegel has done much research on this topic. In an interview, Dr. Siegel stated: “A gentleman named Al Siebert wrote to me and said that he noticed some of the survival qualities of Vietnam veterans which I have listed in one of my books. One of them was a sense of humor. They didn’t trivialize their experience, but they had a lightness about them, and Al Siebert realized that humor was a survivor quality.”

I personally found this to be comforting. I now know why I have always “identified” with Vietnam veterans; we have PTSD and are all Survivors!

(Read Dr. Siegel’s interview in the 3D Humor & Health Journal at <http://www.intop.net/~jrdunn/page17.html>)

Continued on page 3

I have two websites. One is at <http://www.angelfire.com/me2/catsNglass/index.html>. It is called "Southpawcats", and it features my two favorite things: cats and glass (stained glass). I have pages on both of my cats.

I also have started a website I am calling "E-Mail Funnies." I'm putting in a lot of jokes, stories etc. that I've gotten in email. It is at <http://www.angelfire.com/az/bearkat/index.html>.

(Some of these jokes are of a Rude nature, but are noted as such.)

*(Excerpt from Governor's Page: <http://www.angelfire.com/me2/catsNglass/gov.html>)*

"Welcome to my page. My name is Governor. My current job is seeking sunbeams, and to welcome all humans to the studio. I specialize in sleeping. I am a model for the Mr. Kool Kat designs. Modeling is very hard work because you have to lay there and not move a whisker for long periods of time.

"Now I am sure you are wondering just how I got my name. Well, it's a bit of a sordid tale. You see, one day I was just hanging out on the street corner, minding my own business (watching the kitties) when this truck came wheeling by, Screeching to a stop in front of me. A very large man got out and scooped me up and tossed me in the back of this jailhouse on wheels. Off to jail I went. Man, I tell you I was framed! (You know, to some humans, we orange tabbies all look alike.)

"The trial was a joke. They said I had 3 days and then it was the gas chamber for me! Oh man, I was desperate. I was framed, I tell you! What is wrong with a cat just hanging out on the corner, I ask you?"



## MANY THANKS TO OUR ANGELS!

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**River Oaks Hospital - New Orleans, LA**

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We appreciate your support! — Lynn W., Editor

"Well, this lady shows up, (she's my mom, now) and I give her my most pleading look. I promise I will be a great cat for her.

"She said I wasn't her cat that was lost. I felt my heart sink. I really gave her my most desperate look ever.

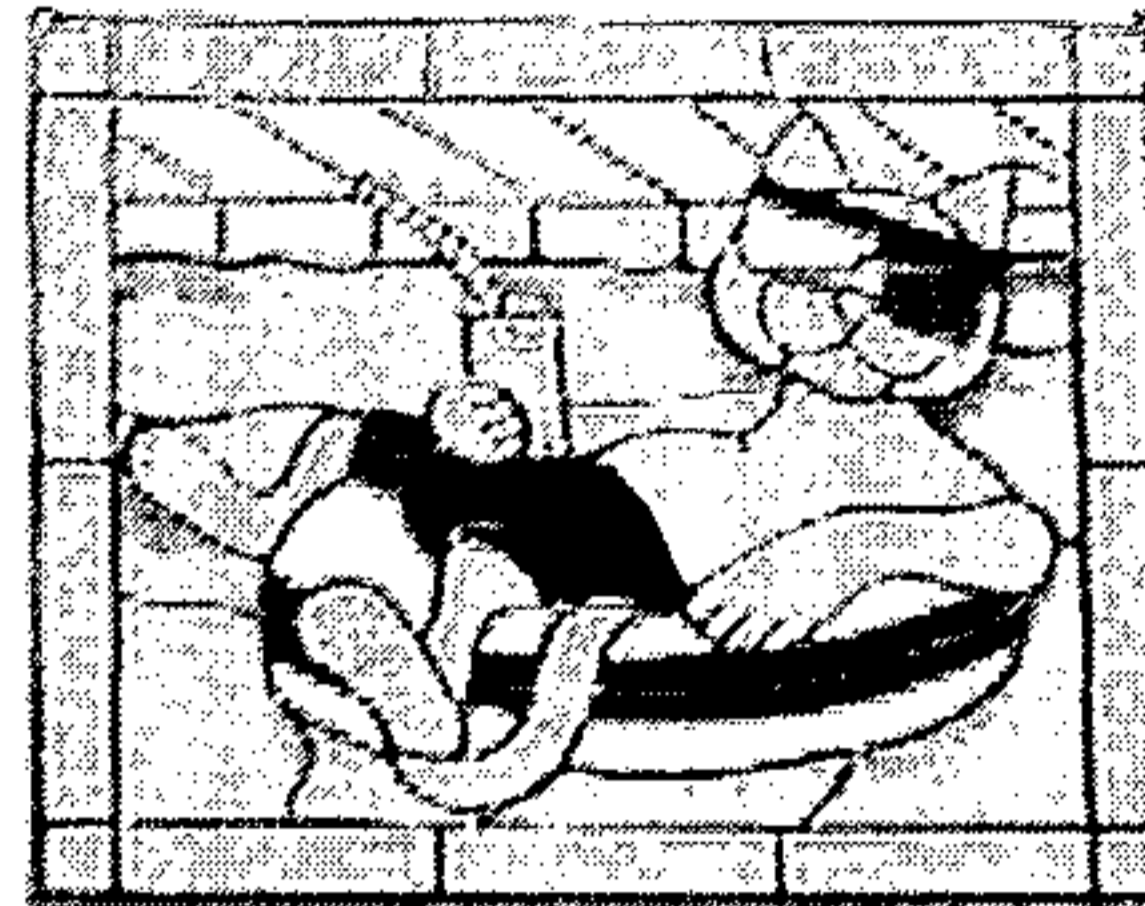
"She said she'd think about it. I only had two days left!

"On the last day, she shows up again. She says she will take me!

"I am saved from the gas chamber. She is told she is like the Governor—giving me a reprieve.

"Well, someone decides that would be a good name for me.

"Heck, after being saved from the gas chamber, I don't care what they call me.



Mr. Kool Kat in Stained Glass

"As long as they call me for DINNER!"

MV



**J** Juggling parts of the "self" to find one who'll clean house!

**O** Opening that can of worms called responsibility. "Who, me?"

**Y** Yeah!!! I'm a survivor!

**L** Leaning on my "self," but another takes over!

**A** Anyway I can get by, I do!

**U** Until I integrate, I'll always laugh at that word!

**G** Ganging up on the core alter is fun!

**H** Healing...is that when one alter gives another the boot?

**T** Timing is important when parts switch & decide who gets the hair cut!

**E** Energy sure gets used up during switches! Time for chocolate!

**R** Remember what you were saying before I popped out?

Ha Ha Ha!

By Diane Barnum

MV

# Embracing Joy & Laughter in our Lives

Here are some tips my therapist and several healing friends have passed along to me about embracing joy and laughter:

1. Bring humor into your life in many forms: comic books, joke books, television and theater comedies, jokes from the internet. Ask your friend for a joke! Or your child!

2. Say, "Oh yes!" instead of "Oh, No!" the next time something goes wrong, and be the first one to laugh at it. (Unless, of course, it's not appropriate.) Lighten up and give yourself permission to make a mistake.

3. Uncover joy with all five senses:

**Sight:** See the outside beauty of nature...yellow daffodils!

**Taste:** Let your tongue lick a scoop of your favorite ice cream...pralines & cream!

**Smell:** Take a whiff of your favorite scented candle...vanilla!

**Hear:** Listen to your favorite music while soaking in a warm, bubble bath...the classics!

**Touch:** Feel something wonderful on your skin...tie on a silk scarf!

4. Be the first to share your joy & laughter with others. Give the next person you see a compliment, and see what you get back...joy! Tell a new joke or something funny that happened, and see what happens.

Everyone loves to experience this wonderful side of life, instead of just the ordinary, everyday stuff. And a great benefit of sharing is that it's contagious. The day you can't seem to find any joy, and life seems to be only "doom & gloom," watch out! When you're sitting there on that park bench feeling sorry for yourself, a little child might run up to you and say, "Hey, do you wanna hear a joke? Why did the chicken cross the road?"

And even though you probably could care less, you look into the small cherub face that has such an enthusiastic smile, with that look of anticipation, just bursting to tell you the answer, you just have to grin and say, "I don't know. Why?"

You'll hear, "Because he wanted to!" And before long, those ugly, gloomy feelings will go away, being replaced by joy as your heart embraces the wonders of youth.

*By Diana Barnum*



## Nobody ever listens to me

I remember waking before sunrise before my mother put the coffee on, even before our old rooster began to chase the hens around Grammie's chicken yard. I would sneak out of my warm nest (climbing over two sleeping sisters) and slip out onto the upstairs balcony. The balcony, held up by two peeling white columns, was my observatory... sometimes my stage. Sometimes I would sit and watch the planets rise, and note the color of the sky through a kaleidoscope of leaves and Spanish moss hanging on the old oak tree (towering even higher than our house). My balcony was a place to dream and to pretend. As our farm animals and the woods' creepers stirred I would pretend to be anyone, but who I was. Sometimes I was a princess locked in a high tower, waiting for a prince to rescue me. I was Juliet, expecting Romeo to come bounding over the garden fence. I was a queen filled with wisdom, organizing a kingdom where everything was "Fair". Sometimes I was Jesus; I knew I must be! Like him, I had all the answers... but nobody ever listened to me, either.

*By Cathy for the Coalition of Joy*



I have been told since I was a young child

*You should be a comedian*

I didn't even know what the word 'comedian' meant.

I just knew, I needed to express myself with a light heart

To get a break from all the trauma I was going through.

Of course my parents rarely saw this part of me

If they did see the comedian in me

I was looked at with glaring eyes and was told to shut up.

They never could get me to shut up.

No feelings were allowed and especially not laughter.

Thank God for Carol Burnette!

She helped me continue to be light-hearted through her TV Show.

Away from home I *did* let the humor/comedian in me out.

I still do to this day.

We sure do some funny things sometimes.

The other day at work, I had to get a message

to someone over the intercom. I totally messed it up.

Instead of mentally beating myself up about it

I allowed myself to see the humor in it.

Nobody said anything to me at work about it

But I am sure people in the area (including the customers) got a chuckle out of it.

*The humor I share in my life has given me the ability to survive.*

I collect comics, jokes, certain comedy movies.

I see humor in everyday life events.

I dedicate this to Carol Burnette who taught me how to laugh.

*By Maria and Herfam 99*

***Let the children laugh  
and they will survive***

# Fun With Boundaries

By Win

**B**oundaries can be "fun"? Well, yes. Recently my therapist, Karen, loaned me a book about boundaries that contained a multiple-choice quiz. Rather off-handedly she suggested that I, too, could probably make a quiz. So I did...not seriously, but just for fun...though as you'll see, it is born of my own situations and circumstances in therapy. (As Karen says, "You are well enough to understand your circumstances, but not healthy enough to change them just yet.")

I suppose the one blessing I now have is that I can have a sense of humor about my circumstance when standing on the outside looking in. We have shared much laughter about things like this that used to embarrass me to death.

Why not read my "quiz" and then try one yourself! I had a lot of fun putting it together, and I'm sure we can come up with a lot of variations...

**1. You notice a new bear in your therapist's office and she invites you to get up and look at it. With no forethought you**

- a) readily accept her offer
- b) close your eyes and disappear
- c) change the subject
- d) ask her to get it for you

**2. You want to go on a drive-by to see where your therapist lives and**

- a) you find an accomplice and use her car
- b) you imagine being invited in for tea
- c) you visualize where your room might be
- d) you're afraid of being caught
- e) all of the above

**3. As you climb the stairs to your therapist's office, she suddenly appears at the top. You**

- a) hasten to greet her
- b) slow down and pretend that you don't see her
- c) assume she's getting coffee
- d) are happy that she's waiting for you

**4. Your therapist wants to encourage conversation about sex, at which point you**

- a) stop breathing
- b) act like you don't know what that word means
- c) use this time to enhance your vocabulary
- d) ask her to share first, using personal examples
- e) all of the above

**5. You unexpectedly run into your therapist at the drug store and immediately**

- a) begin telling her about their current sales
- b) offer to push her basket for her

c) are excited about introducing her to a friend

d) run and hide behind the paperback books until she leaves

**6. You know your therapist cares when**

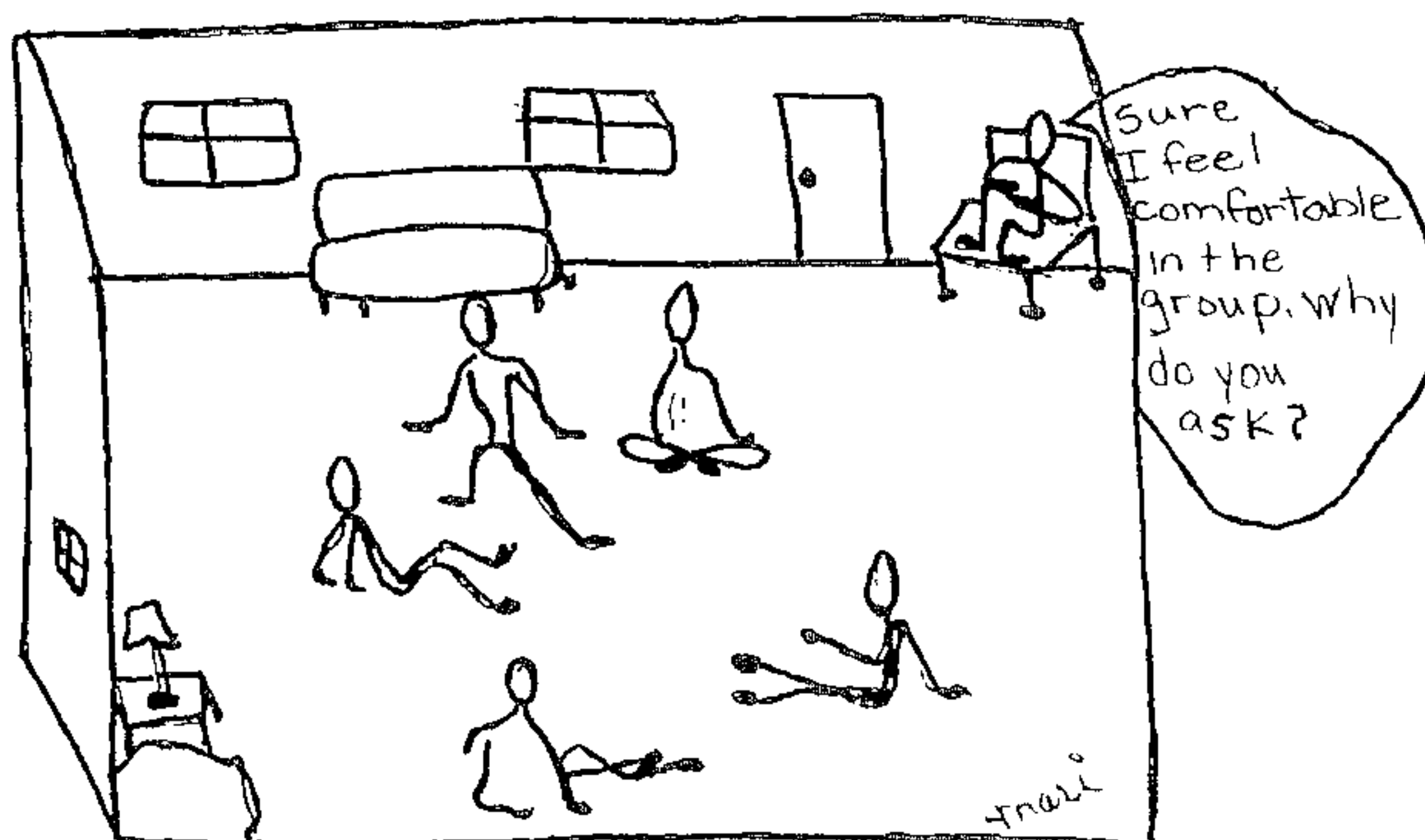
- a) she follows you home to make sure that you're OK
- b) all she thinks about is you
- c) she eagerly awaits your next visit
- d) she introduces you to her family
- e) she includes you in her will
- f) none of the above
- g) all of the above

**7. You want to bring a gift to your therapist, but**

- a) you're afraid she'll reject it
- b) you don't want to step on her principled toes
- c) you're afraid that she'll know that you care
- d) all of the above

**8. You're running late to your appointment so**

- a) you know she went out looking for you
- b) she schedules someone else for that slot
- c) you slither in quietly and hope she doesn't notice
- d) you're hoping for a surprise party



# Therapists' Page

By Paula Bailey, M.Ed.

Paula Bailey, Ed.M. is a psychotherapist in private practice and former Senior Staff member of Opening the Heart Workshops at Spring Hill in Massachusetts. She is an experienced group leader using expressive techniques and integrating mind/body/spirit modalities. Paula has over 10 years of experience treating sexual orientation, sexuality, and gender identity issues and recovery related to addictions and trauma. She is passionate about laughter.

## The Importance Of Being Playful

When we grow up in traumatic situations, laughter is often the first thing we lose. Conversely, it might then be the last thing that we recover in our healing. Laughter, even little chuckles and giggles, heals us emotionally.

Whether the trauma experienced was in alcoholic or dysfunctional families, or extreme ritual abuse, its effect on our ability to laugh is profound. We had little to laugh at as children in those situations, and laughter could make us vulnerable. For some of us, the after-effects of reconnecting with our own innate sense of joy or the surrender to unguarded gales of laughter with another person brings up unmitigated terror. Just consider the words "surrender to unguarded gales of laughter." How do you react inside? That's your gauge of the fears still wrapped around your laughter. We have been conditioned to never call attention to ourselves, or to make so much noise that we might disturb someone, so we have created iron bands wrapped around our sense of humor.

Some of us created "monitors" inside to stop any childlike responses, and keep us safe. But the belief that Laughter = Danger can now, in adult life, keep us separated from other people. A client who had done lots of work recovering her sense of play noticed that when she was with a group of friends who started to get too silly, she still became the serious parent to control the situation. We have an internalized gauge or part checking the environment to make sure it's "balanced." Then whether the imbalance is too much anger or too much laughter we start to behave in a manner that will counter-balance the situation. Notice if you start to feel

serious the next time you are with friends who are enjoying themselves; is it your own feeling or a correcting reaction? See if you can explore letting yourself join in more, or let your kids come out to laugh. Trauma isolates us; laughter connects us. It takes time and practice, practice, practice to learn how to shift from "shut down" to spontaneous happiness. There is joy in that healing.

Laughter connects us to others in many ways, such as when friends tell an ironic experience from life and we laugh together about our shared humanness. Sometimes it takes telling a friend with whom you share a similar sense about life to get us laughing about what happens. Or, when sitting in a waiting room with a stranger, a moment of isolation can be changed to connection if humor—a laugh—gets shared. Another way laughter connects us with others is in sharing a fun, humorous experience together. We laugh more at movies, comedians, plays, street performers, kittens playing, or silliness when we are with someone who shares our appreciation of the entertainment. Laughing with someone is the most profound and joyful means to more laughter in one's life. Annette Goodheart,<sup>1</sup> who does laughter therapy, runs workshops on laughter where she stands up in front of the group holding a large teddy bear and laughs. The people in the group start laughing and laughing because the joyful energetic connection of laughter makes us laugh.

All of the connective experiences above help our heart grow more open and therefore more open to joy. Joy is that wonderful feeling that can start as a glow and become a cascade overflowing your heart. Seeing beauty

or inspiration, feeling angels or spirit, hearing the most moving, wondrous music, holding someone we love — all of these bring joy to our heart.

Through all of our senses we create or find joy. Write a list of what makes you joyous to have right at hand the next time you are sad, scared, or depressed. It may not transform those feelings immediately, but it is a wonderful reminder that joy exists and you have experienced it.

In recent years there has been a lot written about the power of laughter for physical healing. Many authors, such as Norman Cousins,<sup>2</sup> have written about how laughter stimulates our immune and disease-fighting systems to produce the chemicals and the inner environment that we need to heal physiologically. In our society there is a universally-held belief that we should be serious and busy and responsible; those are the earmarks of adulthood.

You know you have progressed in your emotional healing when events which you previously felt stressed about are now at least amusing. Seriousness is so ingrained that most medical professionals don't believe laughter can heal, or that negative emotions can create dis-ease. Caroline Myss comments in her book "Anatomy of the Spirit"<sup>3</sup> that all physical disorder comes from emotional and energetic cause. The physical manifestation of the disease will be where we hold unexpressed emotion in our bodies. To truly heal one must attend to the spiritual. This connects to laughter in two ways. First, laughter helps release and shift energetic blocks in the body. Second, as we are freed from the weight of stored emotions, we become lighter about life, and our own innate sense of joy becomes available to us again. "Angels fly because they take themselves lightly."<sup>4</sup> What an

unbelievable power laughter is! When Allen Klein's wife was dying it was her ability to keep her humor through the painful ordeal that prompted him to write a book about using humor to get through life's hard spots.<sup>5</sup>

In therapy, I teach laughing as a part of healing fear. From everyday life experiences we hold inside our bodies a small amount of nervousness, stress or trepidation, which laughter can diminish by "discharging" or emoting it out of the body. The most common example of this is that a "titter" or laugh will happen when we are embarrassed. That is our body's natural smartness about what will release the feelings we are experiencing.

In therapy I use some of the smaller everyday fears or embarrassments clients experience, to practice discharging and trusting laughter to be safe. Laughter becomes a therapeutic tool to relearn what the body and child would have done naturally to heal itself. Again, this experience of laughter is always connective, respectful, and kind. I never laugh at a client's fears. Together, we find a way to laugh when the fear is happening in order to free it from the body.

I've learned for myself that after I've done something stressful, like speaking to a group, I can stop for a

moment and take a deep breath and start a laugh that goes from chuckles to huge belly guffaws, and releases the tension I would have carried away with me. Laughter is positive energy.

Let me talk a little bit about play. There is a huge discrepancy between what play could and should be like and what is done to children in the name of play.<sup>6</sup> Unless a child is specifically competent at certain physical activities, she will experience being "better" or "worse" than others by not being picked for teams (humiliation); teasing about mistakes (humiliation); being required to do physical activities that aren't suited to her particular body type (humiliation). All of that happens to all of us and can cause us to become increasingly "frozen" against moving our bodies and increasingly avoidant of anything we think is competitive. Children who have been traumatized can experience panic coming up when asked to perform a physical activity.

When we do let ourselves try anything we've avoided before, that "frozen" fear is going to come right up. Breathe and let the fear move through you. True play and playfulness are cooperative, affirming, purposeless, individualistic, and non-humiliating. All children (and inner children) go through developmental stages in

which play is necessary and can be a positive growthful experience. "Play Fair"<sup>7</sup> by Matt Weinstein is a great resource for ideas about how to play with others in ways that allow all of you to laugh and enjoy playing together.

Other ways to bring a little (or a lot!) of laughter and play into your life:

Ask your inner kids what they'd like to do that would be fun:

Watch children's movies.

Find a friend to giggle and laugh with.

Draw cartoons.

Listen to Peter Alsop music<sup>8</sup>.

Give yourself to permission to be silly...even "wacko".

Watch "William Wegman's Mother Goose"<sup>9</sup>.

Draw and paint to make messes.

Remember what was fun when you were a child.

Read a funny book.

Puppy pile with friends.

Listen to a non-insulting comedian (like lesbian/feminist comedian Kate Clinton).

Play with jello or anything else that appeals.

Surrender to unguarded gales of laughter.

Toss an imaginary ball to yourself or someone else—you can't miss!

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MV



# Therapists' Page

By June Burstein, MSW

June Burstein is in private practice in New York City. She has a Masters Degree in Social Work from New York University. She has completed the doctoral program at NYU and is currently writing her dissertation on D.I.D. She is a member of the ISSD.

## Using the creative process to change negative behavior

Individuals suffering from D.I.D. often have maladaptive behavior, such as deliberately wounding the body. Self-mutilation is usually a sign of internal disputes, faulty thinking and anger in the personality system. It's often described as a way to "punish oneself for being bad."

Abusers may have told you this, as a way of twisting your ability to think and encouraging you to believe that the punishment you received was deserved, because you were "bad."

Some people come to believe that any change, even positive change, is "bad" and some form of self-injury should be inflicted.

In my work with D.I.D. clients I have heard self-mutilation described as a "high." They describe a rush of adrenaline and a tremendous sense of relief, as well as a release of built-up tension and anger. It is also said to be a way to feel alive, and gives an acknowledgment of being "real."

These explanations are understandable, if unfortunate. Because adults abused as children were not allowed to express their feelings, these feelings were internalized and repressed. Life was unpredictable and chaotic. What became predictable was pain. As adults, this experience is reenacted with painful, hurtful behavior. At the same time, external wounds announce to the world outside how much it hurts inside; the scars acknowledge internal suffering. Creating another scar or mark on one's body is a way to say "I am alive; I am real; my feelings are valid. See world—see what I have been through." This is a cry for help—a wish, perhaps unconscious at times, for someone to notice, to care, and to rescue.

Unlike some other therapists, I view self-mutilation, no matter how superficial, as a suicide attempt. I believe suicide is about rage and a desire to retaliate. But although the relationships surrounding a suicide are devastated by the act, the person who suffers the most is obviously the victim her/himself.

I would like to discuss and encourage another way to cope with difficult feelings, by using art and the creative process.

In my previous career I was a painter and sculptor. I began to use paint as a way to express and deal with my feelings and conflict. I was able to tell stories I couldn't express with words, so painting became a

release, another way to communicate. I discovered that the way I applied paint, the colors I chose, and tools used, began to give me a different perspective on my feelings. Art became my personal journal.

The ability to absorb oneself is a key factor in the similarity between making art and dissociation. The process of using art and the creative process requires an intensely-focused state of consciousness accessible to both the artist and the highly-hypnotizable person (a typical characteristic of those who dissociate). Of course, when I refer to "painting," I don't mean "artistic ability." Talent is not needed to use paint and other creative arts to express and feel what would otherwise be released by self-mutilation.

To begin channeling self-abusive behavior into creativity, you may want to have an internal discussion among alters. The system should be encouraged to try this to channel rage, and as a healthier way to handle dangerous impulses.

It is helpful to have an area set up with art supplies readily available, so you can go there automatically when feelings arise, and begin creating without much thought or preparation. Washable paint and markers can be used directly on the body and are easily washed off. This can be an effective way to duplicate the feeling of self-injurious behavior, without causing harm.

Another way to counteract self-harm is to paint, not intending to make beautiful pictures, but to express whatever you are feeling. You can do this with brushes or even your fingers and hands. Sometimes using the color directly from the tube gives the picture texture, which is also helpful.

Collage (cutting or ripping pictures from magazines and newspapers, or just using any found objects and pasting them on paper) is another vehicle to express oneself or tell a story. The use of clay or playdough is so tactile, that just playing with it can distract one away from the intrusive thoughts and feelings that generate self-harm. You can also use playdough to create a colorful object that you like and makes you feel "good." Let it dry. Then when negative thoughts or feelings rise, you can look at that object and get in touch with the positive feelings it took to make the object.

Of course, you can do this with paintings and collages as well. Art is a wonderful, freeing way to express ourselves, and

anything we have around us can be used in this process.

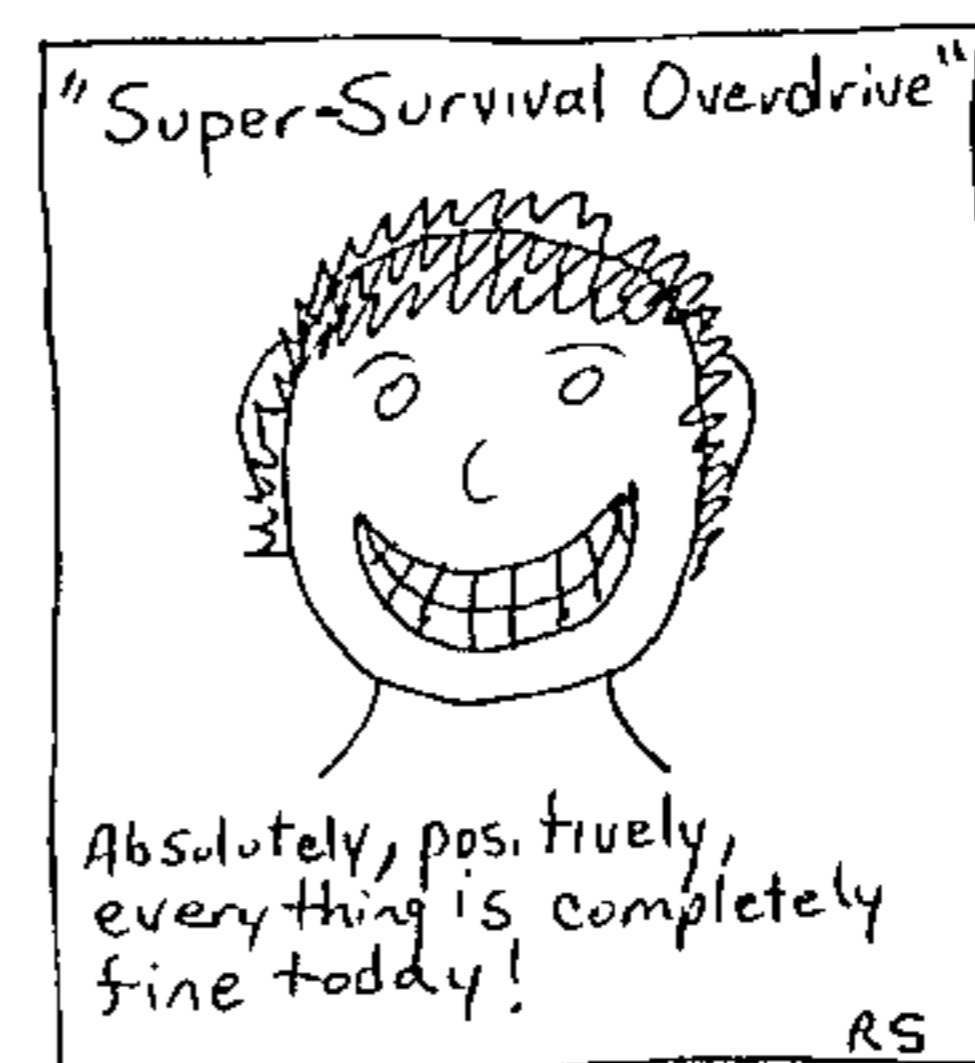
You may also want to incorporate the use of creative sound in your healing. Among these are the deep breathing exercises used in hatha yoga, or listening to meditation, visualization, or deep-relaxation audiotapes to calm the anxiety and felt anger that might otherwise erupt in self-injury. Chanting is another way to release energy. This form of rhythmic singing of sounds or words repeatedly involves slowly increasing the energy and loudness of sounds, then decreasing them. This results in a calming sensation. The use of sound is a very powerful tool to transform energy from aggressive to manageable and understandable.

The host and system must share in a willingness to make this work. It takes conviction. As Colin Ross, M.D. wrote in his book *Dissociative Identity Disorder*,<sup>1</sup> "Art allows us to visualize, not merely conceptualize. Art is an adaptive tool by which we master forces in the environment. Picture-making, like hypnosis, provides a direct shift in consciousness to an image-based construct. It has been said that if you yourself can do something useful, you yourself can become a tool."

Through art, you can say, "Please listen! This happened to me. No one would believe me. I cannot remember, yet I cannot forget." Through art, you can prove you exist. You are saying, "I learned not to feel and not to be. I went away; now I am back, taking control."

### Notes:

1. Ross M.D., Colin, *Dissociative Identity Disorder: Diagnosis, Clinical Features, and Treatment of Multiple Personality*, John Wiley & Sons, NY, 1996. **MV**





## The Hole

She was walking along and fell into a hole, that's what she always says, half-jokingly

She falls into the hole and yet tries to make a joke out of it

Such is her nature, to make light of most anything, to find humor in any situation

Our situations, not others, she jokes, she was walking along and fell into a hole

It's not much of a joke, and it really isn't very humorous, when she struggles to stay

safe, when she feels so much pain, she just doesn't want to live anymore

She doesn't see it ending, and even if it does, she knows it will be back, she thinks she doesn't deserve any better than the tremendous sadness, so she does not wish to live, no point to it she says, no point to it.

She tries to find ways to fight it, over and over, she grabs the side of the wall to start

the long slow climb to the top of the hole

You see she doesn't like to just sit there at the bottom of the hole, it's not her nature

to just sit

She likes to keep moving, she will not just sit

Sometimes she falls so far down the hole that she can't see the circle of light at the top of the hole

Oh, she knows it's there, she just can't see it, she knows it's there because it has

happened so many times before, and lately, so often

Yes, the circle of light is there, she just has to start climbing, and once she sees that

circle of light, it won't be long before she's at the top of the hole

She finds ways to grab onto the wall of the hole to make the climb

She searches for something to come in to give her the desire to make the climb

A cup of coffee, a good book, the computer, the birds outside? Exercise, maybe that

will help

Journal, writing usually helps the most, the search goes on, the search for something

good to come in, she tries to find something to use to start the climb

Her gear you might say, her climbing gear, she has her list of gear

She climbs, some days she almost gets to the top, before she slides down the wall to

the bottom again, yes, some days she loses her grip on the wall of the hole

But, she always says climbing is better than just sitting at the bottom of the hole, no

circle of light at the top

She starts to climb once again, and she'll keep climbing for a long time to come

She will always find a way to climb out of the hole, because she's done it so many

times before.

By Orange

MV

## Precious Moments

Walking in a meadow of yellow flowers

Drinking deeply of the smells after a fresh rain.

The beauty of a rose.

Bob's smile and hug at the end of the day.

A lick and purr from Shadow.

A tiny baby's needy cries.

Misty's kisses.

A good cry with a friend.

Hot cocoa with whipped cream.

Swinging.

Laughter

Precious good friends.

Happily greeting the morning.

God's love

The warmth of the sun on your back.

A waterfall.

A deer.

Home Sweet Home

Oh, what precious moments

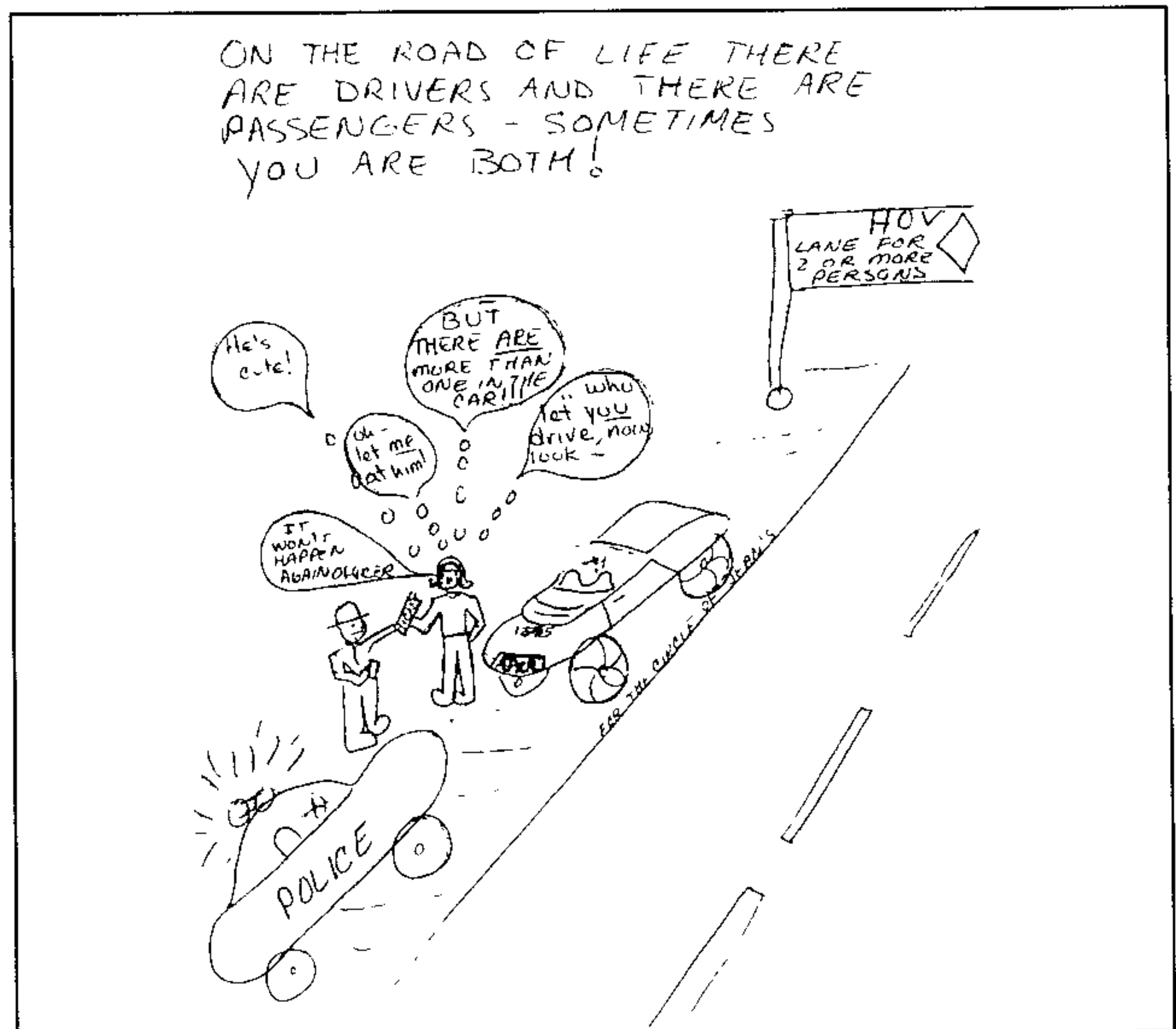
to savor and live with

in the moment.

Don't neglect the simple things!

By Janice & Co.

MV



## Partner's Page

# Self-Defense Training and Recovery

By Richard

(Editor's Note The following self-defense scenario was practiced with a heavily padded instructor )

**T**he mugger slipped up silently behind the slender young woman and clamped his arms around her without warning. She exploded within the mugger's grasp, first slamming her head back into his nose, then driving her hips back to make room for a groin-grab, yelling NO! with each strike.

The mugger stumbled to the ground, but kept his grip on her. She sank her teeth into his arm, rolled out as he let go, and viciously jabbed his eyes. Hurt but raging, the mugger counter-attacked. She spun away to turn her legs toward her attacker and lashed out with side-kicks until he stopped coming, then moved in close, swung her leg high and slammed her heel into his head for a knock-out.

Without taking her eyes off the mugger, she planted her hands, leaped away and to her feet, walked cautiously to the safe zone above his head, then crushed a final stomp into his face

I'm very proud of that young woman. She's my wife.

I've discovered that self-defense training is a great untapped resource in trauma recovery, and I recommend that you and your partner consider it.

I had suspected, ever since my wife told me about her history of sexual abuse, that learning to fight effectively might be a powerful aid in overcoming her fears

We got to test that theory when we discovered Impact self-defense training. Impact, and its close sibling Model Mugging, are self-defense programs that specialize in teaching participants to knock out an assailant in realistic assault scenarios. A specially trained "mugger"/instructor wears state-of-the-art padding so students can practice full-contact defense tactics.

Impact and Model Mugging are unlike any other form of martial arts

training. There are no intricate joint locks, no spectacular throws. This is the bone-crunching, no-nonsense hand-to-hand combat that I thought the Army would teach me but it never did. The techniques are simple and direct. Anyone, regardless of age or fitness level, can learn and apply them. The training scenarios are very realistic, drawn from studies of real muggings. The mugger/instructors talk and act like real muggers while in the scenarios. Students yell, fight full-force, and walk off the mat gasping and sweat-soaked.

Despite that, Impact and Model Mugging are also the least macho martial arts training I've ever seen. The courses are taught by teams of male and female instructors who are trained to deal with emotional processes and create a supportive group environment. The female instructor teaches the physical techniques and facilitates individual and group support. The male mugger/instructors, besides portraying realistic assaults, also provide compassionate support and feedback.

This combination of realistic training and emotional support provides a unique opportunity for healing the emotional wounds of sexual abuse. Many therapists refer clients to Impact, reporting that the training expedites therapy.

My wife and I can vouch for that. We've both taken the Basic Course, where students learn to deal with a single, unarmed assailant—the most common assault situation. The scenario that opens this article is from the Women's Basic Course. (Nearly identical techniques are taught in the men's and women's Basic Courses, with slight modifications to account for the different ways men and women are assaulted.)

I've also taken the co-ed Advanced Course, which introduces fighting against weapons and multiple

assailants, and special situations like fighting blind or on a bed.

Impact and Model Mugging also offers advanced courses against weapons and multiple assailants, Kidpower for people below the age of 13, and even a Partner's Course teaching couples to fight as a team.

Most of the courses are about 25 hours long, and the training is pricey, typically \$20-\$25 for each hour, although many Impact and Model Mugging schools offer sliding scales or scholarships. But our instructors estimated it would take three years of conventional martial arts training to gain the fighting skills that Impact and Model Mugging teaches in 25 hours. And it's certainly cheaper than 25 hours of psychotherapy.

My wife and I feel the training was worth it.

I'm not a sexual abuse survivor, but I never learned to fight well and I had a lot of bad memories and fears from childhood bullying. I tended to freeze if threatened with violence. After the Impact Basic and Advanced Courses, I have a lot more confidence that I could deal with violence if I had to.

My wife got even more from Impact than I did, and I highly recommend that you support your partner if he or she decides to try any form of martial arts training.

"It's hard to describe the benefit I got from Impact because it's been so subtle, yet so pervasive," my wife said. "Although therapy helped me deal with the incest and ritual abuse, it never showed me what to do if it ever happened again. Since Impact training, I know I never have to be a victim again. I know I can fight back. And I know I'm worth fighting for. It's made a big difference."

(For more information about Impact training and a list of Impact International Inc. schools nationwide, see this webpage [www.bedrock.com/dc-impact/impact.htm](http://www.bedrock.com/dc-impact/impact.htm))

# Ending the Never-ending Story

By B. and K.

A year and a half ago it was finally determined that my wife has Dissociative Identity Disorder. So reluctant were her alternate personalities to trust those around her that they denied their need for help for many months before finally making the tepid move into the world of reality that we live in. My wife of nineteen years had lived most of her life with lots of invisible and silent company. The death of her father from a car accident changed all that. Whether his living served as a constant threat, or whether my wife needed to allow others to believe in his decency, the personalities she had created continued well beyond childhood to suppress the terrible memories of abuse that tore the fabric of her soul.

As my wife embarks on the road to healing, she searches to sort out why she was abused. During one sleepless night she managed to write the following letter to her step-grandmother, a letter which was never sent and likely never will be sent. Last year, after weeks of preparation in therapy, my wife managed to talk with her mother about some of the abuse done to her by her father. While her mother was unable to do much except believe and support her daughter, that is enough and usually all that is ever asked. Her mother talked about her father's childhood: one of getting hit frequently, being unwanted, passed around from one family to another and finally raped by his stepmother. It helped my wife to know that at one time, her abuser was a victim himself. We offer this letter as a window into the heart and mind of a woman with many pieces who seeks peace from the torment of her past.

Dear \_\_\_\_\_

Just thought I'd write to let you know how I've been doing. Things haven't been going very well for me. But at least I have a lot of questions answered. Ever since Dad died I've been having a lot of bad dreams. Nightmares...night sweats. I'd wake up terrified and drenched in my own fear. Things got worse. It started happening during the day. Certain sights and sounds and even smells would send me into a horrific panic attack. I started finding myself more and more in places without knowing how I got there. More and more frequently I would encounter people who knew me, and I hadn't a clue as to who they were. I lost time—hours and sometimes days at a time. I was in a constant state of depression...despair, really. I was losing my life. I went to the local mental health hospital for weeks at a time. I was put on suicide watches. Not knowing what to do with me, they sent me to different mental institutions out of state, with a chaperone because I couldn't be trusted alone. I was given drug after drug to try to alleviate the problem. I became lost. Desperately, hopelessly, helplessly lost. Alone.

I didn't know what was happening to me or why it was happening. Until it hit me...hard. Those hellish nightmares and errors were not just a dream. It was memories oozing to the surface of my mind's eye. Bringing along the smells and taste of dirty, nasty acts. Acts so vile and wretched that the only thing I could do was depart myself from them. I went into hiding the only

place I could go, deep into my mind. I didn't know it then, but I was saving my own life by doing so. But as anything that is left to fester and rot, it starts to get gaseous and soon erupts, leaving gaping wounds. Parts and pieces are all that's left. Now the hard part starts, finding them all and putting them back together.

All those pieces were memories of many tragic acts. With each level of horror, my mind created people who could stand up to the pain. They grew into people with separate characters all their own. They all have names and birthdays. All are unique with special traits and acts and jobs to perform. It was my way of coping with what was done to me...by my father. And by others...because when you learn to be a victim it is all you know how to do.

I actually still don't see all of this first hand. The people within me have come to trust my husband and my therapist enough to share the pain and disappointment they have protected me from all these years. It really gets difficult sometimes to even comprehend all this. I always have to ask the question of *why*, how could someone do this to another person, especially a father who is supposed to love his daughter. I have been told that these terrible acts start because the person is reacting to something that was done to him. Something happened in his past, something awful and immoral was done to him by someone else. Just think of that person as pushing the first domino. What a chaotic mess it started! Because it just doesn't end with me.

Even though the cycle of violence may have ended with me, everything that is going on with me now affects my children's lives. They know something's wrong with momma and they know that their grandpa did it. What a crushing memory they are left with of their grandpa! Then there's my husband who has to take the brunt of all this. Not to mention my mom—the guilt and shame she feels. Then there are my sisters to whom I haven't spoken or written or heard from in over two years. It totally shatters their memories and ideas of who their father was.

I feel at fault. There should have been something I could have done to stop him. I should have been a better girl, a good, clean girl, or maybe even a boy. I can't help but feel that they blame me. And because of all that we don't have a relationship now.

I just wish that whoever hurt my dad could realize the damage they have done. I don't know. Who knows? Maybe they were hurt by someone evil themselves. Anyway, I still wish they would burn in hell for what they did.

As you can tell I still have a lot of healing and forgiveness to do. After all, without forgiveness, there is no healing. I guess it's easier to be able to put a face on a person that you are forgiving. Maybe not.

Anyway, I just thought I'd let you know how I was doing.

Sincerely,

K.

**Letters**

**My name is Joy.** I am 16 years old. Vivian is the body we live in. She is 59. She is resting, so I took over. I am the leader. There are 35 of us from the age of about 9 months to 55 years old. Everyone was hurt and abused. I am the one that is out on the street, so I was not abused as much as the others.

No one has ever had a life until now. We came to the mental health center about 2-1/2 years ago. We had our first birthday party here, our first hug, and the young kids had their first toys and food that did not come from a garbage can. We got the first therapist who cared for us, and the first doctor who cared enough about us to find out what was wrong with Vivian.

In these 55 years, we have been in hospitals and institutions, and no one knew what was wrong. They filled us up with pills and sent us home. Vivian thought that hearing voices inside and outside her head was okay. She did not know that other people did not hear voices, so we had to get very strong. The older the kids are, the worse they are. We were abused for 55 years with no help at all. Some of us are very sad, some very angry, some hurt me with cigarette burns, one broke a finger, and one makes her stomach bleed (she had to have part of her stomach and part of her colon taken out to save her life). A few of us are not living in the real world—they are insane. So as you can see, we never had a life.

We want to stay split. We want each to have a life of their own. This is the first time ever that the little kids get toys and the teenagers get makeup and nail polish. We have friends who love and understand us. I told everyone that it is okay for us to stay split. Our therapist and our doctor agree. We have to learn to work together, instead of fighting all the time. Some of us are doing better. To tell you the truth, I would be very lonely without them. Signed,

*The Loners*

**I had surgery 6 weeks ago.** I had many concerns about being under anaesthesia. Well, the fears I had didn't happen. However, the surgery turned out to be much more extensive than

the doctors had thought. I was under anesthesia for five hours.

Then I had several complications. I had a major reaction to breathing treatments and was very sick for a week. Then I got sent home and ended up back in the hospital, ten days later. During that time the "girls" started to "wake-up"...all got very scared and went back deep inside. I went home again, but ten days later at the surgeon's office he had to open up the incision, and we got depressed.

That was two weeks ago. We are going to see him again this morning. We have had nurses coming to the house two times daily to do medical procedures. With all of that said...we have felt like our "girls" (alters) have been "asleep" and we feel so lost, sad and lonely without them. The Doc and therapist make a big deal about how pleased we should be that it is quiet inside. We are glad that there isn't a lot of commotion going on. But have the "girls" gone for good? Where are they? Has anyone ever had this experience? Any ideas for me? I'd appreciate a response. Thank you.

*-Kat and the "girls"*

MV

**Recovery is just over the rainbow**

The rainbows of my heart reach out for courage, strength, healing, and hope

I am learning to accept each color just as it is without judging them or putting them to shame—as in the past.

But, fortunately, the past is over. I am learning to blend each color into beautiful new colors.

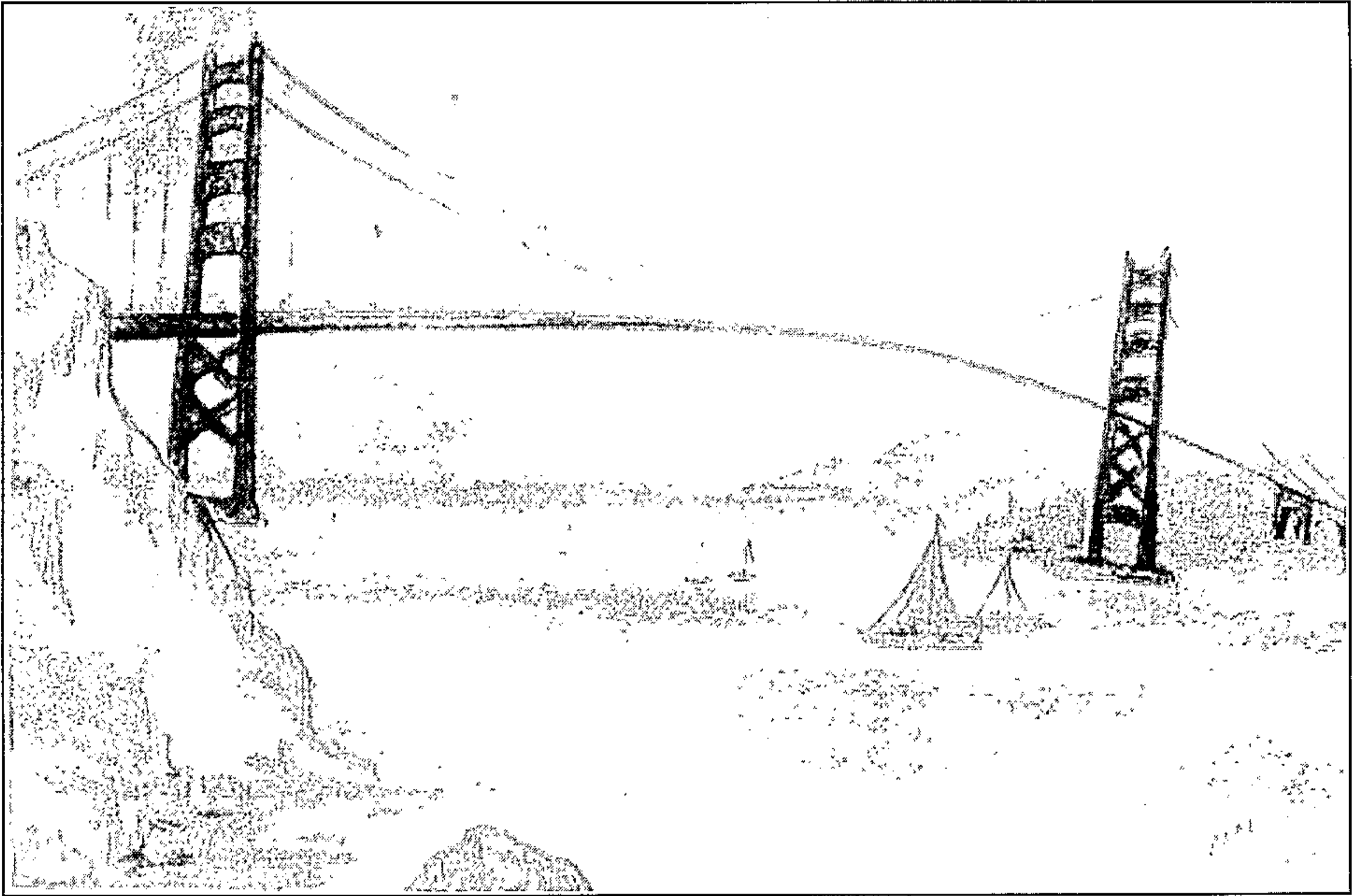
Colors of the future—  
love  
peace  
joy  
and above all—  
togetherness

*By Anita, Inc.*

MV



*By Maria E. Herfam*



## Inner RelationSHIP

Such a lonely place to be: in a huge ship with many sails;  
 with a strange crew; on a vast ocean;  
 with nothing else on the horizon.  
 Each crew member is trying to jockey for position,  
 some acting as pirates with the goal of mutiny.  
 Only some know why and who they search for and what their job is on this ship.  
 The wheel is somehow guided by an invisible presence,  
 with the wind filling the sails and pushing onward, at times leaving the ship in still waters.  
 Regularly the ship tosses to and fro, and large waves appear.  
 Some scream and some laugh as the ship is almost swallowed up, and capsized.  
 Everyone questions the first mate and the Captain, but the Captain knows

what He is doing.  
 No other crewmember can take the wheel, not even the first mate.  
 The first mate assigns each one a task to keep the ship afloat.  
 The first mate has a map and crew list given from the Captain,  
 thus having an idea where they are heading.  
 Some are stowaways, appearing for a second then hiding again to keep safe.  
 Some get seasick and are unable to work.  
 Some like to climb the masts to keep watch for land or incoming storms.  
 The wind blows and brushes across their faces, and they realize they like the alive, invisible stormy winds; the invisible Captain is working hard at the wheel.  
 Other ships come into sight, and unless the crew sees the friendly flags flying,

they work hard to keep away.  
 Sometimes they wonder if they will be overtaken by a pirate ship. Sometimes wonder if they will be tossed overboard, and sometimes fear they are lost at sea.  
 The crew realizes if they want to live they must cooperate; or jump ship and die.  
 They must listen to the first mate who is listening to the Captain.  
 Land Ho, yells one, and the Captain focuses on the light  
 beaming from the lighthouse and has already been listening to the foghorn warnings,  
 carefully keeping the ship from bashing on the sharp rocks.  
 But as the crew work together, and the seas calm, the ship reaches port.  
 The crew realize that they have finally made it, working as one.

*Windy and Crew*

## Is Integration Worth It?

By Connie P.

Is integration/healing worth it? Interesting. Are the difficulties of pregnancy and labor worth the beautiful child that I freely planned and chose to have? Yes. Were the difficulties of being married, rearing children and earning two college degrees worth it? Yes, because I was given the freedom to plan and choose to work to achieve the degrees.

Is anything that I get to plan, decide upon, and then pursue, 'worth it'?

I believe so. Integration was my choice, my goal, my plan. Others worked with me to achieve it, but I chose to do it. Previously, in my earlier life, I was not allowed to choose anything for myself. I was told what I would and would not do.

Everything that is profitable is not always pleasant. Everything that seems pleasant is not always profitable.

I have three non-MPD, non-in-counseling friends. They say

they see a big difference in me and they liked me before, as a multiple. They even liked me before counseling. Now, we really have pleasant times. They have all let me stay at their house during the day for safety. So they have supported me at my best and at my worst.

I am very happy to be at the end of all this. For me, it has been worth it. Forty-plus years as a multiple were difficult. Being "normal" will also have its difficulties. However, I now have the rest of my life to live as a single individual, expending my energies doing things I've only previously hoped and dreamed of doing, instead of expending my energy switching, covering up for my memory lapses, etc.

Some days, I feel fear of having a relapse. I suppose that's similar to the fears and feelings of an alcoholic, but I try to not live my life dictated by fear.

MV

## Multiple Choice: What's your State of Mind?

1. When you awaken to find your bedroom a mess, you:

- a) Assume a tornado hit it.
- b) Think nothing of it.
- c) Figure a child or other messy alter was out again, and after checking with that one to confirm, ask them to please straighten up the mess.

2. When your finances look like five different people have been balancing them, you:

- a) Scream to let off steam, and start over again—your handwriting this time, making sure you destroy all previous records not in your handwriting.
- b) Hope it changes. Miracles DO happen!
- c) Address it in therapy, with all alters who balance finances present, 'til it changes.

3. When a stranger approaches your car, you:

- a) Throw things.
- b) Do nothing and hope he evaporates. The Power Of Hope Trick!
- c) Trust your intuition. Consult a protector alter who can handle the situation and keep you safe

4. When you realize a child alter has ended up in a bad R-rated movie by accident, you:

- a) Sit through it, gore and all—traumatizing the child alter. You paid good money, damn it!
- b) Toss popcorn and chew cherry gum loudly.
- c) Consult an adult alter who can leave the movie, and go take the child alter to the right movie, thereby nurturing yourself.

5. When your friend tells you that you have contradicted yourself, you:

- a) Sneer.
- b) Wear a poker face.
- c) Affirm that you may contradict yourself from time to time, and that you probably have conflicting feelings.

Mostly A answers: You are a little hostile! Your favorite saying is, "When Hell Freezes Over!"

Mostly B answers: Denial is not a river in Egypt. (I've been there, and I know for damn sure.)

Mostly C answers: Congratulations! You're taking great care of yourself!

By Gwen

MV

## Therapy

This relationship, like the unique, handwoven basket is held in a special way, a container that collects the stories, the golds, browns, thick fibers, yarns and threads, the careful, meticulous and spontaneous weaving of the basket that holds our history, creates new history, the smiles, the tears, the love, being known and seen.

I won't give it away and let it be pushed aside by my old distrust or by the memory of those who betrayed me, people who could never learn to weave with me.

I hold this precious relationship close, it is just for me, my own healing.

We've created it together, weaved it from strands of trust and trying from moments of struggle and peace, from hard times, easier times, heart times.

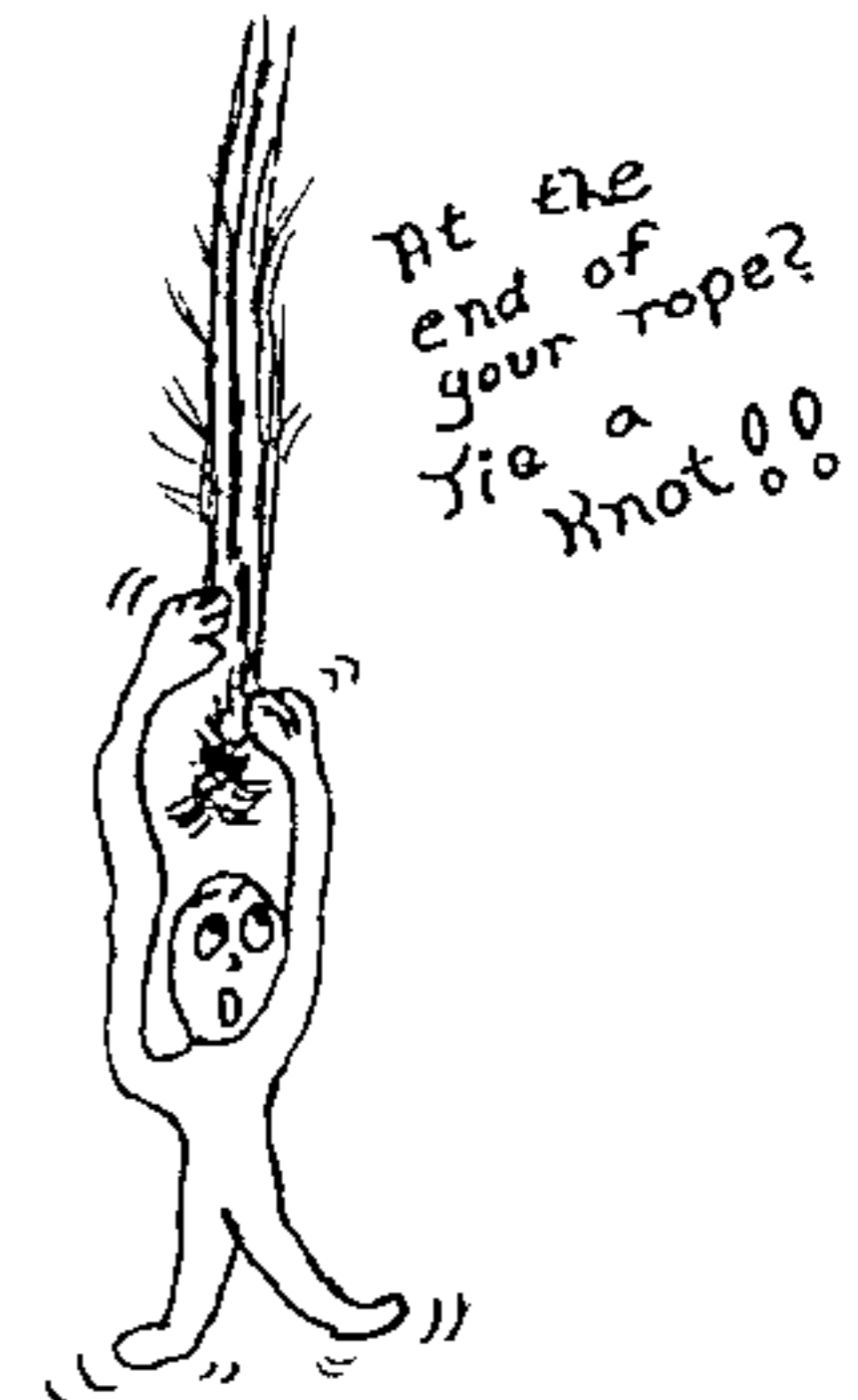
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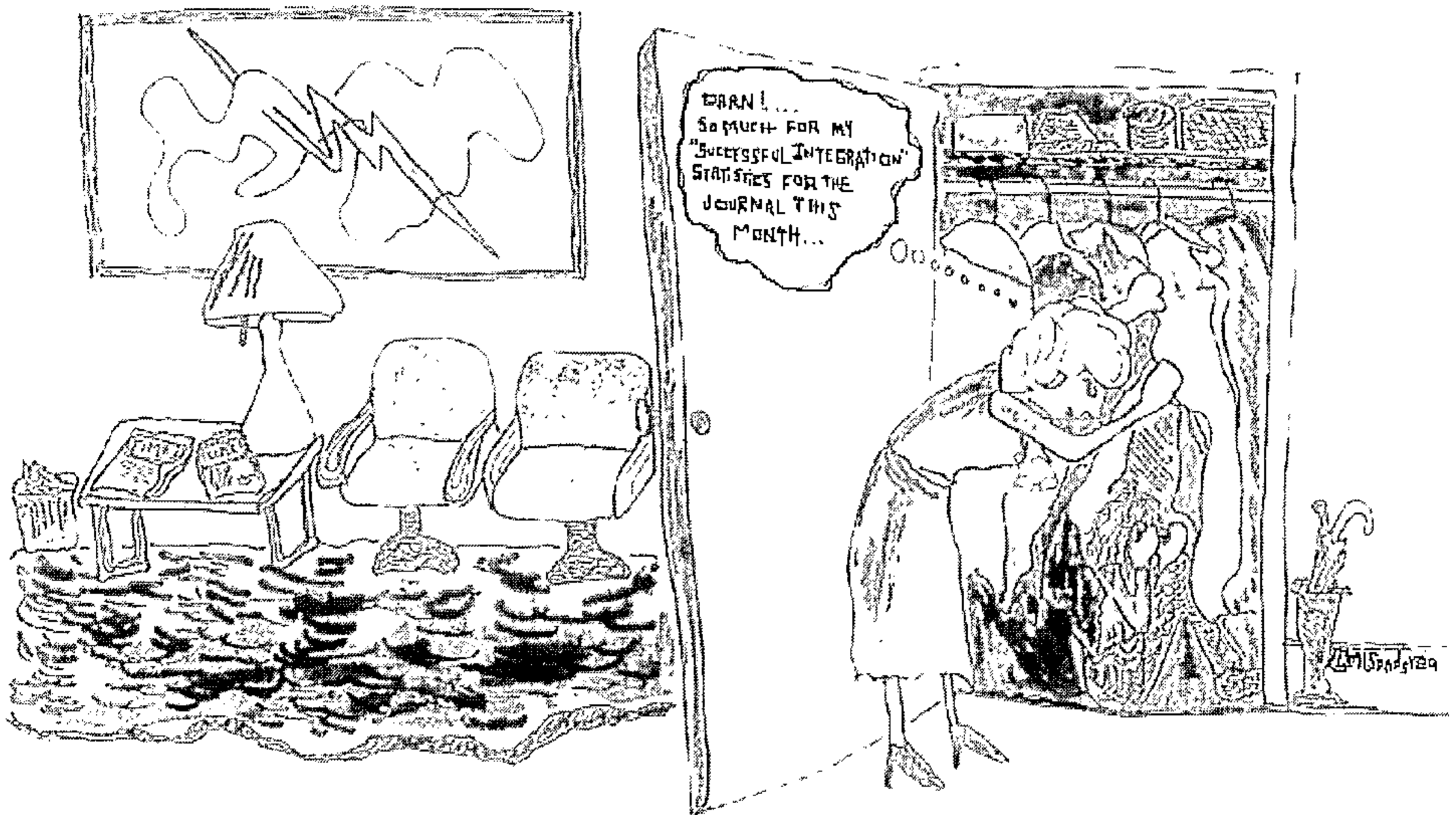
This connection, it is priceless and sacred.

Like she is. Like I am.

Even if I don't fully know it yet.

By K. Riley





## Books

### **Shadow Syndromes: Recognizing and Coping with the Hidden Psychological Disorders that can influence your Behavior and Silently Determine the Course of Your Life.**

By John J. Ratey, M.D. and Catherine Johnson, Ph.D. © 1997. Pantheon Books. Paperback. 388 pgs. About \$12.

This book seems to be both readable and accessible. It addresses something I have believed to be long overlooked—the physical brain. It is written from the authors' dual perspectives of both personal and clinical experience. It also offers a view of how neuro- or "biopsychiatry" has evolved. As in Ratey's previously co-authored book (*Driven to Distraction*) a suggestion here is that becoming more informed may help us to evolve, and to improve the quality of our lives.

The particular conditions covered (in mild or subtle forms) are: masked depression; the hypomanic state; intermittent rage; mild attention deficit disorder; autism; obsessive-compulsive disorder, addiction and anxiety. It is

maintained that "all of the syndromes result in a state of mental noise" (internally), or a "noisy brain." The overall discussion reflects how closely related and interwoven are the brain's functions and biochemistry. There is a serious appreciation of how very sensitive our brains are. Here is a clear statement of how "mental disorders" can develop as a result of things like: head trauma, life trauma, bacterial and/or viral infection, heredity, environmental factors, chemical sensitivity, etc. The authors address some of the denial which has suppressed this information. They offer personal stories—their own, and those of others. They reflect on a variety of attitudes, approaches, and possible supportive measures for what is discussed. Since they focus on research for validation, their discussion invariably includes pharmaceuticals. However, even for someone like myself who uses homeopathic remedies and herbs, this book may be worthwhile.

The Dine (Navajo) people speak of balance in one's life as encompassing beauty. Balance within oneself, with the environment, family, in

relationships. There are those who might reflect that what helps to bring balance is good medicine. The authors of this book offer this written work as medicine. Their wish is for the knowledge shared to be an aid to achieving greater balance—in body, mind, work, relationships, and spirit.

I find this book to be insightful, humane, informative and timely. The information offered here is relevant—whether read in sequence or intuitively. If you have wondered whether a trauma history has indeed affected the brain itself—yours or that of another—you may find an answer here. If similar thoughts haunt you—despite what health care providers admit to—you might look for this book in your local library. Within these pages, read with discrimination, you may find some peace of mind. It is finished in beauty.

*By Living Earth*

*(We welcome book review submissions. Just follow the format above, and let us know about your favorites!)*

*- Lynn W., Editor*

**THANK YOU for Your Wonderful Writing and Artwork! Please Keep Sharing! We need \*lots more\* of everything!**

See our early-stage webpage:  
<http://hometown.aol.com/mvwebnews>  
Tell us what you'd like to see on it!

*THANKS!—Lynn W.*

**COMING SOON!**

**October 1999**

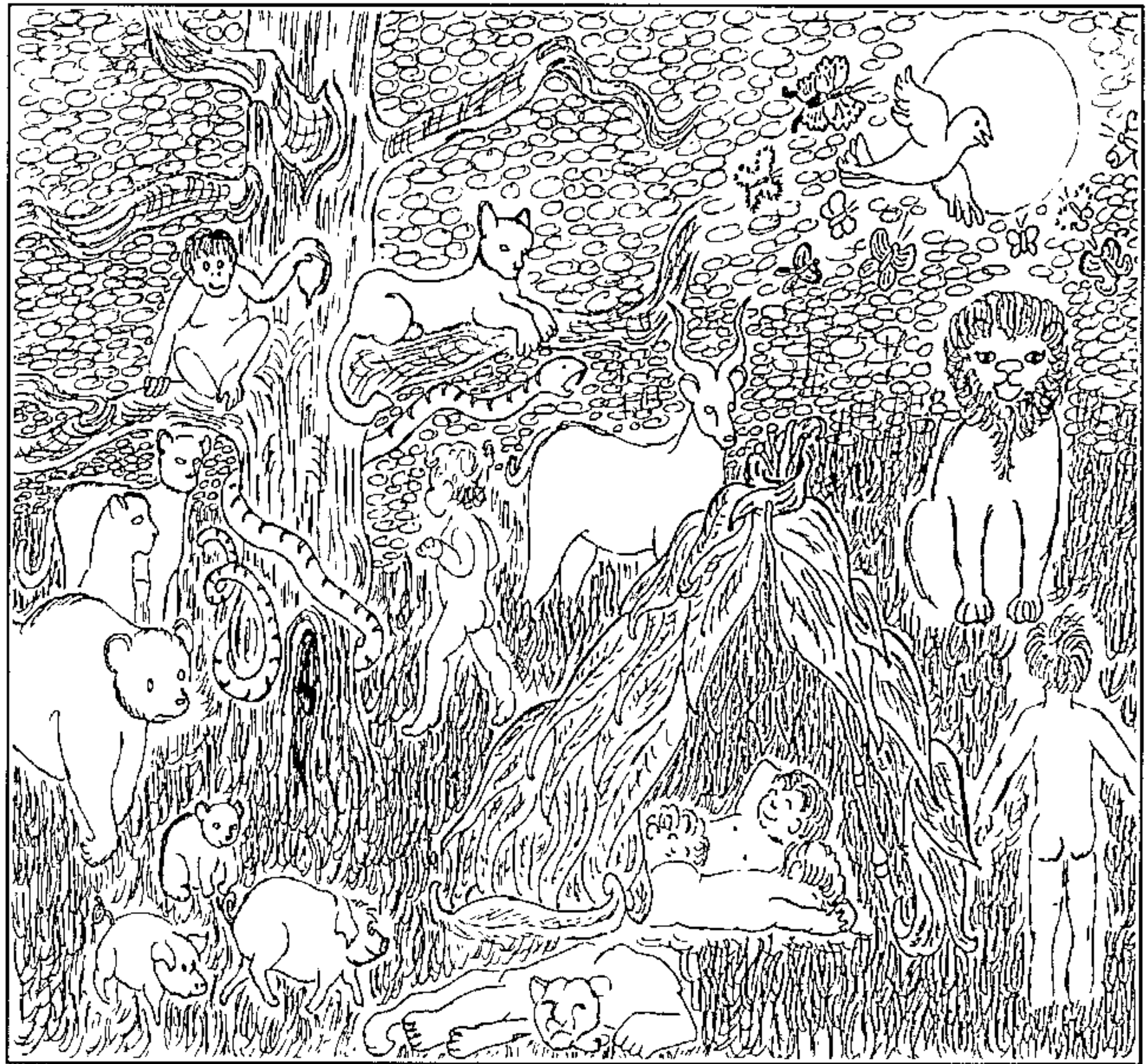
Multiple Issues: seizures, Attention deficit, traumatic medical procedures, infertility, scars, aging. ART: Health and recovery.

DEADLINE: August 1, 1999

**December 1999**

Forgiveness. How to release what we don't remember. Dealing with fears of intimacy. ART: Loving yourself, sharing with others.

DEADLINE: Oct. 1, 1999



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