

# MANY VOICES

WORDS OF HOPE FOR PEOPLE RECOVERING FROM TRAUMA & DISSOCIATION

Vol XIII, No.4

August 2001

ISSN1042-2277

*In This Issue:*

**Recovery Endpoints: Integration?  
Co-Consciousness?  
Cooperation?**



*Next Year's topics! Grab your pen and paper (or keyboard) & share!*

## February 2002

Recovery from Physical Abuse.  
Mind/Body healing and exercise. Art:  
The Mind/Body connection.  
Deadline: Dec.1, 2001.

## April 2002

Recovery from Emotional Abuse.  
Choosing values to live by. Art:  
Spiritual Centering.  
Deadline: Feb. 1, 2002.

## June 2002

"Get a Life" *plus* Therapy! Finding  
balance within. Art: What helps you  
feel good.  
Deadline: April 1, 2002.

## August 2002

Moments of Change. Affirmations  
that work for you. Art: Recovery  
turning points.  
Deadline: June 1, 2002.

## October 2002

Coping with special trauma  
problems: fugue states,  
depersonalization, amnesia attacks,  
PTSD flashbacks. Art: Getting back to  
reality.  
Deadline: August 1, 2002.

## December 2002

Age and Dissociation for young and  
old. Age-appropriate treatment.  
Solutions for missed development  
stages. Art: Growth is good.  
Deadline: October 1, 2002.



*Protect the Lamb*

**MV**

Many Voices (ISSN1042-2277) is published bi-monthly at Cincinnati, Ohio. Copyright 2001 by MV Co. All rights reserved. Editor/Publisher, Lynn W. Send subscriptions, manuscripts and correspondence to P.O. Box 2639, Cincinnati, OH 45201-2639. Phone (513) 751-8020. E-mail, LynnW@manyvoicespress.com. U.S. subscriptions, \$36 for one year. Canada, \$42US. Elsewhere, \$48US. This publication is designed as an information exchange for treatment providers and survivors of trauma and dissociative disorders. Neither its editor nor its layperson contributors are engaged in the practice of medicine. This publication should not be construed as medical advice concerning any specific facts or circumstances. The contents are for general information purposes only. Please consult with competent professionals concerning your specific questions.

# Asset Or Liability

By Brian M.

I am a 37 year old male who was diagnosed with D.I.D. two years ago. I was working full time as a Probation Officer and loved my job. I worked with both adults and juvenile offenders. I have enjoyed reading *Many Voices* since my stay at a major trauma treatment hospital in June of 2000. We thought we would write our story since we get so much from the stories of others.

I grew up in Los Angeles and suffered similar abuse to what we read about in MV. Some of us remember in school feeling "different" from other kids. We just wanted to be by ourselves and daydream. In 7th grade I met a girl named Jolene, who is now my wife of 18 years. I went into the Air Force and served 7 years. I was sent to Mental Health because of a back injury that lead to depression. There they conducted their tests of hundreds of questions and gave me a clean bill of health, stating only that I had minor dysthymia.

When I was discharged, I worked for a Propane Company. In 1991, the truck I was driving was on a bridge that collapsed causing severe physical and emotional problems. I could not sleep; I was having nightmares and began losing time throughout the day. The Psychiatrist I was seeing told me I had a Dissociative disorder. I was taken by ambulance several times in a state they called "pseudo-comatose."

It was at this point my abuse issues surfaced and began to dominate my every thought. With the help of medications and therapy, I was able to return to college and finish my AS degree. I then went to work for the Probation Department as I continued my mental health therapy.

At work I felt like a Chameleon who could adapt to any situation and could relate to anyone. I found this to be extremely helpful since I was working with a wide variety of clients. It was at this point I became aware of not being able to remember certain situations at

work and was losing more time. I felt at one point I was leading a double life.

I began to recognize addictive patterns to medications and sex. I too began to experience recollections of extreme rage and self-harm behaviors. Also it felt as though little kids were inside trying to get out and play. This was all very strange to me since I am 5'10" and weigh 300 lbs and have been called the "Chris Farley" look-alike. I never have felt like I was any bigger than a small, feeble boy.

After several sessions with my therapist about these feelings, she diagnosed me with D.I.D. She explained it to me and after reading several articles about it, I knew that is what has been plaguing me for most of my life. We were all able to start to talk with our therapist for the first time ever. With Jolene by our side, we made a video of the different alters within us. It was both scary and exciting to watch the tape. For the first time in our life, we were able to see what we felt on the inside and life began to make sense.

Unfortunately, the alter who is the sex addict (still won't reveal himself) continued to act out while we were at work. Our employer found some adult video clips on our computer at work and we were given the option of resigning or being terminated. I explained that what he had found was prior to us seeking treatment at the trauma-center; however, he said that we were a liability to him. I reminded him that our work history over the past 7 years as a Probation Officer had been flawless, our caseload had the lowest recidivism rate, and we had a better working relation with my clients than did any other Officer. All this was to no avail.

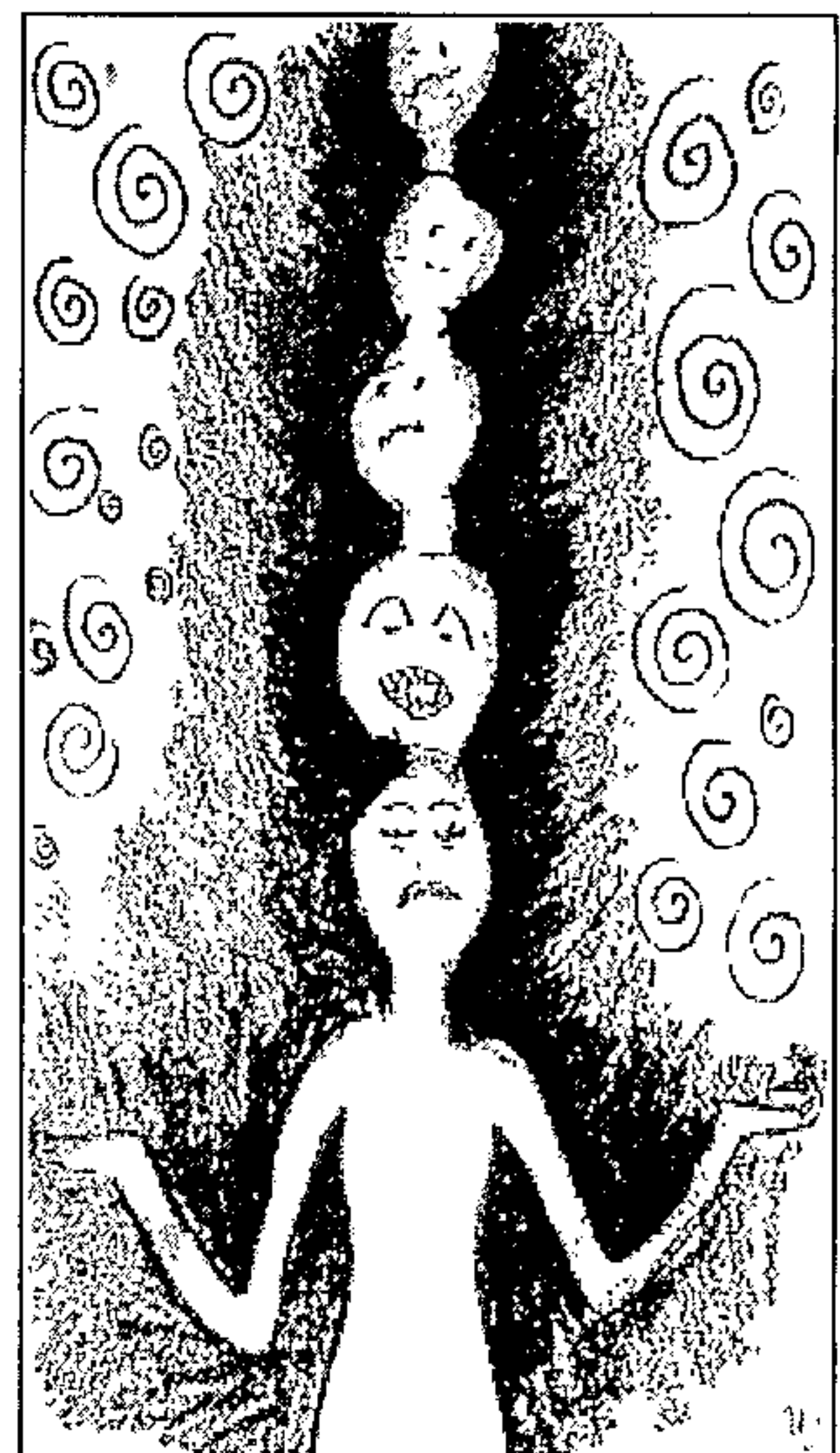
We ended up in the hospital again for suicidal and homicidal ideations. This time we were there two weeks and were able to come to grips with our situation and we were able to take full responsibility for the actions one of us made. Our Doctor put us on State Disability and our Social Security

Disability was approved. We are now attending a Partial Hospitalization Program offered through the Veteran's Administration.

To help our system return to work, we will be going back to college to finish our education and hopefully be more employable when we are ready to return to the work force. We are now able to see that we are not some freak or other object to be abused. We are becoming more Co-Conscious, which is our goal. We are learning how to express our needs to Jolene and the others who are part of our support system rather than isolating. The only area that we feel we are lacking now is a support group that meets face to face to talk about daily trials and tribulations.

We would like to thank MV and its readers for all you do for those of us who have Dissociative Disorders. It truly helps us feel normal, worthy, and that there is hope for us.

MV





## EMDR Helps

I wanted to say that the last year has brought a multitude of changes for me. I was working with a counselor for over six years. He helped me go from total confusion and panic attacks to understanding, and down to 6 personalities from 31. I came to a point that my disability money could no longer pay for therapy. So after checking in with the county mental health department, I was able to get a counselor who works with me and gives EMDR therapy.

At first there was a lot of mistrust in therapy. It took a lot of patience on Glenn's part to see to it that all my parts (alters) were aware of the process and what to expect. If a problem developed in process, Glenn would stop and take time to address the issue of EMDR or anything else that might have arisen. He is very patient with us. For several weeks we had the same issue continue to haunt us, and he took the time to explain and draw or write things on an erasable board, so that we all could visualize what was being said.

Using EMDR therapy has enabled us to come to a place internally at the start of each session, work through a problem area with any alters that were involved, and then continue the process until there is resolution for all involved. Sometimes it doesn't involve all alters, but everyone has made the commitment to participate actively, even if it is just listening and being supportive. I know that I am new to this kind of therapy, but with Glenn's support we can progress at a pace that is comfortable to all. Our goal is to stop the confusion and work together as a team.

My hope is by sharing this, that others will check out EMDR therapy, if it is available in your area. I know that we have a long way to go resolving all our issues, but I see this as the best possible solution for the time being.

I also want to thank *Many Voices* for being there for us. When I have a problem come up, I look back through my many issues and can read about things, and get added support and boost that I want and need. Thanks!

*By Angel, for Kathi and gang*

**MV**

## MANY THANKS TO OUR ANGELS!

**Del Amo Hospital - Torrance, CA**

Call Chris McMillin: (310) 530-1151 or (800) 533-5266

**Forest View Hospital - Grand Rapids, MI**

Call Bill van Harken: (616) 942-9610 or (800) 949-8439

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

Call Martha Bujanda: (504) 734-1740 or (800) 366-1740

**Timberlawn Mental Health System - Dallas, TX**

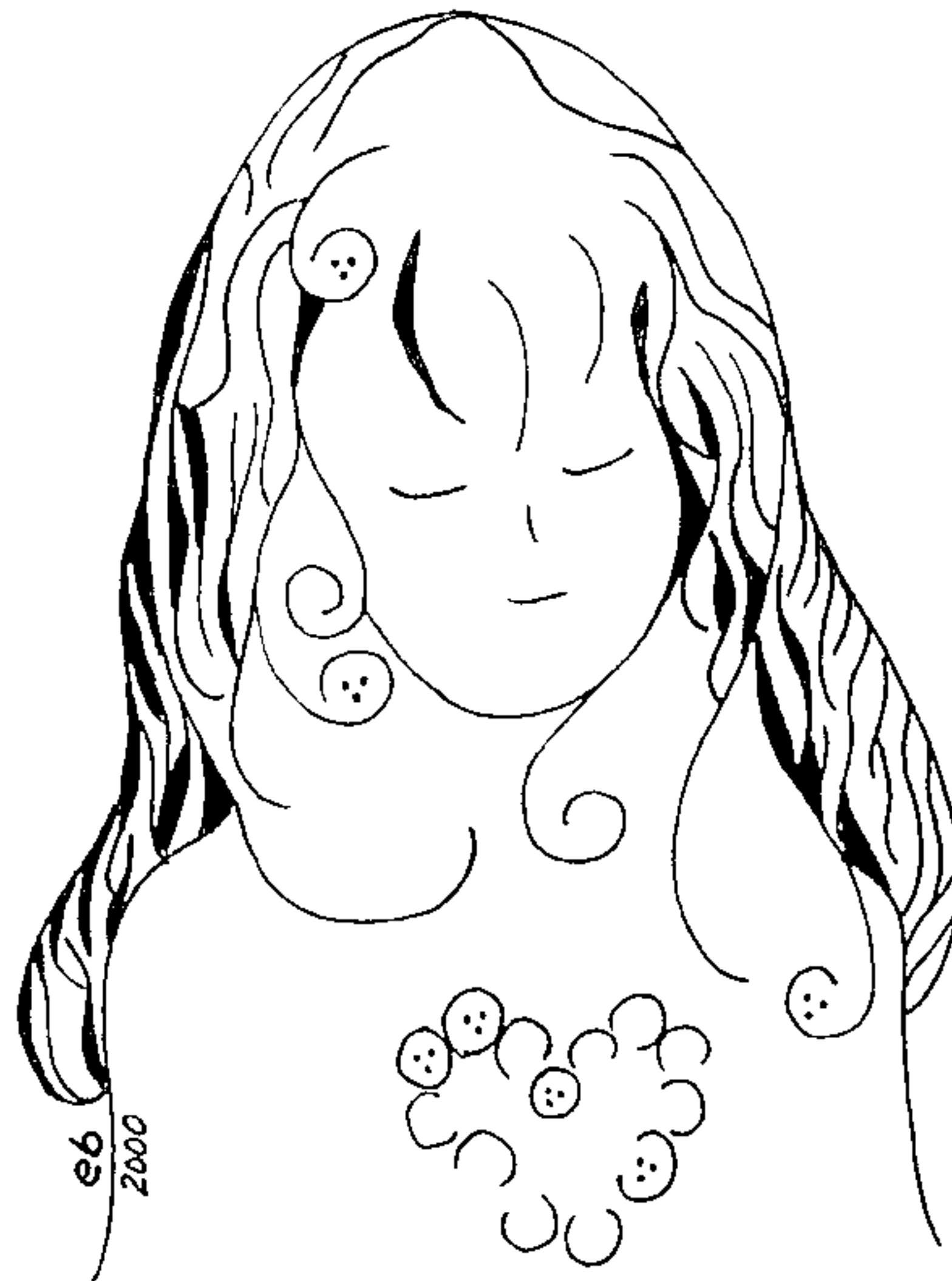
Call Christie Clark: (214) 381-7181 or (800) 426-4944

**Two Rivers Psychiatric Hospital - Kansas City, MO**

Call David Tate: (816) 356-5688 or (800) 225-8577

These organizations are not affiliated with this publication and have no control over its contents. *Many Voices* and its staff have no influence on their operations.

If you know of clinics or conferences that need flyers, please call us!  
We appreciate your support! — Lynn W., Editor



## Healing or Hiding?

There has always been movement inside. These past couple of years have been no different in that respect. Yet at the same time, the movement has been very different indeed. Is this healing? Or hiding again? Instead of reorganization, there has been retreat, envelopment...what is the word I want? Is there a word to describe such a thing? Is this healing? Or hiding again? The retreat has not been to behind slammed doors along a dark hallway. It has been a retreat from my head to my heart. My skin seems to envelop myself...my "selves"? Is this healing? Or hiding again? After the shock of a family suicide, the hallway doors slammed shut. Yet as time has passed and life has gone on, the hallway and rooms in my head have seemed to gradually release their occupants. I did not see them packing. I did not see them go. Is this healing? Or hiding again? Thinking seems less complicated most of the time, less complex. My selves have not felt like strangers, but they don't feel like separate friends, either. I am no longer an adversary to myself, but am I still a helper for myself? My selves feel like parts of my heart. My essence. I see them and I don't. I search for them and I feel them...always. Is this healing? Or hiding again? I ponder. I question. I breathe. I wait. Perhaps someday I will know the answers.

*By ellen b.*

**MV**

# Cooperation and Self-Empowerment

In looking over the recent issue of MV, I came across the upcoming topics and one word stood out to me: *Cooperation*. I am struggling with this. I find that the lack of cooperation is so chaotic

## In Relationships:

The lack of cooperation has been problematic in regards to relationships, in particular with my significant other. The part of me that met and fell in love with her is a younger part. When I'm with her it brings out our teenage to mid-twenties parts and with those parts comes the lack of knowledge and experience that we've had from that time on. Our judgment is clouded and we don't know how to take care of or nurture our selves in those parts. Those parts will do whatever it takes to be loved and accepted, even to the extent of losing their sense of self in the process. The lack of cooperation comes in when we're away from our partner as we are now separated. Then the more adult parts come out and the confusion begins. "What am I doing in this relationship?" "I've got to end this and move on." But then when I get in the car to go visit our son, the younger parts come out and when I see her "I want to spend the rest of my life with you," is what those parts feel and profess. It's such a back and forth pull between parts on a daily basis that I long for some cooperation and resolution between all the parts involved.

Relationships are hard for those with D.I.D. and for those in a relationship with someone with D.I.D. It isn't just romantic relationships, it's all relationships: kids, parents, friends, siblings, coworkers, bosses, etc... Until there is some type of cooperation among the parts it will remain an unpredictable roller coaster where the most innocent interaction can trigger the internal wheel to spin and who knows what part will come up?

## In Financial Matters:

It seems like it's every part for itself. We have gotten ourselves into a financial pit that might have ended differently if we had cooperated.

Certain parts have no concept of staying within a budget. The adult worker part is very good with money but has to deal with the repercussions of the other parts. The older parts had good credit, the younger parts destroyed it. The caregiver part needs to make sure everyone's needs are met (and paid for) at the expense of our needs and budget. Credit cards in the hands of children don't work.

This part is a 45-year-old woman and as I look at other people of this age, they have so much more than I do because they were consistent with their financial responsibilities. I look back at the time of my divorce: we gave up my share of our house—we just let it go because we had no concept of money or our rights, and no sense that we deserved anything. We were leading with the small parts that were fighting for their survival. We needed to just move out because the small parts' cries of "get us out of here" were so loud, and they were suicidal.

Even now, I am reminded that this body is 45 years old and not that far from retirement. Yet we have nothing set aside because the majority of parts are younger and don't realize or comprehend that it's long past the time to think about retirement.

## Self-Care:

If we could just be consistent, we'd experience life from a healthier place. Cooperation among all of us would bring about that consistency. From exercising to AA meetings to eating habits to just being gentle with us, it's all so inconsistent. Whatever part is up, that's whose routine we follow—no matter if it's good or not so good.

What I think needs to happen is we need to gather us all together and come up with a routine that suits us all: the cutters, the purgers, the small parts, the drinkers, the teenagers, the adults, the health freaks, etc. Ask all the places inside for their ideas and what good self care looks like to them. Then build a plan around their answers. Ask for cooperation and patience among us all. All of our ideas

need to be honored. In theory, consistency should follow.

Life with D.I.D. is inconsistent at best, and without cooperation, can be a living Hell. But you can't just stand back all caught up in the chaos and turmoil inside. You have to work at achieving what you want. The first step for us was physically seeing the word *Cooperation*. Then we looked at how much we lack cooperation. It served as a reference point. Now we can begin the work of moving forward with the help of our therapist, our support team, and on our own.

Thanks to MV, your newsletter is a big part of our life with D.I.D.

*By M.R.H.*



**Empowerment, becoming stronger, and having a healthier and happier life. These are goals of therapy for us.**

Other goals include not being so afraid, handling flashbacks more effectively, and living a better and abuse-free life.

Cooperation among alters is our preference, because we want all and each of us to live as fully as possible, both as individuals and as a cooperative whole.

*By Sally B.*



**Our system detests the use of the word "integration" so any future references to it will be described as "becoming one," or of "joining the rainbow", i.e., cooperation, co-consciousness, or a combination.**

My inside family have not all joined the rainbow and several have no plans to do so. My therapist has finally resigned herself to this fact. I have had over half of my alters join the rainbow over the past eight years or so. Those who have joined have done so in many different ways. Some have joined in my therapists' office in a ceremony she



reads. Others have joined at home, or as in the case of Jennifer the poet, have left a note or poem saying they have done so. My husband has been present on many of these occasions. I will write about this wonderful, caring man for a "Partner's Page" sometime. It has always been a tender, gentle, peaceful joining, as well as some sadness. More have plans to join in the future.

I think whether or not to become completely one with the rainbow is a very individual choice. I have almost total co-consciousness and my inside family communicates well with each other. While still healing, part of that healing is experiencing things we missed in childhood and just the feel of being loved, by my kids, husband, friends and god, without a pricetag. Listening to my inside family and feeling their presence is a part of life as it is for my husband and now grown children. I would miss my inside family if all of them were to become one. I do not feel I must be fully joined in order to be healed. Healing is a life-long process, I think. I simply allow the process of our individual and collective healing to unfold.

*In peace, Hannah*



I wondered if there would be an "all better" for me. I could not imagine what "recovered" would look like. For six years I struggled on a daily basis with my "stuff." I worked hard in therapy at understanding my inner world. I have been fortunate to work with two therapists who, although they have very different styles, were life savers—really.

As part of my process, all alters had their own say as to whether or not they would want to integrate—whatever that meant to each of them. Believe me, there was a lot of fear and arguing. I, Amena, had no say. I was not in the driver's seat. My role was to trust and bear witness. It took patience, perseverance, courage, dogged determination, lots of humor, and trust to get where I am now.

I suppose you could call my story "132 to 1." All alters integrated with

the body on an energy level first. Each integration or group integration was unique. What has been most consistent is that they all "stuck." After the final, spontaneous integration of the most active group of alters, I had to figure out how to get into my own body. Only at that point did I realize that I had never functioned by myself. That is to say, I always had at least one alter "riding shotgun" when I thought only "I" was "out."

For the first six months after the last joining together, I was a complete basket case. It was awful! I thought I had traded one type of hell for another. And there was no going back. Again, with dogged determination, patience and humor, I slowly learned what it was like to live "alone." It was so quiet!! I grieved the loss of my dear close family. I especially missed the wee ones. And Todd, my God—how would I do this without Todd??

I had to spend lots and lots of sessions and phone calls with my therapist trying to learn how to relate to the world out there. I was scared out of my wits. I felt like the infant I had been. I needed to learn everything, right down to how to sip a drink from a cup. I'm serious. None of this had I ever done on my own. This went on for six months. I crash landed into a life (my life) already filled with expectations and schedules and a husband!

Over time, I slowly became more sure of myself. I learned quickly. I had to. I was 37 years old and I didn't know squat. I also started appreciating the quiet in my head. I had my own thoughts for the first time. I didn't have to share my husband with anyone else for the first time. I could make all choices by myself. What freedom! And "time" started to make more sense. I seemed to have lots more of it. It didn't disappear like before. My life just started to make more sense to me. The constant terror and anxiety that went along with being split disappeared. And thankfully, so did the triggers. That was the best part—that which triggered me had lost its effect completely. It's a non-issue.

I've come to know the concepts of "peace of mind" and "relaxation." These were never part of my living. Now they are constants, on one level

or another. And I know they are here to stay.

Granted, I have my share of daily hassles—the phone company screws up the bill again, or something doesn't arrive in the mail when I need it. Everyone has to put up with that kind of stuff. The good news is that it's just plain old easier to deal with. The difference, I guess, is that I'm dealing with today stuff. All by itself. No longer is "the past" a hitchhiker interfering with my life.

For me, being "better" is being "integrated." It may not work for everyone. I can only share what my experience has been. I never thought it would actually happen. It had not been a goal of mine/ours. All I had wanted was for the screaming to stop, for some level of comfort, to be able to sleep all night, and not to be so damn afraid of everything. All this was possible for me/we—through cooperation and patience.

I still go to therapy if only to deal with the "normal hassles" of "singleton-ness." I see that winding down as I look to my future as a professional care provider. Every now and then there is what I call "mop up" work to be done on old issues. Even the way I process that is different. It's easier and I'm much more grounded as I work through the issue.

My days are filled with experiencing the now. I'm planning ahead, not looking back. I've lost none of the essence of any of the alters. All creativity is still within me. Also all responsibility for my living. No one "died". We're just one. And I like it. A lot.

I hope this is helpful. The best to all of you.

*By Amena*

**MV**



## Partner's Page:

# We Did the Best We Could

By Richard

**T**his is the last, and hardest, "Partner's Page" article that I will write. My wife and I are getting a divorce, after ten years together (about five of those married).

As my wife has traveled through her healing journey, she has come to realize that she does not want to be married, not to me or to anyone.

"I just can't stand the thought of being owned, which is what I was taught about marriage," she said. "I know, in my head, that marriage isn't slavery. Being married to you taught me that. But that's what my abusers have done to my heart."

### No shock.

As sad as I am about this turn of events, it wasn't a big shock. I've seen this happen to other men in my support group, and my wife and I have been through marriage-threatening times in the past. So I knew this might happen, and I've been braced for it for years.

As Lynn, the editor of *Many Voices* told me, "I must admit that I'm not surprised. The healing process is so difficult and so challenging to everyone; it is truly life-transformation. And that makes both partners different from the people they were when they came together. It's rare, I think, for both individuals to move in synch."

My wife and I still love each other and we're still being decent and civil to each other, but it's still very difficult for us both. The two hardest things for me are second-guessing myself, and trying to make some sense of it all.

### Foolish?

It's tough for me to not feel like a fool, sometimes. After all, I could have avoided a lot of pain and uncertainty by leaving years ago. My wife certainly gave me ample reasons to bail out.

I mentioned this to my wife the other night and she said, "I don't see you as a fool, Rick. I see you as a courageous man who took a hell of a risk, and then had the guts to never give up."

Remembering her words has helped me through some bad moments.

### Walking through Hell

As for making sense of what's happening, regular readers of "Partner's Page" know that I try to take what happens to my wife and me and boil it down into some lesson or set of tools that *Many Voices'* readers can apply to their own relationships. (Writing these articles has been as therapeutic for me as for anyone.)

But what can I say about my wife and me, both working as hard as we could for ten years, only to still be defeated by her childhood sexual abuse?

I keep remembering something I wrote in my first Partners' Page article.

"Sooner or later, a moment of cold clarity comes to everyone who's in a relationship with a sexual abuse survivor, especially those with dissociative disorders. We take a step back from the relationship, take a long hard look at it, and ask ourselves, 'Why do I stay with this person?'"

"It's not a 90's thing to do, making value judgments about someone, weighing a relationship for profit and loss. Yet eventually all of us support people do it, and we each must find our reasons for staying with our partner."

On the old "St. Elsewhere" TV show, Dr. Westphall once said, "Never cross the path of a man headed for Hell." That comment has echoed in my memory hundreds of times during the past ten years, because that is what you do if you choose to love a multiple. You must be ready to walk through Hell with your partner as he or she explores their childhood sexual abuse and multiplicity and fights to recover from them.

If the relationship is not worth walking through Hell, then get out! Get out now! Getting out will hurt, but each day you delay will make it that much more painful.

Of course, if you are the parent or child or sibling of the survivor, your options for escape are limited. But you can still make decisions and set boundaries to limit your involvement in the drama and chaos of their recovery.

### Worth

Why did I stay? The short answer is, because I love her and because no decent man abandons someone he loves just because the going gets tough.

The longer answer lies in an analogy I've used many times. I enjoy occasionally building model kits. There is a type of model car kit called the three-in-one. With one kit you can build a model car three different ways—stock, custom, or racing. Or you can mix the parts to build a unique hot-rod.

My wife and her Dissociative Identity Disorder is like that model kit. I liked the "parts" I saw—her attitudes, values, and ideals. I didn't know exactly how she would finally come together, but I was sure I'd like the result. In this, I was right.

Was it worth it? Actually, only time can answer that. But, at this point, I'd say yes. The past ten years were sometimes hard and frustrating, but they were fascinating, too. Loving a multiple is like a graduate-level course in psychology. I've learned a lot from the experiences and reading and therapy and personal growth that our relationship forced me into. These are lessons I can take forward into the future. Like Army basic training, I'm not sorry I did it, and I learned a lot, but I never want to repeat the experience.

### Goodbye

So my wife and I have come to the end of our journey together. We leave our marriage with the serene knowledge that we both hung in there and did the best we could. Neither of us thinks that we could have done anything more, or better, or different.



So we plan to go the mediation route and leave the courts and lawyers out of it except for legal advice. She doesn't want to take me to the cleaners in this divorce, and I don't want to cut her off with nothing. She and I are very close on what we each want and what we're both willing to give, and neither of us wants to take any revenge. If all divorces were this amicable, it would put half the legal industry out of business.

And I have come to a parting of the ways with the readers of the "Partners' Page." My wife reviewed and edited each of my articles, and each was better for her input. She joins me in thanking you for reading my articles, and in wishing each of you good luck and happiness in your relationships.

*Dear Readers: I wasn't sure of the best way to let you know about Richard and his wife's coming divorce. We could have just started printing Partner's Pages by other people, and never said anything about it. But I opted for a cold dose of reality instead of "secrets." I hope this news doesn't depress you too much. I have greatly appreciated Richard's input, and that of his wife, and I know that many of the ideas and suggestions he has offered over the past years are remarkably sound. It is difficult for people with trauma histories to form healthy, lasting relationships. Many of us who read or contribute to Many Voices are divorced (including myself) and others have never married—sometimes but not always by choice. Life goes on, regardless.*

*But another large number of MV readers are in married or significantly-important intimate relationships with others. And some who don't have one currently are looking. We are definitely continuing the Partner's Page, and invite those of you in ongoing, constructive relationships (married or not) who have ideas to share about living with a trauma survivor—or questions—please write for us!*

*I welcome input from all kinds of committed, loving relationships, including siblings, parents and children.*

*And I join with all MV readers in wishing a brighter future for Richard and his wife. —Lynn W, Editor*

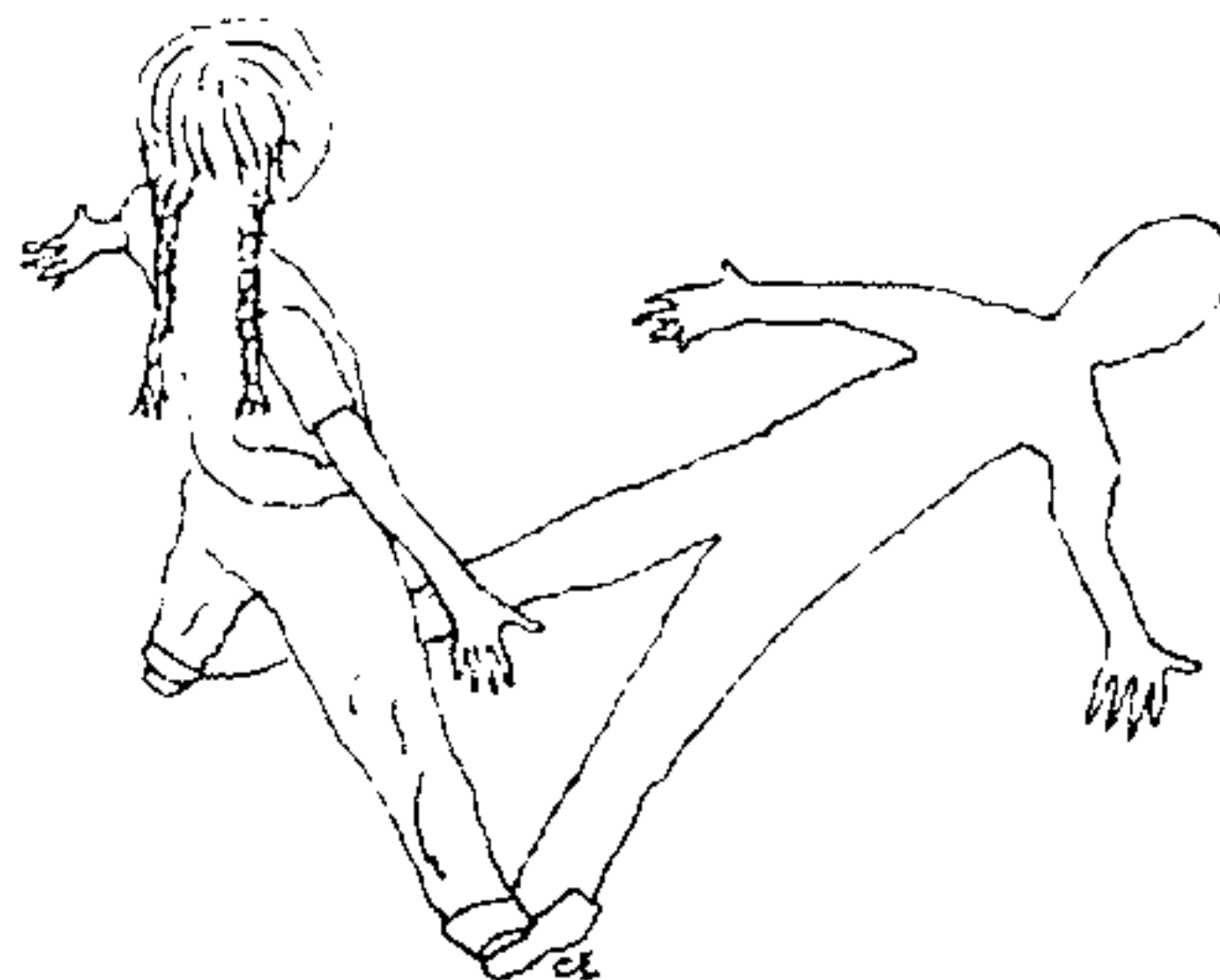
MV

## Journey Towards Me

Some days  
it seems  
I am just beginning  
to know me.  
The confusion clears  
for a brief moment  
I realize  
that French Vanilla  
is really  
my favorite ice cream  
Except  
next week  
it may be Strawberry.  
Some things  
are more definite.  
I love cats  
hate most dogs  
hope someday  
to share my home  
with a sheepdog.  
I am not so sure  
about anyone else.  
I am so busy  
thinking, feeling  
trying out  
new tasks  
listening to new music  
feeling sadness  
joy  
with equal intensity.  
Testing the wings  
of my soul  
taking them to new heights  
crashing with a loud thump  
on occasion  
picking myself  
applying  
Sesame Street bandages

unsure about  
a Methodist god  
or any other  
wondering  
if other faiths too  
have an equal path.  
I want to share  
be alone  
color a flower  
and maybe plant a few  
soak up sun  
warm rain  
the smell of  
fresh baked bread  
chocolate chip cookies.  
I want to fly  
with the hawk sitting  
on the passing fence post  
settle in quietly  
with a cup  
of lemon tea  
and watch the sun rise.  
I feel confused  
and suspect I confuse  
a lot of people  
treasuring most  
those few  
secure enough  
to support me  
in whatever path  
I choose to explore next  
walking with me  
or standing back  
as I continue  
this journey  
towards me.

By Hannah D.



# August 2001

By ????

(This very good article got separated from its envelope and cover letter. Because there is no name or address —not even initials— anywhere on the typed pages, I have no idea who sent it. But the writing is excellent so, whoever you are, thanks very much! And to all readers, writers and artists—please put your name somewhere on the actual work, or I may not know who to thank! — Lynn W., Editor)

**W**hen our Host discovered our personalities, she had high hopes of integration and moving on with our lives. Now, none of us knows how recovery will go. We keep the idea that life is a journey, not a destination, close to our heart. The Host was an efficient planner. But the Core came out two years after our diagnosis of MPD and changed everything. All expectations have been turned upside down. The Host learned computer programming, but the rest of us turn out to be Liberal Arts. We have only one person who worked, the Host. The Core is a novice at being alive. But she synthesizes our memories. The Core is the only one who can pull it all together, so she is seeing and learning things with our information, but no alter ever learned. The Host is numb and a lot of emotions went over her head. Her biggest shock since the Core has awakened is feeling the feelings. She completely misunderstood or could not understand, because she did not have the undercurrent of emotions that, for instance, movie makers assume you are getting. She thought life was like a list of instructions: you do this for that reason. But with no emotions, she did not have the "why" people do this for that reason. For her, life was performing, acting. You looked like that or said this, on cue. The Host and the Core tangle up now. We have habitual responses from the Host, and new responses from the Core, with emotions guiding her as much as information. They literally trip over each other. It's like if we pour a cup of coffee, the host is thinking "We need this. It makes us alert. Let's see, we pour two cups in this big cup, we put in Cremora, we drink." The Core says, "I feel like tea today, with this pretty cup. Splash!"

We never knew how we learned things until the Core woke up. When we were in college, the Host would have to reread a text chapter to

understand it. We reread chapters up to ten times. When we took the test, we had it so well-memorized, we got all A's. The weird part, however, is we understood nothing of the chapter, but we could write it exactly. We didn't know what this was or how this worked, but it worked. Unfortunately, it meant we had no originality, so we could not apply it in new situations.

The Core, able to see most of us, figured out how we moved from minute to minute in our day without understanding any of it. Some alters see with her now. If asked, or if the topic came up, all of the alters who watched, listened, or read came smoothly out and recited a part of the memory, one after the other, piece of the whole memory after piece of the whole memory, in the correct order, with no one having the whole movie. It's a shock to see more of the whole picture. It's scaring everyone, including the Core, because when we get scared the entire System falls apart for awhile. We have to take up new positions with the System to bring a working System back. Everything is brand new, and everyone is having to operate much differently than the alters were used to. We forget now. We forget if we showered, if we took our pills, if we ate breakfast or not. The System is less efficient. So we seem to have continuous non-understanding for non-continuous understanding! Sigh.

There are always three alters, minimum, perceiving the world, so we have a form of continuous memory. But no alter is able to make sense of it or connect it for her or his self. It is like watching a movie where you get up and leave the room and someone else takes over the part of movie from that point until the next alter's turn. We have a continuous memory, but individually we barely understand our memories. (This skill helped us when we were children, but it is frustrating as an adult.) A sense of perception can be

maintained by a little bit of awareness. Computer monitors, TV screens and movies take advantage of the way our brain perceives. For example, movies actually have individual photos coming one after the other so fast, it appears to be a moving, continuous image. The brain sees the moving image, instead of individual pictures, pixels, or lines of image. It is the way brains prefer to organize what we see. You can get the gist of any perception without actually experiencing the entire perception. It's true with speech and other forms of communication, hearing, touching, anything that our human body senses. We were able to catch the pertaining facts to behave correctly every day.

We have some co-consciousness. We see ourselves as apples in a bin touching each other, but still separate entities. We have a bit of cooperation going on. None of us trust each other yet, as a general operating rule. The most cooperation comes between five alters, who are the main engine of our mental life. There are three alters who are responsible for responding to motivations by moving the body. We have a couple of alters who are outside of our general area where alters can be seen and heard. When the two outsider alters motivate, talk or think, the rest of us lose control. One is someone who thinks fast and learns quickly. She is perhaps the smartest one, but she is very young. Our abusers never appreciated any sign of intelligence from us. She is our final protector. If talking and thinking couldn't make us safe, then she took over and walked us away. It's amazing how many situations can be handled by leaving, without another word! The other took on our feelings of being "bad." She is seven, and her sense of "badness" is a child's view of badness. She also punished us if we were bad. She cut or beat us with objects. She was the only one who had colors, but she shared colors with us. Our ability to deal with colors varied with the person being shared with.



Many of us were created for certain types of bad memories, some of them overlapping. Amnesia protected alters who perceived a threat. Another alter would take over. The new alter can be someone buried in our system, or one of the three that is perceiving, all unaware, that there are at least two others watching. This all changed when the Core woke up. She can communicate her awareness and feelings to the rest of us. She thinks, notices, feels emotions that are more complete than what each alter has. She has the power of synthesis, which frightens and amazes the rest of us. We did not know synthesis. She sees the whole movie.

She realized the problem with our way of perceiving is we end up being reactive, rather than creative or decisive. We don't act. Instead, we keep the memory flow without thinking, but if we needed to remember our day, we could all bring up our parts of the memory in a flowing whole, and then think about it (mostly the Host did the thinking). If

there was no need, none of us could think about what our day was. We satisfy every person we meet by living up to their expectations, rather than our own expectations. It's what saved us from our abusers killing us. Too much initiative of our own would have meant our death. Too much thinking would kill us. We needed to suppress understanding and emotions so we would not run or go insane. Now, it's weird. Our Core is floundering with our lack of motivation. She has needs, feelings, likes and dislikes, but she has to learn by herself how to express them both in her brain and outside of the body. We never had this awareness, but she is afraid to take control. We know motivation to protect ourselves, to appear normal in a classroom or work, or driving a car. Until she woke, we didn't know we weren't being alive, in effect. When she is frightened, which happens often, our System gets strange, all perceptions begin to wheel about our brains like a fast moving night sky, while the event plays out in slow

motion. We can get scared over everyday events, as well as new and strange events, because everything is new and scary to the Core and she makes it all new and scary for us even when we know what we used to do. The rest of us become frightened, which scares the Core again, and it's like we are in a burning building, everyone trying to find the exit, but unable to see the exit sign in the confusion.

**Recovery endpoints:** wherever the journey goes. We're not calm about this; who we end up being will control the journey, but who will we be?

**Cooperation:** more of a co-opt situation, like what the Clinton Democrats did to the Republicans.

**Preferences:** Whatever growth/integration the Core induces. She doesn't exactly plan, it just happens. She is still learning to get up on her feet. We will have a better idea when she starts walking. Scary!

MV

## There is Hope

By CE

Early in the year 2000 I got a new therapist. She is a perfect match for me and together, we are moving toward health at warp speed. However, sometimes I become mildly frustrated that she has such a tenuous grasp of what I've been through to get to this point.

Recently, she guessed out loud that I had been hospitalized at least a dozen times. When I contradicted her and said the number was more like forty, she looked at me in disbelief. Since it has always triggered me when I feel I'm not believed, I silently vowed to study all my old calendars and present her with the correct information.

Last night I did just that, and I was the one who didn't believe...

My first psychotherapy session was in September of 1990, and by January, I was on psychotropic medications. I cut myself for the first time in February of 1991, but kept the practice a secret until November when I was introduced to psychiatric hospitalization. A month later, I quit my nursing career and was back in the hospital for my first round of ECTs.

Between November of 1991 and today, as astounding as they are, here are my vital statistics:

**15 psychiatrists and 6 psychotherapists**  
**62 psychiatric admissions to in-state and out-of-state hospitals**

**18 emergency room visits for cutting and mostly, for serious suicide attempts requiring stays in ICU**

**52 outpatient days...and a total of 507 inpatient days!**

I wouldn't have believed it myself, unless I knew how compulsive I am about keeping my calendars accurate and saving them religiously.

The numbers swam on the page before my eyes as I tried to absorb the reality that I had spent over a year and a half of the last decade behind locked doors. We only have so many mornings to awaken in this life, and it was gruesome to realize how many of mine have been eaten up by having to awaken as a psychiatric patient in a gown that revealed my backside.

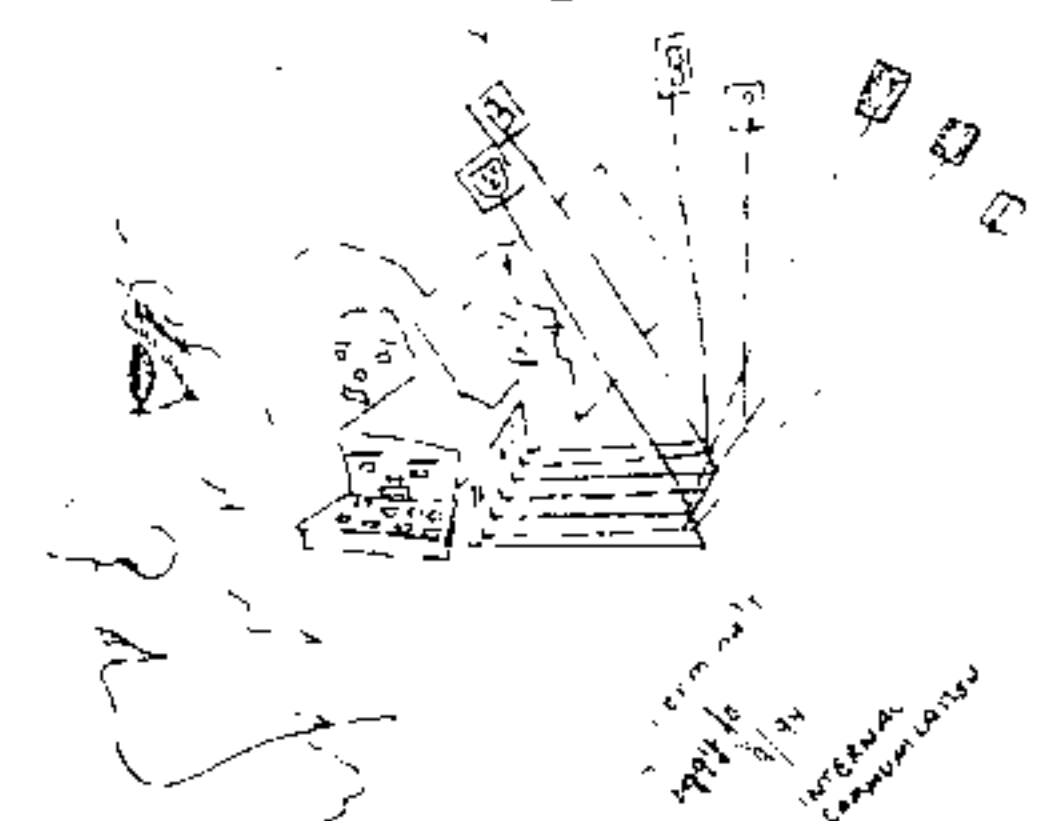
I cried when I saw the totals...tears for all the days that were stolen from my life; tears for the pain and embarrassment of readmissions; especially, tears for the knowledge of how close I came to prematurely ending my life on earth. But a

call to my therapist helped put things in perspective. I would not be where I am today without the struggle. Those days were not lost; they were gained. They were life sustaining. They taught me to forgive, to mend, to grow. They were confining and freeing at the same time.

It goes without saying that everyone does not require the same amount of treatment that I did. I should hope not! I recount all this to you with only one goal in mind. I long to encourage anyone who needs such encouragement along the way to healing from trauma to know that there is *hope*.

Dear God, this is a rocky road we travel, but there is a reachable destination and however one has to arrive there, it's worth the effort.

MV



## Becky's Page

Becky C. has been a subscriber to MV for many years. She is a remarkable person who deals with what some would call "overwhelming difficulties" in a constructive way. I'm giving some space here so you can appreciate her creative, courageous look at life. If any of you would like to respond to her work, send me a note or email and I'll forward it on. I'm sure she'd be glad to hear from you! - Lynn W.

I am going to attempt to tell my story and how I arrived at this point in life.

I have primary progressive MS, which means I cannot walk, and every four to six weeks I get worse, and never have gotten better. I live alone with my faithful service animal. I have good days and bad days, but mostly physically bad days.

I am also an incest survivor who has D.I.D. I chose to keep my parts around and they keep me company. We have learned to communicate and share this body.

Some of them are less apparent now; they are there, but not too active. I guess with me being physically ill, their jobs are not as necessary. But we still have group meetings like we did before, to make major decisions.

One decision which was not something the kids got a vote on, was a truly adult thing which we had never tried before. We decided to date a person and have that experience before our body would not be able to have this experience again.

Anyhow, we looked through ads on the Internet, for other small town folks (women). We corresponded for a bit with one. Then we decided to take the plunge and go out on a date!

Our former therapist drove us to the date. The rule internally was, this is adult time, and even though we had Angel, who was a teenager, who had slept with many people in her time out, we told her and others these were adult decisions and adult time, so they should go take care of the kids and let us try and see what dating was about.

Well, I survived the first date! We met at a restaurant and found we had lots in common—not the incest—just things we enjoyed.

I have a problem with folks who are D.I.D. letting others know about their parts too soon! It is my problem, I guess. You see, dating is a process, and it is a process of getting to know the other person. So why would I tell everything about me? I needed to

protect the kids, and I am still protecting them. I think this was an adult decision, and an adult's need to make the choices and also interact with the other person.

Now, this is my opinion, but I feel safer that way; so this is how we handled it.

Anyhow, going out meant facing things like sex, and dressing up, hearing compliments about me, allowing the other person to pay my way, to help me, to just think about and do something other than pure survival.

It is me at my best, and so many choices I had to make before even the first date! So there are two adults in my system, and honey, we had to work hard to get ready to think if...then...what should we do?

Also, I have the MS to deal with. I had carried around the incest so many years, but now I also carry around the MS and wondered if me in a wheelchair could be a partner and date to anyone. It is hard to go beyond our stereotypes and feel pretty, in a wheelchair, with a service dog to boot!

Well, the first date went off alright, and all my parts behaved themselves. I found out I truly was OK to date. This person did not rape me, and she listed to me talk, and was interested in me! I felt safe, and happy, and well—compliments were expected, so I dealt with them.

After our first date, my friend found out she has inoperable cancer and is dying. So we faced a major decision early on in our time together. Did I continue dating her and dealing with death at such a close-up place, or go on about my way and deal with my own self.

Well, I chose to stay with her. Now we date as time and energy permits for both of us. You see, this again is my opinion: we all begin dying as soon as we are born. Some die from old age. Some die from getting run over by a truck. Some die in the hands of abusers. Some like me survived their

abusers only to be dying from the symptoms of MS. So cancer—well, it was no different. Perhaps quicker, but mostly, just another way to die. So we two, she and I, accept that her body and my body are both breaking down...and so we just live the time we have left to the fullest.

Oh now...do we argue? Well, yes! Do we enjoy sex, although she is in pain and my body does not feel anything from the shoulders down? Well, yes! Do we reach out for each other to hug and hold and take the pain and fear away? Well, of course!

We have time. We do not know how long, but time. So we are devoted to use it and try to enjoy ourselves. My abuser did not want me to have this time. And other victims of his, and others, did not have this time. So I figure, even with the disabilities my lover and I live with, we cheated my abuser. We are here, and we are having fun. Something they could not have.

MV



By Becky C.



## My Hatemail to God...

God, I thought you put humankind on this earth as a cruel joke! I thought you created this horrible place that looked beautiful and set traps and pits in it to torture us. I thought you laughed devilishly when we cried in pain. It seemed just as I would crawl back to my feet from one blow you delivered another, sending me tumbling into another pit of despair. And after awhile, I got real mad and came out fighting you.

"How dare you create me with the need to be loved, then place me as a vulnerable child into this hell-hole of a world!"

When my counselor attempted to explain You to me and promised she would never leave me (like you also said in the Bible) I vigorously put her to the test to see if she meant it. I can't believe she didn't weary of me. I put on my counselor, Charlotte, all of my fight against You. She was safe. She refused to hit back. She just let me kick and scream, and still drew me pictures of a loving God.

Charlotte was the very first person I have dared to trust. I dared to love her, and every time she "seemed" not to love me I pushed her away violently. Really, Charlotte was You with skin on. Just as I couldn't understand Charlotte's efforts to help me, I have not understood Yours. I was kicking at You. I was shaking my fist at You. I was firing You. I was so selfishly claiming my

need to be loved. I was a bratty child who went to a psych ward to punish You because You wouldn't ease the unbearable pain. I curled up on the couch in Charlotte's office in a stubborn, dissociative numbness, willing to kill myself rather than accept a God who refused to give me what I "thought" I needed. I saw you as the enemy.

I watched Charlotte struggle through very difficult times, on top of the hard times she had before I knew her. Her body was fatigued and weary from illness, and then the surgeon's knife twisted into her. Still she trusted You. Cancer brought her to death's door, yet still she trusted You. She trusted You when pain wracked her body and she vomited away her strength. Her intestines wrenched and she became gaunt, weak and pale and gray. Yet, she still trusted You. And dozens of eyes watched from my soul. We watched waiting for her to raise a weak fist to Your face, God, and curse You. She never did; she still rested in Your arms that I couldn't see holding her.

And dozens of eyes watched her and waited and screamed at You for hurting the only one who never gave up on us. I wanted to scramble to her side and help her, but she wouldn't allow it. She had all she needed—You. But I didn't see You helping her.

It was through this whirlwind that I finally understood faith. Faith is special glasses You give us to see You at work. The enemy in this world really blinds our eyes. With these faith-glasses I finally saw your gentle hands cradle my precious Charlotte. I saw you mop her feverish brow. I saw You wrap her warm when she trembled. I saw You rock and caress her aching body and soul. Charlotte could have been relieved if You decided to take her home; instead, she knew she must fight. She struggled to survive, and You helped her. She once said, "It is much harder to continue living than to die."

So now God, I lay down my club of hateful revenge aimed at the God I did not understand. I too will continue to struggle and will not give up. Because You are "with" me, not "against" me. And I also must release the right to anger. I must forgive and bring my tormentors to You, the God they also cannot see, like Charlotte's done for me.

Charlotte, my counselor of 5-1/2 years, was finally relieved of her struggle and joined God in an eternal rest on May 22, 2001. She modeled life to me even in her death. I miss her miserably.

*By Jo for the Cocoon*

**MV**

## More From Becky C. : The Fifth Season

Last year I wrote an essay about how excited I always got at this season of the year. I call it the fifth season. It is school starting. Well, I thought and thought about it last night, and could only get to this one thing...how I felt about it as a teacher (not like last year, about how I felt with squeaky new shoes and new paper).

You see, teachers get all excited too. We go to the stores and buy school supplies to give away, and get new shoes and feel the hope the first few days bring. We work and work on schedules to make sure the children know where they are to go and when, and the first day is stress free. Oh, there is such excitement in the air.

Last night I was thinking of the difficult students I taught. They were a disadvantaged sort of kid mostly. New shoes came to some of them for the first day, but some others who were teased just came to school with hair slicked back and the cleanest clothes they could find...which were often soiled and wrinkled and smelly, but they were into the hope of the season too.

I think it is an almost universal feeling, the first day of school. Even those ones who

were so poor and had so little were hoping. Oh, how they were hoping "this year may be different." They seemed to feel the day like I did...or maybe I just thought they did.

The problems they had were gone just for the day, and it was all about celebration, seeing their new teachers, seeing their new schedules, seeing the new bulletin boards and getting books to carry. Many of my students could not read anything I gave them, but oh how they wanted those books to cover and carry around!

I thought of the honeymoon of the first day or so with kids. They were angels, and all their emotional baggage sort of stayed outside of the door just for that day. We would smile and laugh and get acquainted. But I would be tough as nails and anyone who knows me knows I have a heart of mush...ha ha! You see, they too, even with all of their defeats, thought "maybe this year will be different...maybe this year I can make real friends...maybe this year I will be good all year."

They too hoped, even when they had no new shoes or paper or pens.

I know it. I felt it and I miss it.

I believe we all remember those times before we had our difficulties...those times before we caused hurt somewhere, before we messed up...when we thought "ok, this time we can do it right."

Oh, they were 7th, 8th and 9th graders, and for them life was so full of internal physical changes and external pain, but they hoped, oh so fully and with such joy, that first day before the page was soiled and written on.

I think I tried to keep the page of their lives unsoiled as long as I could in that quiet little room, but things happen. I know I felt it last night, how life had hope and joy, and how this season feels so new, crisp and joyful to me.

So when you see those kids in the school busses in the next few weeks, think of how you felt when it was all new and clean, and you were free to be who you wished to be. As far as I am concerned, we still are free to be whoever we wish to be, daily, but I am nearly always reminded of the joy and hope those first days of school sent to me and to those kids who had little but hope.

I wish for you, hope and joy in this fifth season...the beginning of school.

**MV**

# The Fluid Dance

By Gwen

This is a rare thing for me: to speak up for myself. To allow myself to draw the line in the sand; to define what I will and won't accept. There is nothing overt that I am really responding to, but rather a pervasive sense, maybe to some response to some words here and there, that—when it pertains to multiplicity—seeing is the most common path to believing. This doesn't hold water for me; or, I wish it weren't so. I wish that my words were held as importantly as I mean them to be. Words mean so very much with a simple awareness of truth—multiplicity. All of us, multiple or not, have parts of ourselves we only share with a select few. All of us have tears that we hold close, and secret dreams that we dare not whisper aloud. All of us have our masks of protection that we wear. Yet, somehow, it is safe for us to assume we know, pretty much, what the other person is like. Not necessarily so with multiples. Not by a long shot. And not with me. To know part of me is not at all to get a continual sense of who I am. No wonder people can be continually startled by my actions. "I didn't think you were like that. I didn't think you were that assertive. I didn't think you felt that way." Maybe I didn't. Maybe I wasn't. At another time.

I am left with the sensation that for my friends who don't know all of my selves, expecting them to understand without experiencing might be like holding back water with a wall of damp sand. It doesn't hold. Inevitably, their doubt, their disbelief, their discomfort, their questions—maybe some of these or all of these—burst forth in complete misunderstanding, wet with assumptions and an almost frozen hold on only what they've seen. My partner can tell them he lives with all of me's, but they don't get it. Or won't get it. It's difficult for me to know which, since multiplicity is second nature to me. I don't un-get it most of the time. "Where is your secret self; that other self that you hide away, beyond all this? What do you really think, that you don't say? How can you be so consistent in your thinking—is that all there is?" I misunderstand them; they misunderstand me. However, caught in the isolation that is

multiplicity (for me) this brings me close to tears. I feel burnt, and exhausted, as though my words are meaningless. My partner and I were talking this morning about people outside our relationship, who don't really know me as "multiple"—even though they may be aware that I am multiple—and at first it was such a monumental thing for me to have them know, that I perhaps gave the word "multiplicity" and all that meant to me, more emphasis than necessary. I'm slowly beginning to realize that the concept of "multiple" may mean different things to different people, or barely anything at all—most especially, when hidden well. The only traces of my multiplicity (when I am hiding) are blank moments in which I forget what I am saying, and a smooth veneer that feels like it will never crack (something some may interpret as stone-walling, and in a sense, they'd be right). Inevitably I get the sense that my friends may be thinking "I don't see anything out of the ordinary. You seem fine to me. What the heck were you talking about?"

These people cannot begin to understand what it is like to both live with and live as, a multiple. Because I have the ability to buffer very very well, and behave as though everything is fine, doesn't—does *not*—mean that it is. I want to say, My friends: don't assume you know how I am at any moment unless I specifically tell you; even then don't assume that you know in entirety. I've learned how to hide unimaginably well. Don't assume you necessarily know "who" I am—at least in the sense that we usually speak of knowing, or that I am the same "me" when I am not with you. Repeat: I've learned how to hide unimaginably well. Also don't assume that you can begin to understand what my partner goes through or what I go through in this difficult process of mending. Please don't assume that you know what it is like for him to be in a relationship with the many me's of me: you don't. You *don't*. My partner said this morning that unless people experience living with a multiple, and experience that

for a good amount of time, they can have no real concept of what is going on.

I used to think that because someone was aware of multiplicity, that the pieces would fall together (excuse the pun) and they would understand. But my experience is that, because I am very cautious about who knows all the me's of me—in a sense it is very difficult for people to understand. What they know and what they experience are two different things. Repeat: "You seem fine to me." I wish they would ask me questions. I wish they would talk to me about the "apparent" discrepancy, instead of assuming that "what you see is what you get."

My partner lives with many of me; and sometimes I long for his efforts and dedication to be appreciated, to be honored and accepted. Without my having to prove anything. If you think you know what's going on in my life, you don't. If you think you know how I feel: you don't. Ask. I won't be angry. I welcome the chance to be open, and the chance to be heard. Multiples reveal themselves in layers (at least I do), and not all at once. I guess we all do, but perhaps I do it more concretely, and more slowly, and more separately.

The other thing that gnaws at me is the time it takes me to trust someone. Often it takes me a couple of years simply to be open and forthcoming. By then, they've given up or assumed that I am hostile. I'm not hostile; I'm observing. I seem to need to soak up a lot of information from my environment before I put my toes in the water. It's like gauging river current. You don't want to step in too soon; you don't want to get pulled under. And once you're in, you want to make damn sure you can navigate the waters. Preparedness. I need a lot of it. Don't give up; and please don't assume, either. And it's be great if you could give my partner a pat on the back for the level of commitment and respect that it takes to make a relationship like this work: he's a pretty incredible guy.

MV





# Mind/Body Questions

By Kathryn

(Responses to Kathryn's questions will appear in our February 2002 issue on physical healing.—LW)

I would like to know what kinds of exercise work for people who dissociate, how and where they do them, how dissociation affects and is affected by exercise, how to "fit in" to situations with other people (classes, groups etc.) versus exercising alone, how to keep structure and motivation to exercise going when emotions get difficult.

People who dissociate are survivors of childhood trauma. We "split" to get out of our bodies, to escape overwhelming pain and stress. Some apparently never do get "back in" to their bodies. They continue to suffer pain from various injuries and lack of conditioning. Those of us who do "get back in" may find the process painful.

Sports psychology seems to exclude any discussion of the "dissociative athlete," as if this is an oxymoron, or of the team as "support group" for the individual athlete who struggles with dissociation, or of what coaches can do to help.

An informal survey of my SIA (Survivors of Incest) group indicated that everyone present had been "last-picked" in grade school for sports teams. Are there any dissociative people who had childhood histories of success at dance or athletics or any in-body-coordinated activity? I doubt it, if dissociation began in childhood. But perhaps there could be ways a dissociative person could focus and be successful and in-body in particular ways, or settings that felt safe despite being "out of body" elsewhere.

I know, looking back on it, that despite humiliating experiences on the playground in team or competitive sports, or with people watching and critical of me, I did enjoy success in situations where the stress was removed—like when I could not be "out" of the game no matter how many mistakes I made, or when I was in nature, or alone, or "just for fun." Understanding what creates stress and what removes it can make exercise possible and enjoyable again.

Also exercise can be a way of discharging angry or aggressive feelings that are not acceptable in other settings. Playing football with boys (when one is a girl) or drilling a tennis ball directly at (abusive) mother, or practicing martial arts or self-defense, for examples. Sometimes exercise allows symbolic destruction—for example, chopping wood or attacking a compost heap with a mattock.

I'd also like to know how to learn physical skills when one "part" or alter may learn them, but not others. How to get them "in body" and retain them? How to deal with the stress added by teachers or classmates who do not understand dissociation—why you "forget" or seem to be "not paying attention" or lose "concentration" or "focus"—or you talk like a six-year-old?

If dissociation destroys the unity of mind, body and spirit, then healing dissociation must involve fully inhabiting the body—to be fully alive and feeling—to develop oneself to full strength, power, intensity and directness.

What might "unity of body, mind and spirit" be? How do dissociative people imagine themselves healed or whole—unified in mind-body-spirit? And how do we work toward that? And how do we experience the reality that we have it, right now? Despite being people of "many parts" we are in fact, in one body. This being in one-body, experiencing our connections to our bodies, is how we integrate, discover ourselves as "one" person—though aspects of the process are painful.

All of us, multiple and "singleton" live in a culture which discourages identification with our bodies, encourages us to see ourselves as minds and our bodies as things/objects/alien from ourselves. Bodies to be punished, controlled, disciplined, objectified, looked at, criticized, judged.

But not our bodies as means of life-expression for our selves, not

learning how our feelings, our bodies' sensations, yield information to trust about our world.

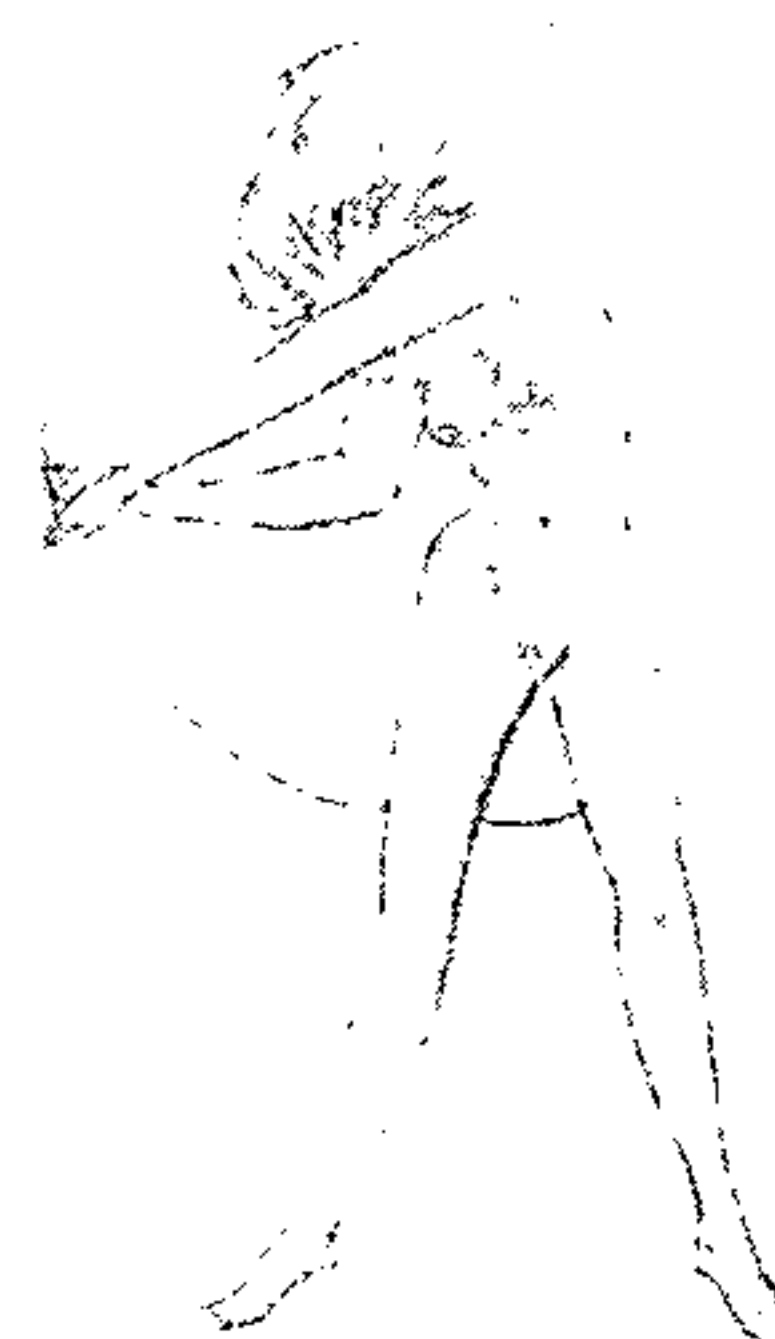
In seeking "unity of body, mind and spirit" we go against thousands of years of western cultural tradition of separating mind and body, alienating mind from body, and declaring mind superior over body. The spirit is also separate from body (e.g., the body dies, the spirit has "eternal life".) Perhaps in doing our own healing, we are healing the culture, suggesting new possibilities to it. (Is there sex in heaven? Is the life of the body recycled into life, to continue life-energy, on Planet Earth?)

I do not know the answers to all of these questions, or what answers other readers of *Many Voices* might have, but I am interested in hearing some.

If it is true, as my intuition and experience, and the experiences of others in my SIA group suggest, that dissociation is easily observable on grade school playing fields, teachers and coaches could easily identify kids who are (likely) being abused—perhaps intervene to protect them, empower them, and save a lot of hell.

Exercise and athletics, perhaps especially dance, martial arts, yoga, those forms grounded in a philosophy of inner-focused attentiveness, meditation—offer opportunities for healing, for re-claiming the unity of body-mind-spirit and self.

MV



## Integration: If it's part of the healing process, why does it feel like hell?

By Deborah

I have multiplicity and have been actively working on the multiplicity for the past four years. I have been in therapy for eight years. I am the host.

I am in this awful stage of "integration" and haven't found much written about it. It's difficult to find someone willing to talk about it. I am sending the letter below in the hopes that I might hear from others. I have always been very highly functioning, holding a full-time job and being the primary financial provider for my family for the past 20 years. Only in this stage of co-consciousness and integration have I felt that I "lost" myself. I have been on disability for the past 9 months (which is humiliating) and although I am back to work a few hours a week it has been incredibly difficult. I used to function well at work.

I am experiencing more helplessness, hopelessness, and loss of self confidence than I have ever experienced before. Logically, I can attribute this to the increasing integration within myself. I am flooded with feelings and emotions, both past and present. I have lost those wonderful isolating, compartmentalizing walls between my parts. I can remember the difficulty that multiplicity caused in my life very clearly. But at least it was familiar! And at least then, I had an escape from feelings that were overwhelming and an ability to enjoy at least a few things in my life. Most of the time now, I would give anything to return to that old way of life.

When I am more present and objective, I can understand that this agony is due to the co-consciousness of my parts. And sometimes I can grasp that this is part of the process of healing. But most of the time, I feel that this is so horrible and agonizing that it must be the end stage of a terrible terminal illness, and that it will kill me. Only this illness doesn't seem to have an end.

In desperation, I wrote the following letter to my acupuncturist, the latest addition to my healing team. It helped him and my psychopharmacologist to understand what is going on inside. I would appreciate hearing from anyone who has gone through integration and come out the other side. I need any piece of hope to hold onto.

Dear Dr. R.

When I last saw you, you asked many questions that I didn't know how to answer. It's very difficult to describe what's happening internally. You know about the outside pressures in my life: I'm still on

disability, working part-time and dealing with six years of ongoing custody litigation. It's the inner stressors, though, that I think are causing me the greatest difficulty coping on a daily basis.

I have about 20 developed alters, eight of which are equally strong and prominent in my system. In the past 6-12 months, there has been a gradual integration of just about all these parts to the point where I no longer "lose time" or experience amnesia when one alter is more prominent. I now see the world through all of their eyes. Instead of solid walls separating the parts (complete dissociation) there are glass walls or no walls. I can now "see" what's happening all the time, like watching a movie, or I actually experience it in real time—being really present. The difficulty is that it is jarring to see the world through many different eyes.

Instead of losing time (like watching a movie with chunks cut out of it) I now experience a tremendous sense of disconnectedness or unrealness with the world (with the exception of my daughter, who is very grounding to me.) It's a strange and unsettling transition to go from a disjointed world where there are no confusing emotions (lost time was familiar and seemed a small price to pay) to a disconnected world where incoming information is processed by many parts in different ways. As I struggle to integrate all these feelings, emotions, and pieces of data and make sense of them, I experience flooding, overwhelming panic and "paralysis."

The paralysis I experience from two perspectives. For a long time as I child I used to truly think that I was paralyzed. Now I realize that physically my body is probably OK, but I can't seem to send the signals from my brain to the body to make it move. This might be because the incoming stimuli is so overwhelming and confusing to me that I become "paralyzed." But I think a more likely explanation is that present day crises trigger a reexperiencing of actual paralysis when I was repeatedly drugged with quinine as a child.

I understand that it is "normal" to experience oneself as having different "selves", i.e., a gentle self, a child-like self, a parental self, a self-assured self, etc. But when one develops in an integrated manner, one learns to assimilate these different selves and understand them to be "the whole me." My norm was to experience the world in very rigid, isolated, walled off parts where my selves did not communicate to each other about their

experiences. Because of early trauma I had parts that came out to handle very specific jobs, feelings or situations to avoid being overwhelmed. Now that the "walls" are coming down, I get flooded by the rush of incoming, confusing, mixed pieces of information. I'm trying to learn to develop more "normal" coping mechanisms.

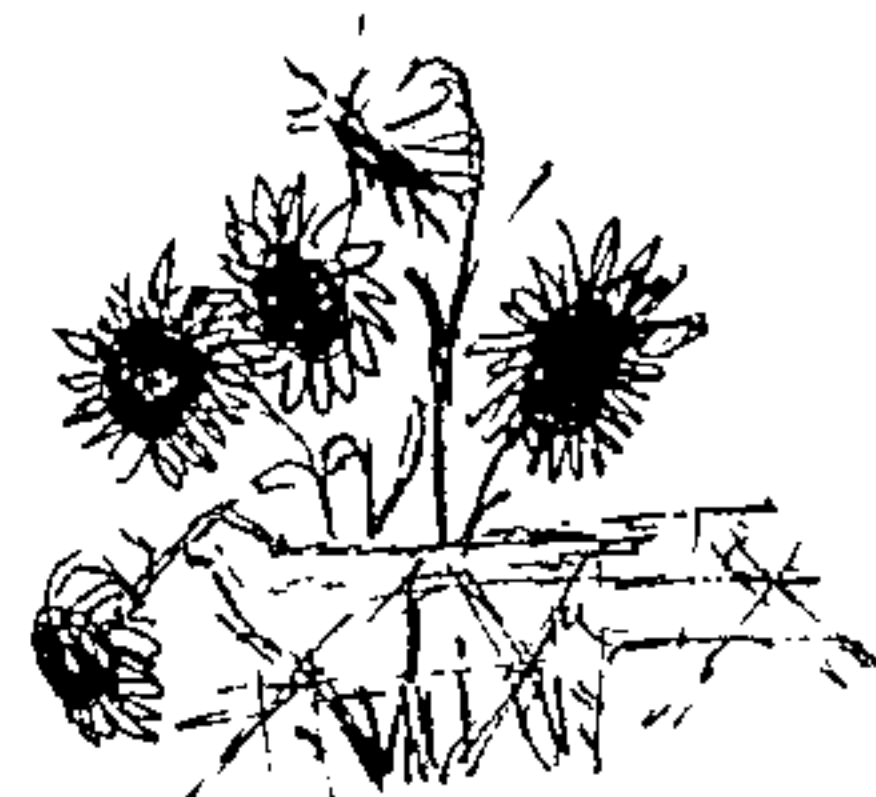
I believe that it is this inner turmoil from the past that is my greatest block, although it is constantly being triggered by my present day stress and the threat of losing my daughter. I've learned that early trauma and resulting dissociation can cause biologic/chemical changes such as those that Dr. H. has documented. And that these changes make processing of environmental stimuli difficult. The Depakote has helped in the past with the confusion and flooding and the switching from one alter to another. The benzodiazapines have been invaluable to help with the panic. All other tricyclics and SSRI antidepressants have had no effect with the depression.

What I hope for is to be able to cope more normally and not constantly be flooded to the point where I cannot function and all I can think of is suicide. Therapy has been invaluable to understand the early memories and to learn that it can be safe in relationships with other people. But so many early memories and physiologic responses of panic and paralysis are locked inside my body—even when I know this, I cannot seem to control them, they are so powerful.

Ideally I would like to cope without medication. This may be asking too much. But I desperately want another child and if I could cope without medications for a few months prior to pregnancy I know I would be OK. The only time in my life that biologically I feel grounded was during my last two pregnancies and when I'm with my daughter. Wanting a child at this point in my life may seem strange. But it is the only thing in my life that has given me happiness, and the only thing I really want.

I hope this helps you to help me.

MV





## Letters

### DID - A Gift or Curse

My name is David. I am D.I.D. I was diagnosed 8 years ago when it was called M.P.D.

I have been in therapy for this "gift" as it is called so frequently, which brings me to the topic at hand.

This "gift" allowed me to survive the horrors of child abuse that no child should have to go through but I went through it with a little help from some fragmented parts who all have names and a lot of plain dissociation.

I survived. Yes. I am now in my 30s, and wonder what I survived for.

I am separated after an eight year marriage and a ten-year-altogether relationship, due to my "gift" and its rebellious times.

I have been arrested twice for D.I.D.-related incidents and am currently on probation. I was lucky. It cost me \$25,000 but I didn't go to prison.

I went to a specialized D.I.D. inpatient program at my own expense, and learnt

more about my condition than years of therapy could have done.

I have tried to commit suicide three times due to the pain that is being brought up, and worse of all I am alone, isolated from any other D.I.D.s, due to my locale. I take Serequel, Librium, and Paxil daily to keep the horrors at bay, which costs me \$400 a month.

My therapist, thankfully, is covered under health-care, so no cost there. I see her two or three times a week now. She is a wonderful therapist.

But I have spoken to several D.I.D.'s about this "gift" and asked the inevitable question: would you have wanted to survive, if this was the outcome or the passage to wellness? The response I got was mixed. Yes, we have good days, and we are, for lack of a better word, "normal," but the bad days outweighed the good by far.

I am a talented male with above-average intelligence, but for the first time since I was sixteen, I can't work due to a disability. I'm plain dangerous and unpredictable to

myself and others. This has to be the most debilitating thing of all. Maybe I'm worse than others. Maybe I'm better. I don't know. But I'm told the average recovery time for a D.I.D. is three to five years...well, I've beaten that and was still told at the hospital that I was only cracking the tip of the iceberg. I'm tired, I'm fortunately co-conscious, but with PTSD and D.I.D., I'm extremely high strung.

We have been doing E.M.D.R. work for some time now. I find it wonderful sometimes, and repulsive the next, leaving a lot of feelings in the air. I'm trying to cut the umbilical cord with my perpetrators, and that is hurting me more than anything. So—gift or curse? Which is it? Some days a gift, others a curse. I am surviving the same way I did as a child—one worried, fearful day after another, wondering what the next hour will bring me.

Thank you for letting me vent.

Sincerely, David.

(MV will forward letters to David.)

**MV**

## Circle of Light

In the strobe light we peer down at  
ourselves.

We are here and gone, here and  
gone,  
in a never-ending succession of  
flashes.

Across the room, a soft shining,  
a golden glow  
moving toward us slowly and  
graciously,  
warmly intent upon us.

Completely untouched by the  
frenetic strobe,

it comes to rest around us,  
a circle of blessing.

It does not invade, but enfolds us.

We close our eyes

and the circle of light becomes two  
arms

wrapped tightly around us.

Holding all our parts,  
they bind us together,  
and we are here.

The strobe continues to flash  
but we don't see by that light  
anymore.

*By jannie (with FMB)*

**MV**

## Books

### Four and Twenty Blackbirds: Personae Theory and the Understanding of Our Multiple Selves.

By Peter A. Baldwin © 1997 Published by Bramble Books, 4001 S. Decatur Blvd., Suite 37-406, Las Vegas, NV 89103. 265 pages. \$16.95. Paperback.

"We are everyone of us more than meets the eye." This statement by Peter Baldwin, therapist, Unitarian minister, and professor of psychology, sets the tone for his multi-dimensional book about—our multiple selves. Not just the multiple selves of people who chronically dissociate, but the multiple selves of us all. A good portion of this book is devoted to role playing and self-discovery, the way individuals learn that they can choose how to present themselves in different ways for different purposes...including just plain fun. Although he recognizes that some "multiple selves" may be symptoms of serious personal disturbance, he claims clinical literature is too narrow in interpreting "normal" and "natural" human behavior. He names personae (including his own) and notes that within the same individual, some personae may be neurotic or seriously disturbed, while others are expressions of the true self at play in the world.

The book itself uses a variety of formats and styles of writing, which Baldwin identifies as his own personae expressing themselves. This book is an interesting exploration of the variation within each human being, and is, perhaps, a call to all

of us to be more adventurous and accepting in our perceptions of reality. I found myself arguing with some angles of Baldwin's approach and in total agreement with others—in other words, this book encourages thinking. So if you sometimes wonder about the difference between natural role playing and disabling dissociative splitting, this is a good book to study. And if you think you're really pretty healthy, despite your "parts"—here's a professional who seems to agree!

### Soul in Mortal Chrysalis Art, Poetry and Prose for the Theological Millenium

By Pegge Patten, Mark Singer, and Leon Lombard. © 2001. Published by Singer Communications, Flint MI 48532. 87 pages \$12.95. Large-format paperback. Available on order at Amazon.com and major bookstores.

A trio of creative people produced this inspirational book. Pegge Patten, the artist, is a reader of *Many Voices*. Her husband Mark, a college speech teacher, wrote the poetry, and Leon Lombard, a psychology professor, interpreted the poems and art as they appear together. Firm, clear graphics reflect the philosophical and spiritual themes of the verse. Prose reinterprets those themes with a soothing spiritually-oriented message. Subjects include True Love, God's Destiny for Us, True Hope and Inner Peace. The creative team has put sincere feeling into this collaboration, with good results.

**MV**

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

ALSO: if you have "recovered," or know someone who has, please contact me. I want to hear your story!

See us on the web at [www.manyvoicespress.com](http://www.manyvoicespress.com) & Tell us what you'd like to see on it!

## COMING SOON!

### October 2001

Supporting Yourself: financially and emotionally. Tell us about your struggles and how you work to resolve them. ART: Winning the battle of living well. DEADLINE: August 1, 2001.

### December 2001

Self-Esteem. Encouraging good feelings and a sense of personal control. What helps? ART: A joyful holiday. DEADLINE: October 1, 2001.



## Share with us!

Prose, poetry, and art are accepted on upcoming issue themes, (and even on NON-themes, if it's really great.) DO send humor, cartoons, good ideas, and whatever is useful to you. Please limit prose to about 4 typed double-spaced pages. Line drawings (black on white) are best. We can't possibly print everything. Some pieces will be condensed, but we'll print as much as we can. Please enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope for return of your originals and a note giving us permission to publish and/or edit or excerpt your work.

Subscriptions for a year (six issues) of *MANY VOICES*: \$36 in the U.S., \$42US in Canada, \$48US elsewhere. Back issues always available, each issue 1/6 yearly price. Enclose the form below (or a copy) with your check, and mail to *MANY VOICES*, P.O. Box 2639, Cincinnati, OH 45201-2639. Phone: (513) 751-8020.

# MANY VOICES

**NEW!**  
We now accept  
**Visa & Mastercard!**



Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
City/State/ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

☐ I have a Dissociative Disorder ☐ Professional/therapist ☐ Relative/Friend

Subscription type: ☐ New ☐ Renewal ☐ Gift Send full list of past themes: \_\_\_\_\_

Full yr. (6 iss.) '89\_\_ '90\_\_ '91\_\_ '92\_\_ '93\_\_ '94\_\_ '95\_\_ '96\_\_ '97\_\_ '98\_\_ '99\_\_ '00\_\_ '01\_\_ '02\_\_

Specific issues or preferred start date: \_\_\_\_\_

1 year: \$36 in U.S.; \$42US in Canada; Elsewhere, \$48 in U.S. currency drawn on a U.S. bank.  
Make check payable to *MANY VOICES* & send with this form to

*MANY VOICES*, PO Box 2639, Cincinnati, OH 45201-2639

**CHARGE IT!** (Please print clearly) (circle one) VISA ☐ MASTERCARD ☐

Cardholder's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Acct# \_\_\_\_\_ Exp. Date \_\_\_\_\_ Total: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Today's Date: \_\_\_\_\_