

MANY VOICES

WORDS OF HOPE FOR PEOPLE RECOVERING FROM TRAUMA & DISSOCIATION

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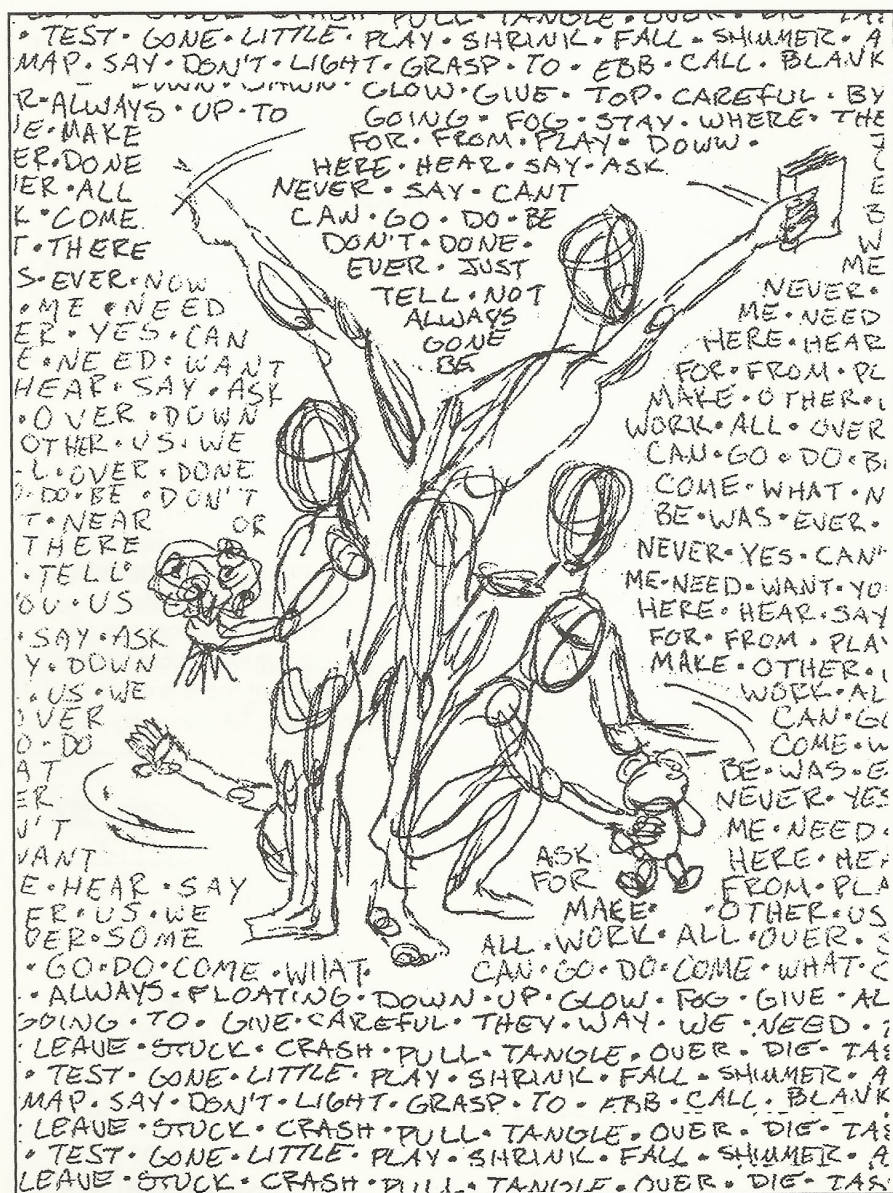
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In This Issue:

Life Without Therapy

Changing Therapists ...and more...



The Needs of Many - By Kate Edwin

The Fourth of July

The child looked up at the sky
With wide-eyed anticipation.
There was a knot in her stomach,
But it was a good knot—

It came from waiting all day
For the light show that happens
But once a year.

There's some fear there, for she
Can remember the awful stories
About children whose faces got
Burned from sitting too close.

So she takes care to be far enough away.
They never start on time,
It's so hard to wait!
But here they come—
the colors are wonderful
They fill the sky with wondrous
streaks of light
How do they do that? What an invention!

That people can come and
watch and hear
And build lasting memories.
It's a good thing for memories
Because there were some years
When the child had to sit
in a marijuana cloud.
The girl whose body
she lived in thought she
Could enhance the colors and splendor.
But she really just needed to find a way
That the child within
could say "WOW!" and
Not feel self conscious.

Today, though, the child can
clap her hands
And jump up and down
in childish excitement.
And the woman whose body she lives in
Can smile and give the child
permission to be.
It is truly my independence day.

By Shoshonah

MV

Changing Therapists

By Jacki N.

It was 1996 and I saw my first counselor. I hated being there and I didn't want to talk about myself. I was referred by a friend who thought I was not doing well. He convinced me to give it a try.

She wanted me to talk about myself but I didn't want to. We spent many sessions with not a word being said. After a few months I started to feel ok with her. After about six months she diagnosed me with DID and we began the work of integrating my six personalities.

After about three years I felt whole for the first time in my life. I was ready to start talking about me. We had spent the whole time on them and never got to me. I told my counselor this but she just wanted to talk to my littles. After another few months, and she wouldn't talk to me, I decided it was time to find someone else to help me with the healing process. This was not easy. She was my first counselor. I trusted her more than I trusted myself. She had a lot of power in my life that I didn't realize at the time.

I couldn't tell her why I was leaving because she had done so much for me. So, I told her that I wanted to take a break. I felt like I had jumped off a cliff without a parachute. I went on to another counselor who helped me, but after six months she decided to relocate to another city. She referred me to someone else. I

couldn't breathe. I had left my first counselor voluntarily, and now my second counselor was saying goodbye. I didn't want to go on. I called my first counselor back and told her I needed to talk. After a session with her I realized why I left. I took a deep breath and then went to see my third counselor.

She didn't know how to work with DID. She could help me with my everyday life kind of issues so I agreed to stay with her for awhile. Three months later she retired. She never said anything about wanting to retire when she took me on as a client. I was pissed. She gave me two weeks notice. I took deep breaths and swore I would not go to another counselor. It triggered all the feelings of abandonment and lack of trust that were deep down inside of me.

After a while I knew that I needed to talk to someone. My general doctor referred me to yet another counselor. It was a man this time. We didn't talk about any of the sexual abuse as I was not comfortable discussing this with a man, but he did help me with everyday issues. After six months he quit his job and I never saw him again.

I was severely depressed after this one. My psychiatrist doubled my medications but I couldn't rise up out of the depression. My whole life people had been leaving me. I beat

myself up for leaving my first counselor. I wanted to go running back. I couldn't stand the pain. I was suicidal.

My psychiatrist recommended ECT. I was open to it because I just couldn't take the pain anymore. I have no memory of the actual treatments but my friends and family said I was worse after. It took me awhile to recover. My psychiatrist recommended yet another counselor. I was so tired of starting over that I was shutting down and did not want to go. How many more rejections could I possibly take?

I have now been seeing my current counselor for two years. I am down to seeing her once a month. How much longer will I go, I can't say. A part of me doesn't want to stop because I am afraid if I stop I will go through the same process as before. I do attend a support group once a week that helps. But it is not the same as being able to talk one-on-one with someone you can trust.

If you are struggling to find a counselor, hang in there. The right one is out there for you, but sometimes it takes a process to get there. You can't trust all counselors, but the majority of them are out for the better of you. Take one day at a time.

MV



Sometimes life is messy, rocky, barren and pitiful all by itself



Sometimes it gets that way when I forget to look where I'm going or where I am.



Then I find myself up against a wall unable to move at all and I keep sliding down and away.



It feels real stupid going nowhere at all very fast, and it feels miserable

Beg To Differ

I have realized
I have realized
I'm very different
I have realized
I have realized
I'm very stupid
I don't see things
The same way

I have realized
The paths I've taken
Are god forsaken
I have realized
I see a different light
It's not the same
When you partake of him

Maybe I am truly stupid
And when you talk you mean what
you say
But I get really frustrated
Because I see things a different way
It's not the same
The things I think are right
It's not the same
It's like a main line to my brain

I have realized
I have realized
I'm very different
I have realized
I have realized
I beg to differ

By Clarence "Buddy" Huggins

MV

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REMEMBER

No longer hopeless or helpless
It is hard to still share our days with each other
For so long we worked separately
but we are a family now
An army
A TEAM

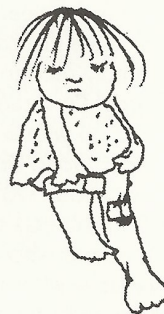
By Kathy A.



I almost might
rather go some
where, almost
anywhere at all,
than staying stuck,



Till I check out
my bloodied knees
that remind me
where I've been,
and what I tried.



Sometimes I think
hurting teaches us
to take some time
to rest, and to
feel the pain,
So we can walk
more care-
fully.



Because I do
forget to take
care of my self
unless I feel.

By Meagan Andrew

We Speak Now With One Voice...

By Kate

I knew something was wrong, especially after I awakened one morning, alone in a locked room with two black eyes, fractured ribs, assorted cuts and bruises, and disarray including upended furniture and broken lamps. I remember walking into the bathroom, astonished at my reflection in the mirror with no clue how I got in that condition.

The emergency-room physician was sure I'd been a victim of domestic violence and wanted to file a police report, but I insisted I'd fallen down some stairs, too embarrassed and confused to tell the unbelievable truth - that I'd done it to myself (actually, Big Al did it).

After many experiences of finding receipts from places I'd never been, clothes in the closet I'd never wear, waking up to wonder where I'd left my car, I still did not know what was going on. My best friend Doe observed many of these incidents, and would tell me we had gone to a movie or seminar of which I had no recollection, and she always said I'd acted unlike "myself." In later years she came to realize that if I took a "switch-nap" I'd be "me" again and she would sometimes utter in frustration, "Just take a NAPI!"

I chanced to read a library book called *When Rabbit Howls*, by Truddi Chase "for the Troops" and it totally resonated; it seemed as if it were my autobiography but, of course, I "knew" that none of that had happened to me and for a long time thereafter managed to dismiss the feelings that had begun to stir.

My mother is believed to have had a condition known as Munchausen's Syndrome by Proxy. I survived all she did as well as repeated subsequent traumas, which included - among others - witnessing murder as a child, my brother's suicide, and the later suicide of a long-term lover. I was well into adulthood before the mysteries began to unravel. Like most multiples, I had huge gaps in my

memory. Like many, I was repeatedly mis-labeled, suffering through a myriad of false diagnoses and outrageous therapies.

About seven years ago, I relocated with my now-husband and sought out a therapist to help with my recurring bouts of severe depression. That therapist (Paul N. George of Indianapolis) promptly and correctly diagnosed my DID. He - probably inadvertently - fostered the notion that integration was a bad thing and that cooperative co-consciousness was the correct goal. We did a lot of good work together over about five years, and I became as comfortable as I could be with my multiplicity, getting to know and respect my alters, whom I called "The Committee." There were nine of us who presented: Kate, Katherine, Kate Too, T'so, Big Al, Twelve, Jason, Mary Sunshine and Bootsie.

I learned to fear the "I"-word. Integration meant annihilation of those who had saved me. Summarily killing them off seemed ungrateful at the least, and just plain wrong on a gut level.

Another job change, another move, this time to Houston, where I was fortunate to obtain a referral to a psychiatrist on Galveston Island who has for many years specialized in dissociative disorders and has been repeatedly recognized for her work in this area, Dr. Jean Goodwin. I was hooked up with a kind and caring therapist (Joan Smock, of Friendswood, TX) who never doubted the Committee's existence for a minute, and who eventually met individually with most of the alters. It was she who decided after two years of balking that it was time to really start on trauma recovery; I was adamant that I'd "forgotten all that stuff for a good reason" and had no desire to remember any of the horrors of my childhood. So yet another shrink joined the team, this one (Suzana Stankovic) specializing in a

therapeutic technique called "E.M.D.R." (eye movement desensitization reprocessing) - actually we used a subset especially for multiples. I saw Suzana weekly, accomplishing more in an hour than I ever had in months upon months of talk therapy. Those visits set me up for my regular weekly therapist visits with Joan, all of which were coordinated with monthly visits to Jean (Dr. Goodwin), the psychiatrist.

After about six months into this new regimen, a very strange thing happened. One Thursday in a regular session with my talk therapist, my tween alter "Twelve" was the object of the meeting. At that time, the therapist informed her that the mother was dead. Twelve had a very difficult time believing that but was eventually convinced and apparently informed the Littles that the danger was over.

The next morning I made a trip to Chicago, where I was to speak at a fundraiser. It was a very busy and exhausting weekend, during which I barely had time to think. It wasn't until I got home Sunday night that I started realizing that there were no voices in my head!

Monday morning, I went to my E.M.D.R. session. I was very upset and disjointed, alternately sad, angry, and afraid about the Committee's abandonment. (Of course, it was no such thing; their job was simply over.) The therapist was totally stunned; she murmured, "This sounds like integration!"

I had experienced "spontaneous fusion" - it turns out that integration is not an event, it's a process. No one died. I own all of the functions and abilities - but not the memories (my p-doc insists I add the word "yet") - that I relied on the alters for, just without the walls of compartmentalization. I went through a period of loneliness, confusion, denial, and a sort of mourning, for lack of a better term. I have a vast depth of fondness and gratitude for those who carried my

unendurable pain for so many years for the sole purpose of my survival. I release them with my blessing. I know that "they" haven't gone anywhere, after all, they were always me (only a multiple will understand that sentence)! I never knew what it meant to be whole and it's taking some getting used to. I continue with my therapy and recognize that I still have Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and a lot of work yet to do.

My message to fellow multiples is this: integration is not to be feared. If it happens, it happens. I did not choose it, didn't even get a vote. Dissociation and multiplicity were coping mechanisms that just outlived their usefulness. I feel compelled to share this because if even one person/system finds comfort and hope in their struggles from reading this, mine will have been worth it.

It feels like a sort of miracle: out of one, many; out of many, one.

MV

Life After Therapy

Our therapy ended in 2001 after a partial integration and new medication (Geodon) cleared up a lot of the problems we were having. The therapist told us he'd done what he could for us, but to come back if we needed him. He said to go live your life.

Now we go to the psychiatrist once a month. I go to AA meetings five days a week where I see my friends. I live out in the country so it's important not to isolate. I am friends with other people who dissociate, so we have people to talk to about that.

It was a little scary to go without therapy at first. If we didn't have friends to talk to, it probably wouldn't have worked as well, if at all.

Therapy and my psychiatrist are 125 miles away, so it is a little less stressful not to go so often. My psychiatrist listens and answers questions, so I am not totally without supervision, just in case we start to disintegrate in a bad way.

By Red G.

MV

Dry Wells, Full Wells

By Shirley Davis

Being open to other people about the severe abuse I suffered as a child has been very challenging. At first I wore a sign on my forehead that said "incest" and when I shook hands with someone I would announce, "Hi, my name is Shirley and my grandfather sexually abused me."

Of course I am not being literal, but that's how I felt. I ate, drank, and breathed therapy and was totally wrapped up in recovery. I was too naive to understand how people would react when they would learn I had DID.

I was open to the wrong people a majority of the time. The wrong people included my family (who have only recently accepted my diagnosis after 20 years of therapy) and a Pastor I dearly loved who decided I was demon-possessed and needed an exorcism.

Other people who reacted badly learned of my depression through a talk I gave in church about it. I never told them about the DID, or they would have freaked out! Suddenly I became a social outcast. No one would sit with me in church. Sometimes they refused to speak to me as though I were somehow contagious. I got the cold shoulder in a place where I should have been accepted 100% as a sister in Christ. I had my Sunday school teacher ask me not to speak in class because (and I quote) "You don't know what you are talking about. You are too sick!"

I am very knowledgeable of the Bible, and his remark hurt very badly.

I have learned the hard way not to tell just anyone that I have mental problems, or that I now reside in a nursing home. Once I moved into the home the Pastor only visited me once, the others totally ignored me, and they even stopped sending the church newsletter. I called them immediately and insisted that they place me back on the mailing list as I was still a member!

There are people who have

accepted me for who I am. I attend a day program called Psycho-Social Rehab (PSR for short) where I feel wanted for who I am. I don't hide my DID because the staff and other participants have experiences with it. There is another person in our program who is a multiple. I trust the people of PSR more than anyone I have ever known.

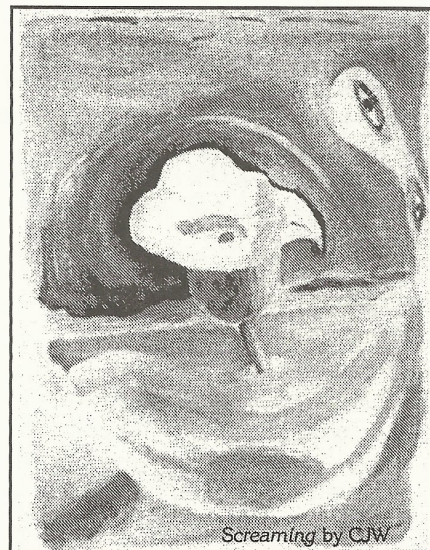
My first therapist was very wise and asked me "Why do you keep going to empty wells for water (love, acceptance, support) when there are wells with water in them?"

At first I didn't want to take her suggestion; in fact I fought hard not to take her advice. I was afraid of losing the people I loved even though they were of no help to me at all. They truly were dry wells.

Finally I began to comprehend that what she was saying was true. I had been going to people who would not treat me the way I deserved to be treated, with dignity and respect. I needed to find those who would, and I have begun to build a support system through my friends in PSR. I can tell them of the trauma and its effects, and they listen unconditionally.

In conclusion, I would say that taking my first therapist's advice, to go to wells with water, has changed my life forever. Thanks, Paula!

MV



Screaming by CJW

Therapist's Page

By Marjorie McKelvey Isaacs, Psy.D.

Marjorie McKelvey Isaacs, Psy.D., is a psychologist who treats traumatized clients and others at her private practice in Cincinnati, Ohio.

Ending Therapy, Changing Therapists or Addressing Resistance: Walking the Path to Health or Running From Difficult Work?

One afternoon a few weeks after starting kindergarten, my daughter announced, "I can count to 100!"

"Really," I said, aware she had only recently ventured—and creatively—beyond the 20's. I marveled that formal education might progress with such speed. "Let's hear!"

"OK, Mama," she said with a grin, "One two, skip a few, 99 100." We laughed.

That whimsical story catches a wish that trauma surviving clients and I often sense and share. Partners on a difficult voyage to living more fully and with greater safety, we both wish we could "skip a few" or all of the painful and sometimes frightening activities along the way to healing. I usually tell clients, "I do not want to say this, and you probably do not want to hear it either." Much of counseling is hard work.

Difficult, frightening, confusing, uncomfortable, enraging, unfair—you name it—yet often necessary to reclaim a life worth living.

Sitting with my clients, I know they may have to explore events far beyond any ordinary life difficulty. Clients sometimes must talk about what was unspeakable and feel what is unbelievable.

Recovery often requires affirming events that loved ones frequently deny and, deliberately and completely, forget.

Like abuse, the discomforts of counseling are unfair. The tasks of therapy can feel like another form of mistreatment. No wonder clients are reluctant to explore personal history.

They sometimes sense a warning, "*Do not enter. There be dragons here.*"

Freud called this internal warning function *the censor*. It protects from ongoing despair over the past, but at the cost of understanding it.

Psychologists who theorize that all behaviors are learned, conducted research proving that fears also can be learned. Every time anyone backs away from a feared activity they experience immediate relief. Escaping becomes a powerful reward, but at the price of postponing the goal.

Unfortunately, every time a person backs away, s/he also loses that chance to prove s/he can overcome the fear.

An ancient tale from India similarly illuminates the nature of fear. In the story, a tiny monster slipped into the palace, fed on people's fear and began to grow. *The more it grew, the more fearful it appeared, and the more it frightened those who saw it and backed away. The monster gobbled up that fear and kept growing.*

We will return to this story, after looking at other parts of the counseling process.

Along with fear, the strategies and perspectives which protected during childhood, sometimes paralyze survivors and inhibit progress in therapy.

When an adult abuses a younger or more vulnerable person's trust in order to hurt them, trusting later on becomes more difficult. "People who have been treated badly are always waiting for nice people to turn mean and mean people to turn nice."

This unfortunate but accurate saying can apply both to the external world and a client's internal world. Separate alters sometimes help each other, but frequently betray one another. When no alters developed,

an abuser's betrayal can instill general mistrust and internal conflict which also can slow or stop action.

People who have been treated badly are waiting. Not moving, suspended in time. This paralysis is also a temporary physical condition which can be brought on by the body's response to disaster.

Inaction can be played out between people. Every instant a child can avoid complying with an abuser is a real victory of the moment. It may even prevent another traumatic event. Any sense of control then can feel like a piece of safety.

All of these symptoms and reactions illustrate that trauma survivors have already been through enough mistreatment. Why not simply comfort the suffering victim and avoid exploring the painful past?

Developing self comfort and coping skills and the habits and attitudes which promote using them regularly are essential early treatment activities. These coping skills should be revisited throughout counseling as well.

For those who are satisfied with their external life, comfort and coping skills can be enough.

However, trauma survivors often want more independence, confidence, energy to accomplish goals, freedom from fear-inducing triggers, and greater self understanding. Some of these goals can only be reached by sorting out aspects of a difficult past.

Ironically when people become more effective at self soothing, and managing difficult current life events and feelings, they often begin to want more from life, and better self understanding.

Oh my! We all know what that means: digging through past trauma, a job no client can even think about without wanting to both get it done immediately, and flee forever.

In that situation, there is no hope

that a counselor can simply "love a client into health." I used to try that before I attended the trauma resolution seminars for professionals offered by the International Society for the Study of Trauma and Dissociation (ISSTD).

All of these factors can coalesce to create a strong sense of wanting to avoid counseling. This resistance is a normal part of the counseling process. We all have desires to hold onto those "good old reliable painful past ways of doing things." We all resist change.

When difficult emotions emerge during counseling, part of the work is identifying their source. We all experience general senses of arousal which we then must attribute to something or someone. During counseling it is easy to confuse feelings from the past with feelings in the present including reactions to a therapist. A good professional will understand the value of your talking these things out, and not take offense. Using your journal to reflect on what might be the origins of your reactions can help as well.

With all these difficulties, any excuse to leave therapy can appear attractive. Therefore, a very important part of the work is figuring out what motivates those wishes to stop attending at any given time.

You may want to ask yourself questions like these:

Am I feeling and functioning adequately and too busy with life to do a good job with counseling?

(Examples: raising several preschool aged children or working two jobs to help an older child through college)

Do I feel the urge to end counseling because I can't stand my counselor's sofa, or because I am afraid I cannot tolerate the work I will have to do while sitting on it?

What is making me feel this therapist is not helpful? Is it their pattern of incompetent efforts which keep me stuck? Or is it my own feeling of being incompetent to face overwhelming events in my history?

Am I afraid to trust my counselor

because he or she actually has made unacceptable mistakes? Or am I afraid that if I do trust I will have to face unacceptable mistakes that others made in my past?

Do I want to leave counseling because I actually am feeling and doing better? Or do I want to quit because I fear feeling worse from talking about my past before I will feel better?

You can also ask your counselor for their point of view on these and other questions.

And while you are at it, be sure frequently to express any complaint or discomfort. You are always the expert on you. Airing your dissatisfactions helps your professional fit the work to who you are and who you are growing to become. If you experience your counselor's action as an error, you have an opportunity for a corrective emotional experience.

It may feel foreign if your professional responds to your complaint with empathy, agrees to modify their own behavior or takes other helpful action. Processing that experience will help you move ahead. As you improve, your needs will change, and the counseling process should change accordingly.

Complaining to your therapist is good practice for the real world as well. In your counselor's office you have a space where such discussions should be treated with respect and used to illuminate your next steps on the path. It is neither necessary nor best to raise these concerns with poise and polish. Any way you can get it out, from elegant expressions to writing on a crumpled napkin or drawing on the back of an envelope will help you and your professional be a more effective team.

This is your counseling, not your therapist's. This precious information will help you and your helper together to discover the best ways forward, and the time to move on.

Back at the palace, Shiva entered and saw the huge, roaring fear monster, knew it was only a mouse, and began to laugh. The more Shiva laughed, the more the fear monster

shrank, until it was smaller than a mouse. Shiva and the others swept it out of the palace and kept smiling.

Bit by bit, you too can face your fears and accomplish reachable counseling goals, sometimes even with laughter.

MV

She Runs

She runs through the field laughing
Spinning, swirling until she's dizzy,
giggling with each turn
She stares at the sky in wonder
as she lies in the grass,
She's soft and beautiful,
yellow inside and out
The essence of innocence and youth,
untouched by the world
Longing for love and unaware
of those who love her
Not understanding the present she
must live in the past
I see myself in her eyes,
our energy is the same
The orange in me bursts forward
in her zest for life
It seems I need her to remember
that feeling
As she leaves the front of my mind
it brings us closer
Entwined with the innocence I long for
Yellow and light blue,
we are entwined
as it should be
She is that untouched part of me
I long to embrace,
and from her,
I will learn to love myself
I love her.
For she is who I was
and who I wanted to be.

By JL

MV



Using Different Modalities

By M. & Family

In my opinion, therapy for mental illness takes more than one approach to be most effective. D.I.D. is so inconsistent that it, especially, needs to be broached by many different avenues. Littles, teens and adults don't respond to the same processes. We need to blend modalities in order to come up with our own individual plan. At this time in my life, I currently use four modalities: spirituality, psychiatry, cognitive therapy, and creativity.

First and foremost comes my spiritual practice. Carving time out of each and every day is essential, time for prayer work, traditions, ritual, and weekly meetings with my spiritual family.

I practice the ways of the Taíno people from the Caribbean. I have created an intense relationship with the source. Several times daily, I make time for prayer and the following of the Taíno ways. I am a very spiritual woman and I require this time each day in order to be whole. It takes a lot of dedication and commitment, but I have found my life satisfying. My attitude is positive and my thoughts have become much gentler. I have a purpose, one area in my life that my illness doesn't touch. I am accepted exactly as I am, multiplicity included. All parts of me have one thing in common and that is our love of Guaterey...The Great Spirit. I have found this to be the most intimately rewarding part of my life. Peace, calmness, and safety. Definitely a modality of life-affirming reality.

Psychiatric visits are another important modality for me. Without the medications' stability, I am incapable of doing any other type of therapeutic work.

Keeping an open rapport with the doctor comes first. I need to be honest if he is going to help me. Keeping tabs on my stressors is important. Also knowing when to request medication changes to

compensate for increased stress or when needs change.

I have researched my medications, so I know each of their milligrams, doses, indications and side effects. I feel that this is my responsibility to myself and my doctor.

Also, being up to date with insurance matters helps in general, being on top of any changes with visits or medication co-pays.

Cognitive therapy is another modality and has been a great help to me in my journey toward health. Here, I can openly discuss my switching and be totally understood. That is because of the trusting relationship I have built with my therapist.

Weekly sessions allow for consistent release and repair. I generally like to have homework to keep things fresh and growing, in the "real" world.

In a crisis, it is important to know the rules of when and who to call. We have built a safety plan that is comfortable and clear to me for use at that particular time. Once again, keeping my weekly appointments is paramount to my increasing health.

Last, but in no way the least, is my creativity. I have many creative parts within me. When they are up and peacefully grounded, a beautiful song or inspiring art is produced. And when they are out of control, any kind of expression is gracefully accepted.

You see, what is held deep within is creatively voiced when no words will come. A stroke, a hue, or a powerful word wrapped in a intriguing (musical) note. This is communication of the primal senses. This is a feeling at the gut level. Uncensored, as the brush carves out its first stroke. Irregular tones, as music cries in pain.

In conclusion, I have found that often there is no order to these modalities. They arise as each part has a need to best express itself. At times spirituality is needed when the road ahead looks uncertain. At other

times, it is a child that needs to talk about her fear in session with our therapist.

As the wheel of parts spins, it starts out fast...confusion abounds. Then it slows...a part comes alive and communication through a single or blended modality becomes apparent. A song, a prayer, medication, a confession, a collage...all a means to an end: peace within the family of Me's.

MV

I Am Many

I live in a world
no one understands.
I am surrounded by voices and
screams
that live in my head.

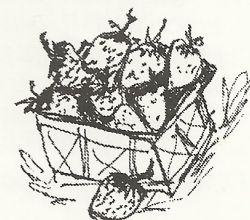
I am many
as you might tell.
Each separate and unique.
We are all special
in our own way.

Sharon doesn't know us all
for some she is not aware.
She hears us speaking to her
and she seems very confused.
But we all live inside her,
tender is her heart.
She listens to what we say,
she does what we will.

She is who we are
Many wrapped up in one.

By Sharon C.

MV



Therapy Revisited

By Lorel and the Rainbow Choir

I received my first issue in the mail box today. It felt like a long lost friend had come to visit me. I had gone many years without the subscription to Many Voices and also without therapy because I believed that I was healed completely from DID.

However, in the past few months, I had a meltdown after getting out of a toxic job environment where I had been working as a therapist with the mental health system. When I did not have the stress and structure of going to work in that environment, old feelings and body memories began to surface. I had been in a situation where there was more work than I could possibly handle. I was put in ethical dilemmas that I could no longer tolerate. I was isolated by other workers who had a clique and gossiped. I was accused of behaviors that I did not do and then not appreciated for the professional work I loved or for the accomplishments made by my clients. I was even assaulted by an out of control client. It took all of my courage and support by friends to get out of the situation. In other words, this environment was a repetition of my ritual abuse. I took a leave of absence for 2 months before I officially retired. During that time, I allowed my body to succumb to the exhaustion which had been plaguing me and stealing all the fun from my life. And I located a therapist with experience in dealing with ritual abuse who had used EMDR to resolve those issues.

I have been revisiting memories of the abuse which I thought I had resolved 15 years ago. What I learned was that every time I moved with my husband in the past 20 years, I created new alters to handle the move. I had moved constantly as a child usually in the middle of the school year; I even attended 3 high schools my senior year. That meant that I was also being taken into new cult situations with continuing sexual abuse by my father at home. I had no

secure school while undergoing abuse. I was always the new kid. Then when I married, my husband had a job which necessitated more moves. Since I was diagnosed with DID in 1990, we have moved 3 times. In that process, I would create a new personality who acted like everything was okay. I had to find another job, settle into a new house, make new friends and find a new therapist. Since our last move, I was not able to find someone to work with who could figure out where I was. Therefore, I have been stuffing down unresolved issues by focusing on my clients, stuffing down feelings, being a workaholic and ignoring physical symptoms.

I have experienced various modalities of treatment which have helped me such as hypnosis, art therapy and Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT). EMDR has helped because I don't have to expect myself to have streaming videos of the abuse to believe the events happened. My body has been racked with digestive problems, terrible headaches, tingling skin, moments of burning heat, dizziness and confusion. I have learned that I was probably drugged so that my memories are confusing whirs of visions at times. To understand that this is normal has helped me to accept the reality of the abuse. I am for the first time able to put together and understand at a heart and mind level what went on. I can see a light and hope for resolution. My little ones are getting to draw again and have me allow them to communicate. I am experiencing a return of my creativity and energy. In fact, I am in the process of opening up my own private practice so that I can limit my practice and my hours. I am excited about this new possibility.

I continue to refrain from making calls to my family members. I no longer have to accept being treated like I am invisible. All of this is a complete mystery to my husband who

is very family oriented and believes that I need to keep up with my kinfolk. He is supportive but he cannot listen to any of the things that I experienced. In a way healing is a very lonely task. Thank heavens for Many Voices and all of you who share from your experience, strength and hope.

MV

From My Window

From my window I see you
unafraid,
smiling, laughing
warm.

From my window I see you
free,
no clouds over your head,
living in the light,
dramaless.

From my window I see you
happy,
dancing, playing,
one person
complete.

Look in my window
what do you see?
fear, depression,
hyper drive mania?

Look in my window
Can you see me?
Beyond the drama?
Beyond the alters?
Without the masks?

Look in my window
who do you see?
Is it still me
under the mask?

Look in my window,
please see me,
in all my forms,
me in the middle
always there.

From my window I see
You.
Look in my window see
Me.

By Maureen M. Huggins

MV

Spirituality Q's and A's

In our free E-Newsletter, the MVNews Insider Edition #5, back in February, we posted some questions on spirituality from our readers, as follows:

I've recently received phone calls from people searching for specific information. One person wanted to know how to talk with "Christian-relatives" who are not willing to consider the problems of ongoing abuse in the family. She still believes in Christianity, but would like to hear how others resolved this sort of spiritual problem.

Another said, "I can relate fairly easily to choosing a life before birth to facilitate learning for the soul. I am stuck, however, on figuring out how anyone could choose a life in which being a child abuser is part of the lesson. Also, along the same lines, how can someone "choose" to be abused as a kid?"

We received several replies – too lengthy to post in detail in the next E-Letter. So here are the replies in full. I hope everyone finds them as insightful as I did. – Lynn W.

Regarding the question about how to discuss and deal with Christian family/friends: Their reluctance to even want to hear her life issues (dismiss, blame, turn away and all that) is not limited to Christian-types (although I have those too) - it is general fear and horror and perhaps guilt/ concern. It can be disguising in concept - blame the victim - guilt they did nothing - gizzardly overall feeling. Additionally, there are those who have had similar experiences and can't deal with it or are still blocking. Denial is a major fact in everyone's life and there is anger too — I know I can hear commentary from my family about Things Like That Don't Happen To Nice Girls ... or some rendition.

From Barbara G.

As a Christian counselor I hope I can give your reader a few generalized thoughts:

1. Abuse is real even if others understand it or deny it.
2. Look for a therapist from a Christian

organization such as the American Association of Christian Counselors etc. I've met qualified therapists from the Ashland Theological Seminary-Formational Counseling Program -Ashland OH too.

3. Find a new version of the Holy Bible. The Message or the New Living version can be helpful. Programming was probably done with an older version -so this may limit triggers.

4. Some of my clients have found the Celebrate Recovery program helpful. It is a Christ centered program with local groups in churches throughout the nation. They have a website nationally with locations listed.

5. Attend services at another Bible believing church different from where family attends. Families often have family members attending different churches or not attending - in all circles of life. Most families would be thrilled that you opt to stay with the Christian faith.

6. You must feel safe where ever you attend. Continue to attend with family members if you opt to on some occasions or regularly if you find benefit in the service. Your healing and relationship with Christ is the top priority-regardless of family.

7. Hold on to Jesus-regardless of family members.

8. It is neat when all internal parts accept Christ and work together

9. Use the internet to view religious services daily. Don't expect all preachers to understand DID, You can still learn from them

10. Give people "grace" to not understand DID etc. Sometimes it takes us a bit.

11. No continued abuse should be taking part in the name of "Christianity."

Hope this helps!

Blessings- *From V*

The first problem posed is quite difficult. If one refuses to discuss ongoing abuse in the family, they cannot be forced no matter how "Christian" they may be. "Christian" here is quite meaningless. Abusers are abusers no matter what their religion, race, culture, or social status. Over time they may be persuaded; if the

persuasion is constant, then their consciences may convince them to address the issue. I consider that a long-shot.

The second situation is not very clear. Whose soul is going to learn from the birthing, the baby's or the parent's, or another? We humans do not give life; God (the Spirit) gives life. We accept life, and are agents through which God gives life. So that, the woman finds herself pregnant and the parents choose to birth the baby and nurture it into a child's life and then into a mature person. Life exists in itself no matter what or where its site. St. John tells us that God is Love; He could have said that God is Life. Jesus came that "we might have life and have it to the full." Christians believe that God wants us to share his life and it begins here on earth. The angels share God's life as do the animals, and plants but in respect to their nature.

How could anyone "choose a life in which being a child abuser is part of the lesson?" A lesson for whom? If the person means by this that the child would be abused then that is dreadful. But then, some people are strangely affected by their experiences which may have been abuse—serious as in ritual abuse. They in turn may abuse.

Kids don't choose to be abused! Usually they are victims of violence and lose their innocence through traumatic experiences because they are in the wrong place at the wrong time or in a dysfunctional family.

The writer may have a particular case in mind such as a different kind of "choice" I encountered. While it is a choice, it is made from bravado or stupidity. Boys when young and foolish usually seek out dangerous little missions to "prove" their bravery. In this case the group dared one another to go over to the local "dirty old man" who was known to fondle boys. My "counselee" took up the dare and went to the old man and was promptly fondled. He didn't give me any details and I didn't ask, but he liked the experience and repeated it. For many years he struggled to avoid homosexual relationships.

From Patrick McAteer, SJ

I do not condone the abuse of anyone, and offer this by way of explanation, not justification. Most people who are abused do not abuse others. Most people who abuse, were abused. "Hurt people hurt people." In my opinion most people who abuse have a dissociative disorder and need effective therapy. They are not in complete control of their behavior. The abuse is driven by old emotional pain and programming from the abuse.

Unfortunately few seek therapy and there is not much available out there anyway. It is a very sad state of affairs. A case in point: I worked with a lady who had a strong impulse to molest a young girl. She was horrified by the thought and sought therapy. She had a dissociative disorder, a young alter who was created by her parents forcing her to molest her sister. She didn't remember those experiences until this impulse came up.

I helped her to heal the old pain and the impulses are gone. Fortunately she didn't act on the impulses and sought therapy.

Abuse in all forms cannot be tolerated by society. I hope someday abusers will be offered effective treatment that will end their torment as well.

From Patrick Poor MFT

I think of past life regression as illuminating some thoughts or feelings about present life, and the past years of it. Past life regression may provide a symbolic expression of thoughts and feelings just as some dreams do.

Having the sense that one was an abuser in a "past life" does not mean that this belief is literally true. However, the sense that one was once an abuser could help a survivor of abuse reflect on mistakes she has made and what to do about them. It could also carry the message that most abusers are human and have some good qualities in spite of the dreadful wrongs they committed.

Most important, would be real awareness that the past abusers no longer have the power to harm her the way they once did. Such awareness can help a survivor act in more self-empowering ways. For example, a survivor might decide to attend an event such as a wedding where the person who abused her in the past is likely to be present.

Remembering that the abuse is no longer occurring could help decrease panic and plan realistic self protection strategies should she encounter that person.

On the other hand, many survivors are burdened by undeserved guilt. This guilt

may be projected onto them wrongly by another family member, or the abuser himself. He may tell his victim, for example, that she was so pretty that "he could not help himself." Such statements are as false as they are common. Alternatively, I have noticed in my clinical practice that some survivors of abuse believe that the abuse is their fault for many reasons.

In one phase of a child's moral development, children believe that anyone who gets into trouble got there because they deserved it. Memories encoded at that point in a child's life may include that kind of immature self judgement. As we mature, we realize instead that "bad things do happen to good people," but may not think to correct the immature self judgment formed during the past event.

Finally, sometimes it is easier to believe that you yourself are at fault than to accept that you were in an unbearable situation over which you had no control. Let's place responsibility where it belongs: a child is never at fault for what an adult did to them.

From Dr. Marjorie Isaacs

MV

Achieving Wholeness

By Jean

I've often wondered what wholeness would feel like. When I reached integration of all my parts what would my life begin to turn into? I can only fantasize or dream about that day, although I think I have had glimpses into the new reality my life would take on.

I envision an energy of mind, body, and spirit that right now is just beyond my reach. I would be "at home" within myself, happy wherever I was. I think I would be more at peace with the loneliness that comes with the very nature of our human existence. I would not be so angry with the world because the anger within me would be softened. I could let others love me because I will have forgiven myself and know I am worth loving.

I think I try to find my moments of wholeness now even though my life at

times still seems chaotic. I create those spaces within my physical world that seem safe and beautiful. My spiritual director continually tells me I am a "nester". She is very right. In my house I choose warm colors for a room and the furniture needs to be placed just so, so that everything feels very comfortable. Things that are dear to me are everywhere. My home is warm and welcoming, with a pub table in the kitchen to converse at and comfortable "feet-up" couches in the family room. The pictures on the bookcases and walls tell a history of who we are as a family.

When spring comes my outside world is just as important. The artist within me is nurtured by creating this vibrant world for us with plants. The reds, blues, pinks, and yellows of the flowers and all the various hues of coleus turn the area around my patio

into a space flush with color. What's more, our big glass patio doors bring all this vivid landscape inside into our kitchen all throughout the summer months.

I need to create my own spaces. I need to have places that make me feel like I belong to them, that they are mine for me and my family. When I have these places I think I feel more whole inside. I think I begin to touch that spot that says I am really real. I connect to the warm tenderness that is me, my spirit that is affectionate, caring, and nurturing. With time hopefully that wholeness from the outside spaces will become more real on the inside of me. I will unite those parts of me that are still fragmented into a fullness of being so I can feel complete wherever I am.

MV

Looking Back at Being a Parent with a Serious Mental Illness

By Jenn J.

I read the article about being a child of a DID parent with interest and trepidation in the last issue of *Many Voices*. I'd wondered what my kids' point of view was and really appreciated someone stepping out and telling their side of the story. As I read the article I cried at the losses and at the same time was relieved to know that in the end, through therapy, everything turned out pretty much okay.

I have worried much of my life as a parent with a mental illness about raising my kids to be happy and mentally healthy. I am sure that I'm not alone among survivors in being vigilant about my children's safety, security and mental wellness. I let them know I had a therapist. They knew when she called to come get me. I took them to a therapist when I divorced and when I felt issues came up that I couldn't handle. I told them when I was going in the hospital. I told them someone hurt Mommy really bad when she was little. Maybe I told them more than I should have. I slept a lot. I tried to get my husband to help them cope when I was gone.

Now that my children are both "grown" at 18 and 21, I can look back and see the effects of what I did and didn't accomplish as a parent. I can see the things that grew into their life and personalities from the roots of their childhoods. It is interesting that they are very different in how they coped with my illness and I believe some of this is due to the developmental stages they were in at various times during my illness.

When my daughter was born, I was symptom free for the first four years of her life. I loved being a mom and watching her grow and discover new things. She was loved and nurtured and I was an excellent parent. I was concerned though with her safety in daycare, and as soon as she could understand, taught her about good touches and bad touches. We read to her and played with her and gave her every opportunity to learn and grow in all aspects of her life. We were a young strong family. I worked full time and my husband was in school. We spent time with the other grad students as a family. Everyone loved our daughter and she delighted them with her new knowledge regularly.

When my son was born three years later things began to get a bit difficult. Again, I loved having a new baby to nurture and give my heart and soul to. I have to say I was really tired though, but that isn't abnormal for new moms. My daughter at 3 and a half years old was quite angry with her mom for bringing this "baby-thing" home. She didn't seem to be

angry with him, just me. This too is normal for kids with new siblings. I continued to work full time and my husband picked up the slack on the housework that I couldn't do.

As his schooling neared to a close, my husband began the job hunt. Upon accepting a job I put our house for sale and we started looking for places to live in our soon-to-be new town. I actually sold the house myself to someone at work. I arranged the sale with the bank and began to work on moving issues. This is the first time my depression came back. My stress level was increased beyond my optimal coping levels and I began to have many symptoms. My husband was not helping with any of the moving stuff and I was still working full time and I just couldn't handle everything. I saw a therapist a few times. Things were tense and tenuous with my husband.

We bought a house and moved with our two young children to a town of about 2,000 people where there were no jobs for me. This is when I began to get severely depressed. My self esteem was in the tank with no career options and I had few friends. I was so exhausted and slept more and more. I started having flashbacks and tumbled into a deep depression. I was suicidal and ended up being put into an emergency psychiatric hold. After that we moved in with my parents and my husband stayed in the town so that we could have health insurance.

At that time my children were 6 and 3 years old. I got them up and took them to school and slept the rest of the day. I made sure I was up when they came home until about 8 pm at night at their bedtime. I was exhausted. My mother did everything else because I was too sick to do more than maintain anything beyond basic life support. I tried to be happy around the kids as much as I could. My parents were life savers. They gave my kids more than I could give myself as I struggled to make it through each day.

As the kids grew older, I continued to have symptoms. I slept a lot. I took a new job when I was severely depressed and that helped somewhat. My husband had refused to come home and take care of the kids at lunch time from his job. I remember a time when I talked to my son from work and he said, "Guess what Mom? I made my own macaroni and cheese for lunch!" He was five years old. I asked him why his sister didn't fix it for him and he told me she was asleep. She was 8 years old and I expected her to take care of her younger brother; of course this was totally inappropriate. I worried about

them being alone at such a young age.

After 4 months on the job I had to go in the hospital after a serious suicide attempt. I was in the hospital every year for the next three years. In addition, my husband did not want to bring the kids to see me in "that place." He was uncomfortable with psych hospitals and did not want to go there. He was totally unsupportive and had no compassion. He told me I'd get fired from my job because of the hospitalization. I don't know how he behaved with the kids, but I can imagine his discomfort was either directly addressed to the kids or they picked up on his obvious stress he was under. Every time I got out of the hospital they asked me what I was going to do about my husband. They knew it was not a healthy relationship.

I started to realize that our marriage was abusive. It was horrible for the kids to have their parents fighting all the time or see me being crushed by his verbal assaults. To give you an idea how stressful things were for the kids, my son developed shingles at five years old. This condition is often brought on by stress and is rare in children. Had my husband been compassionate and caring, I believe the kids would have had an easier time of it.

After my many hospitalizations and depressions and divorce, my kids have turned out with very different outlooks and personalities. My daughter was devastated when she came to visit me in a public hospital residential program. She told my mom that she "kept it together" while she was there, but sobbed when she left. She was living with her dad while she was in college and that healed her relationship with him. His new wife was great for him; she also had grown up with a mentally disabled father and a depressed mom. I was glad that my daughter had her there to help sort things out with me. What happened was that she grew closer to her dad and her step mom became her mom. She could not handle the feelings she had when she was around me so we didn't see each other much. I felt very replaced by her step mother and my feelings turned out to be valid. This was confirmed when she got married last month and did not invite me to her small ceremony in another state. Her dad and his parents were there and her step mother was her matron of honor. I was absolutely devastated. I cried for three days and on and off after that.

So, here is what she turned out to be: a workaholic with success at every turn who is in therapy and (hopefully) learning to deal with me. I believe she is happily married. I have chosen to be kind and

gracious about her wedding and am having a party for her. I've been working with my therapist on how to get through the event.

My son, on the other hand, has turned out to be an independent, kind and compassionate young man. He tells me he can't tell me what's going on with his sister because her therapist wants her to be able to talk to me on her own. I appreciated that he told me that and I told him I can respect that. I am glad he communicates with her. I think the difference between him and his sister growing up is that he was younger when I was really sick and also when we divorced. He and I also had the support of a wonderful family of one of his best friends. They had a solid marriage with clear cut rules. They treated him as one of their own. He stayed with them when I was in the hospital. He was supported and loved there. He is a hard worker and is in college. He stays in touch with me and although he was a pesky teenage boy at times, he really has turned out to be a great human being. He is "promised" to a girl and said when they get married I will be invited to his wedding.

I know that I have been a good mother to my kids, especially when they were in their early formative years. I truly loved my children and they knew that from the

moment of their birth. They both came out with great self esteem which I believe allowed them to make good choices and good friends. Neither of them got into the drug scene or violence or vandalism. To my knowledge, they did not suffer any physical abuse. They were the target of their father's verbal abuse at times. I know my love for them made them responsible and basically happy individuals with good values. I also know that I am a good mother now.

Unfortunately, my daughter has a lot of healing to do for many reasons including coping with the memory of a suicidal overdose when she was present and was a very frightened ten year old. I wish that had not happened. It hurt her deeply. I also know that this behavior of mine was not rational. I was very sick at the time. It hurts tremendously that she is uncomfortable around me. I think so many of us know that it is often easier to recall the bad times because of the intense emotions surrounding them and the pleasant memories are often overshadowed. Other than that attempt on my life, I was the best mother I knew how to be. I know neither of my children would be who they are today if I had not been a good mother.

My task now is to heal from my daughter's rejection and to start looking at

and processing how my actions affected her. This came up in therapy and was a bombshell that I never expected. I need to see how she probably felt about my actions. I was neglectful. I can't refute that. While I understand that my illness wasn't my fault, I still need to understand specifically how she would have felt. It was devastating to realize that even as my mom was neglectful toward me (due to reasons beyond her control), that I was neglectful also. I was like any mother that would protect her young but I couldn't. To understand what it was like for her is important in my healing. I just never expected anything that would be as painful as dealing with abuse memories. Boy was I wrong!

I'm working with my therapist on visualizing a kind and compassionate reunion with her at her marriage celebration. I think the positive imagery and meditation I'm doing has helped with my coping about being ignored and excluded from one of the most special days of her life. I know healing will come. It's just like any other therapy though, it is painful but there is hope for the future. I just have to let her come to terms with me on her own schedule and that waiting is one of the hardest things to do.

MV

Being With or Without a Therapist

By Valeda, Angie, & Slate

Hindsight is 20-20. What about for multiples like us...Can the view possibly be clear? So many it's...no that's eyes...

Hindsight, seeing choices made, only now we can judge—for we've seen damage done or band-aids put away. Yes. The statement is therapy, life without it...

I am 54 years old, physically; soul-life is "older," much more so. As an infant in a baby chair I remember hearing arguments between my mom and her mom, the older lady was angry about another baby (I was not planned, as another baby had been born the same year). So to speak, I was in need of therapy before I could speak—a gentle, trusting hug—just touch, innocent. No, I received mine from the family dog. She was safe, warm, and I wasn't in her way.

My life without a therapist—Reality—same confusing hell. I don't know makes me "crazy", "moody", as so many have called us. To learn a diagnoses or actually several, but the verdict finally came through, no mis-

trial—MPD, Borderline, PTSD, Major Depression, Anxiety, DID...a life sentence handed down. Treatment "needs" to begin soon. (Self-injury is occurring, life danger from inside parts.)

OK, what insurance do you have? Excuse me...

I said insurance? You know?

Um. No. I don't know. I'm a huge mass of noise, movement, can't tell distance, time. I have to get back to you. Someone, anyone, HELP! What is insurance? Why do I have to have it, to get therapy? Oh I've got too much.

Excuse me? Have you had your verdict?

I need simple, common sense. Yes. And, well, Time. You know that is the greatest gift you can give someone. Anyone. Time is precious and my life becomes easier when I just try to keep track of what day it is. Not so much time.

So you say two years before I get my disability. Two years. I filled that space with halfway house, apartment

program, supportive living—hospitalizations—a lot of them.

Scars—insignificant ones, because I needed no stitches. They "didn't count." Suicidal ideations—"what a creation" daily—morning, noon, night—can someone help me to slow down, get rid of...suicide, suicide...Oh my family is supposed to help these days. Oh wow. Let me see, how does that work? I grew up by them, ask for help many times, turn down, and now after all the memory smear and searing pain, I am told to use them. Suicide ideation #... Where did that common sense go to? The damage is done.

OK. We know we need therapy to survive. So – ask inside. OK we have books. We have articles. We have a tremendous amount of art work. Keep asking. We used to journal. OK. We use the newsletters (*Many Voices*). We buy a new journal and decorate it. New pens. OK. We found our supplies. So we ask inside. While your time goes by, finding me insurance, we hope to keep living.

MV

The Pain of Separation

By Satty

I write today, because I have recently experienced the separation of my therapist because of his retirement. I searched books and the web site for information or any writings of others out there that have experienced this, and felt the pain that I was feeling. There really is not much out there, yes they talk about that this is not an easy process. But there was nothing out there that really helped me. Yes my therapist did all the things a therapist does to help the transition, but let me tell you, it still hurts like hell.

It is hard no matter whom you are, you develop this therapist/client relationship, but as I was soon to find out, for those like me, who were so abused growing up, so abandoned, and so hurt this was a double whammy. I literally felt like I was going die at times, and even though I was introduced to a new therapist, the trust had not grown and I felt so alone.

When I started to see this therapist, my goal was to get in there, and do what I needed to do to be fixed. To fix this craziness I thought I had, I had gone to another therapist, and things were feeling crazy to me, with the dissociation and the switching I was experiencing. I had not been diagnosed yet, with DID. I had no idea what was happening to me, and worse yet, I did not like how close and needy I was feeling. I quit that therapist, and went to see another therapist so I could just be done with therapy, so that I could fix this and then get on with my life. This therapist did not let me run away, like the other one did. I would have parts that would get scared because how close we were getting, and at the same time, others would panic when I thought about just quitting. I remember having nightmares that I would be at home where I grew up, with those who abused me, and I would panic because I could not reach my therapist. I would be trying to get to him, with my abusers chasing after me, or I would be trying to call him, and I could not get the buttons

punched or I was too small to be able to know how to make a call. I would wake up with tears and sobbing. When my therapist let me know a year ahead of time that he was retiring, it was my nightmares coming true.

Yes as an adult, I understood why my therapist would want to retire, but the kids inside, to them who never had anyone growing up to go to, to share what was happening, this was rejection. This was right up there as bad as all the other abandonments we had experienced. To them, my therapist made a choice to leave and not have any more contact with us. How can they know this is different from all the other rejections we felt? In fact in some ways it was worse, because of the degree in which I trusted my therapist. As a child, I eventually learned to not depend on those who were supposed to care for me, I made the decision not to expect anything from them. Yes, I understand I was feeling that original abandonment, but that doesn't make the pain anything less.

Yes it is grief I was feeling, but this is so different from other grief, because others reach out to you when you lose a parent, spouse or a child, you have permission to grieve publicly. But when you grieve the loss of a therapist, the only ones you have for support are your new therapist and 1 or 2 friends that understand. You don't get time off your job, so you can grieve, if you have a hard day at work and start cryin; they don't understand the therapist/client relationship. People do not understand. I needed to have something out there, in which I could reach out to and see it was ok that I was feeling this. That this is normal to feel this way, and it was Ok to feel like this. Yes my new therapist told me these things. But I still felt alone. The grief was also overwhelming because all of the parts were feeling the grief. I am also pretty integrated, and I can no longer dissociate away from the pain like I used to. Little ones that I have not presented recently were now presenting. This too is normal.

I don't blame my therapist; he did all he could to help up to the time. I also know that I would not been able to do the work I did, and the healing I had, without having this relationship. I always hear him state, "You were hurt in a relationship and that is how you will heal, in a relationship." I also knew this was something I had to go through, that this was just another phase of my therapy. I know one day this pain will not be so intense. On my good days I hold on to the good memories, and all that I have learned from him, and give thanks for having him to help me. I found that being thankful changes the pain from hopelessness.

I want everyone to know yes it is painful, not everyone will feel as much pain as I did, it makes a difference the kind of abuse you suffered, the age you were at the time of the abuse, and where you are at in your therapy process. Your therapist leaving or retiring is another piece of that hard work that you have already started, and there are others out there who understand that pain.

MV

Feelings

My car sits nearby
 Needing to be dealt with
 My apartment lies inside
 Needing to be dealt with
 My tumult rages within me
 Needing to be dealt with
 But I haven't the soul to respond
 It's been sucked from me
 The years have left me dry
 Withered
 I have nothing left to give
 Nothing to receive
 Nothing but hope for hope
 And longing for peace
 I see a young man
 Struggling up a hill
 And wish him well
 And wish that's all I had to face

By David D.

MV

Life After Therapy

Is there life? After therapy? His voice. His voice and hands and hungry eyes, the one who's finally charged with sexually exploiting women who come to him for help. The attempt to avoid the referral is met with scorn while told there's no danger to be alone with him.

There's early learning to ignore and laugh at self, at nagging intuition because of walking around in a body with breasts and wide hips seen as being EASY TARGET and VULNERABLE.

The bodymind learns early to yield, give in, change form to tolerate sitting in rooms with many different someones who do something called counseling, therapy, advising, guiding, listening, teaching, coaching, instructing, leading over and over, over many years.

Even that nice one who says NO, YOU'RE NOT LIKE THAT when Truddi Chase's book falls into these shocked hands that know the story feels familiar. On and off for almost 35 years until bloody, screaming, jagged pieces made of flesh and memory become a kind of history of many selves forming a forest made of ancient trees with voices, voices and one day there's no one else to talk to, or money to pay, in yet another office for an unnatural span of time. IT'S OVER.

Shock then. The shock of life current, nakedness without buffer, where's the water cooler and paper cups, posters about rules, another waiting room, forms to complete, police guarding handcuffed people, medication withdrawal, phones ringing, eyes behind desks watching every move and gesture, filled smelly ashtray passed while entering a building...

Life doesn't make an appointment. SHE FEELS LIKE SHE HAS NO SKIN. What now? Now what?

By Living Earth ©2010

MV

BOOKS

A Still, Small Voice: Healing from Abuse.

©2010 By Diane K. Lavett, PhD.
ISBN 978-1-4502-1937-2 Published by iUniverse. Available from the author's website at www.dianelavett.com. \$22.95 in the US. 313 pgs incl illus. Paperback.

Diane Lavett's memoir is an exceptional book that should help overthrow the "self-published" stigma. It is perhaps the best-detailed, ably-written description of the therapy process that I've encountered. Every book, even a memoir of abuse, is a creative work, and is necessarily selective. Yet Lavett reports her therapy sessions in vivid dialogue that reads as if it is a verbatim account. I doubt that the book was "pre-recorded." But the discussion between herself and her therapist, as well as family members, friends, and others, is astonishingly true-to-life. Journal excerpts and significant letters are reproduced, adding to the perception of reality.

Like every survivor's history, Lavett's story is both familiar and unique. Complex family secrets emerge in flashbacks. Graphic details may be upsetting to some (my method is to skim those parts!) The author's life is turned upside down more than once. Yet she was fortunate to connect with a therapist who understood dissociation in the mid-1970s...and despite the serious work it takes to recover from a childhood of horrible abuse, Lavett kept reaching inside and pulling out the answers she needed, in order to heal.

This is a woman who went through most of her recovery as a single mother, working as a PhD geneticist, fighting custody battles, trying to reconnect with siblings, bridging gaps with extended family, desperately struggling to understand and deal with what happened to her, and why. Because this is a book based in reality, many of the questions are never fully answered. But by the end of the text it is clear that Diane Lavett has succeeded in her journey. She has become a strong, stable, and

compassionate mother and friend, as well as a highly-competent researcher and writer.

Witnessing Lavett's growth and progress, despite frequent upheaval, is an inspiration for counselors and recovering abuse survivors alike. I strongly recommend it.

But He'll Change: End the Thinking That Keeps You in an Abusive Relationship.

By Joanna V. Hunter ©2010 by Hazeldon Foundation. ISBN 978-1-59285-818-7
Published by Hazeldon. www.hazeldon.org. \$14.95 222 pgs including appendix/notes. Paperback.

"If he hits you once, he will hit you again." This is a book to help people, generally women, face facts about the abusive partners and relationships in their lives.

The author, Joanna Hunter, endured an abusive relationship herself, for many years, afraid to get out of it for what she realizes now were all the wrong reasons.

Today, Hunter works with domestic violence victims to help them leave abusive relationships safely and rebuild their lives. Her book is an extension of this effort.

Besides the introduction, and her personal story, Hunter breaks down the series of chapters (Denying and minimizing his behavior...Believing I can Save Him...Sacrificing Myself, etc.) into single-page Q & As, designed like worksheets. Each begins with "Yes, but..." and then develops a particular theme: "Yes but...If only I didn't make him angry or provoke him....He's not all bad...At least I don't have it as bad as others..." etc.

Each of these pages suggests topics to journal, and steps to take to help emerge from the untenable situation. Hunter also includes resources such as Safety Planning that are essential guides for anyone living in a dangerous environment. A helpful book.

—Lynn W

MV

THANK YOU ALL
for your wonderful writing and
artwork. Keep it coming!
MV can't do this without you!
& PLEASE send ideas for
next year's themes, too!

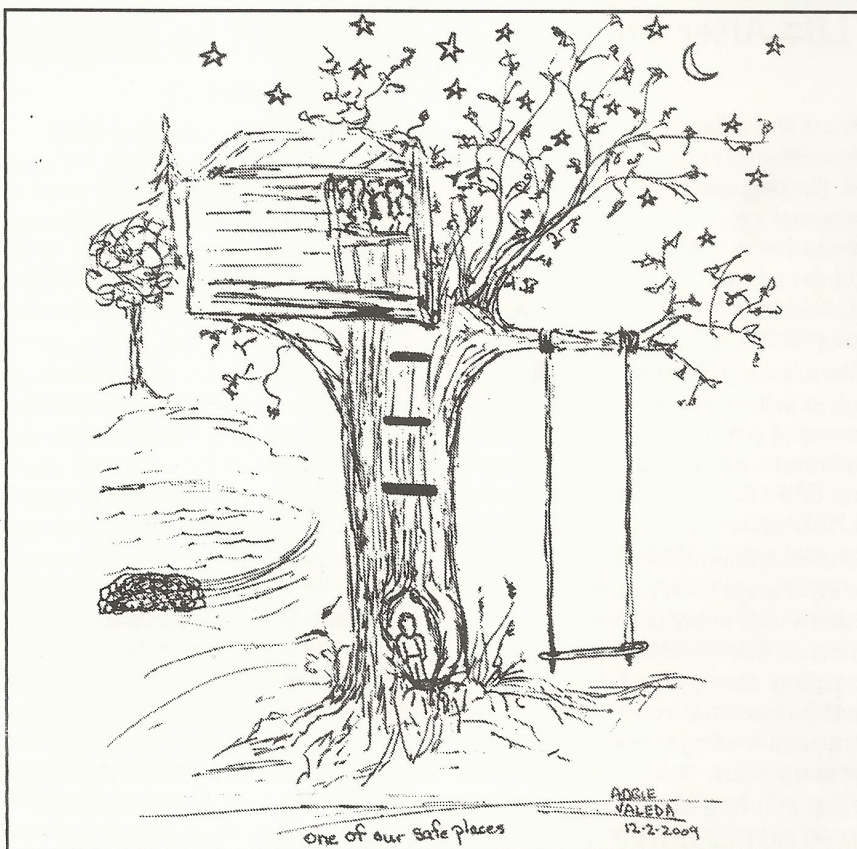
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Sexuality: Choices & Dilemmas. Is
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Safely Opening Up About Abuse.
ARTWORK: Loving Yourself and
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DEADLINE: June 10, 2010.

OCTOBER 2010

Dealing with Authority.
Communicating with Medical Doctors,
Lawyers, Police and more. Share
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Conditions vs Body Memories.
ARTWORK: Images of Dissociation.
DEADLINE: August 10, 2010.



Share with us!

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

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