

Interview with a Support Worker:

Gill Tamplin is a support worker who works a few hours a week with a client with DID alongside her psychotherapy.

How did you start working with DID?

I saw an advert in the therapy centre where I was working as a receptionist. It was strange as part of my job was to put the notices on the board and put adverts up, but I ended up applying myself.

Had you heard of DID?

No, never

So what made you apply?

I had never specifically worked with mental health conditions but the advert was worded in a friendly way, in language I could understand. I did google DID but didn't find anything constructive. But nothing that put me off either.

What was the initial meeting like?

I don't know what I was expecting as it was not like anything I had done before. I met the client with her therapist in a public place. A young child alter came with a cuddly toy and some little plastic toys and seemed to be studying me intently.

Was that weird for you?

It was strange. What came over at that moment was how protective the therapist was. It felt normal but also felt strange as well. I've met so many different sorts of people though life so I try not to be judgemental. A friend of mine said

"Didn't you go to a library and get out all the books you could find?" but I felt like what's the point because I was not writing a thesis. So I decided not to do research. I still struggle a bit with am I really making a difference? Am I making anything worse?

What was the next step?

I met the client in her home.

How did that go?

It went well but felt a bit strange as the therapist was there observing, so it felt a bit unnatural but seemed to go well, and I was asked to come back!

What were your biggest worries?

That I would trigger the client without meaning to, especially as I had no experience. I didn't think it helped to ask too much about triggers. The way I saw my role, I didn't need all the background information as I was not a therapist but then I worried I'd unknowingly trigger them.

Has that ever happened?

Not that I was aware of. But sometimes a young teenage alter tried to run things by me and I felt she was too young to be taking that much responsibility for big questions. I wanted the 'main personality' to take more responsibility and not leave such a young part to do it all. I ended up worried about her sometimes. She wanted to tell me things sometimes but I had to say "you don't need to tell me that"- I tried to tell her to talk to her therapist.

Do you have supervision or support?

The therapist said I could call her if I was worried about anything, and every now and then she called me. It was nice to know there was someone there if I needed but I didn't need to call her often- in fact I don't think I ever did.

What kinds of things does your job entail?

A lot of it is generally being there. It was hard at first to believe that 2 hours a week could make any difference, but just being there seemed to help. The client has had a lot of changes in her life and I liked to think I was consistency as well.

What are the best bits?

There's quite a long list. Seeing how amazing they all are. The little one is so funny sometimes. The young teenager is so amazing and wise.

Do you feel you do make a difference?

I think so. I feel I have been there through the ups and downs and been consistent.

What are the hardest bits?

Sometimes I feel I am not aware enough of the switching. And sometimes I forget how young the young teen really is.

What is your relationship with the 'main personality'?

Good I hope. I don't see much of her sometimes. I used to call her at the end of the time and fill her in but I haven't done that so much recently.

Have there been any crises?

There have been a few times I have been asked for extra, at weekends sometimes. But it's been

ok. Sometimes I have had to say I couldn't, or I couldn't straightaway. I have never felt too pulled on. I am quite flexible and I think that has worked out well. I haven't been asked for any extra recently.

How has the relationship developed?

It feels more natural now and that it flows more. When I first started it was always in the client's home, now we do a lot more things out of the home. It feels more sort of family like now. But being adaptable has been vital.

Have you ever been scared?

No, never. People sometimes say to be 'aren't you scared of going into someone's home', but I never have at all. I had a job before which involved going to families' homes, so that helped.

Have you ever been scared for them?

Not really because I know that they have access to other help. I have never been pulled on to be a therapist instead.

How do you feel if there are incidents of self-harm etc?

Well, it's not something I am going to be able to stop. I am not a therapist and don't have the counselling skills. But it doesn't upset me too much as I know they have a good therapy team and other people to call.

Any final words of wisdom to anyone who might be thinking of doing something similar?

Just go for it!