

f i r s t p e r s o n p l u r a l

Newsletter for Dissociators and their Allies

April, 1998

Preview Issue

Welcome

Welcome to this preview issue of "**First Person Plural**". It is hoped that this new UK newsletter will be a support and source of information for people who experience dissociative identity and other dissociative disorders; for their formal and informal supporters and allies and; for anyone with an interest in the dissociative experience.

"**First Person Plural**" takes its name from a newly formed dissociator-led group who are currently seeking funding for activities which will encourage the increased recognition of dissociation throughout the UK. The group are presenting a poster display of dissociators' poetry and artwork at the Fourth International Society for the Study of Dissociation (UK) Conference in Chester on April 1st, 2nd and 3rd.

This preview issue of the newsletter is being circulated free to all those who responded to a flyer in the last issue of "Collective Consciousness¹" and to delegates at the ISSD(UK) Conference.

If the response to this preview issue is favourable (i.e. if enough people return a subscription form and POs/cheques) "**First Person Plural**" will continue as a quarterly publication. To cover the costs of publication there will be an Annual Subscription charge of £5.00 for people who experience dissociative disorders; for their informal supporters/carers; for other individual users/survivors of mental health services and for unfunded mental health service user/survivor groups. Professionals and organisations (including funded user/survivor groups) will be charged a higher Annual Subscription rate of £10.00. The subscription charge will cover 4 issues. Please see back page for details of how to subscribe.

We hope you enjoy this free preview issue and will want to see "**First Person Plural**" (both the newsletter and group) continue to inform and support in the field of dissociation.

*Kathryn Livingston (pseudonym)
Founder & Editor*

Editor:
Kathryn Livingston, First Person Plural
c/o 25A Belvedere Gardens, Claregate,
Wolverhampton, WV6 9QL

¹ "Collective Consciousness" was a previous UK newsletter for dissociators and supporters which ceased publication in Autumn 1997.

Editorial Statement

While every effort will be made to keep contributions complete and unedited "First Person Plural" reserve the right to make amendments when necessary. Decisions about the inclusion and amendment of contributions are the burden of the editor and are final. Contributions do not necessarily reflect the views and opinions of "First Person Plural" and the inclusion of any reference to an individual or organisational resource should not be taken as a recommendation.

Contributions of articles, stories, poetry, artwork (please remember that artwork must be reproduceable by photocopier - black & white line drawing is ideal) or details about useful resources e.g. books, organisations etc are welcomed from all persons with an interest in dissociation and should be sent to the Editor at the address on the front cover. The deadline for contributions to the next issue is **Friday, 12th June, 1998**

Attention: Material in this newsletter may trigger painful memories and feelings.
Read with caution and appropriate support if necessary

Tips for Managing Triggers

If a dissociator is currently vulnerable, yet wishes to use the opportunity arising from triggering material in this newsletter to process memories or feelings, these tips may help:-

- * *Make sure you are comfortable;*
- * *Keep your journal, drawing pad, comforting toys and some tissues handy. It is often helpful to keep a positive image visiblesomething that reminds you of your desire to heal*
- * *Remind yourself of your positive motives, possible short-term consequences and your reasons for risking them. It is often helpful to make some message signs (block letters, so kid alters can read them). For example:*

"This article may trigger my feelings and/or memories. I can stop reading if I need to. If I am very upset, I can _____ until I feel better. [Fill in the blank with what works for you. E.g., "listen to some music"; "hold my teddy bear"; "call a friend"; "write in my journal"; pound a pillow; draw]

I am choosing to read so that I can heal by honouring and comforting my pain. I do not want to add more pain through self punishment in the present. I am willing to release old pain, but I do not want to become confused by it so that I think I need to be hurt any more."

- * *Be aware that narratives can sometimes open up associated memory fragments which can seem mixed, confused or contradictory.*
- * *Remember, you have time to sort out all of the pieces. Things are not always as they first appear. Trust your feelings as valid to your experience.*
- * *Remember to ask yourself, "If I knew a child who just experienced what I am remembering or feeling, what would he or she need to feel comforted?" Then provide for yourself as best you are able.*

The key to healing of the adult is the healing of the child.

Amended from Survivorship Homepage at Internet address:-

<http://www.xroads.com/rainbow/svship/home.html>

A note on terminology

Multiplicity; Multiple Personality Disorder; Dissociative Identity Disorder; MPD; DID; DDNOS; Multie; Dissociator; Multiple Personality Gift; Host; Core; System; Alters; Parts; Ego States; Switching; Fusion; Integration; Out Front; Gone Deep; Co-conscious; In the background .. etc etc

The language used to describe the dissociative experience is various and individualistic. First Person Plural retains the terms preferred by each contributor. Consequently throughout the newsletter different terms may be used for similar concepts.

Dear Kathryn.....

First Person Plural encourages respectful open comment and debate about the issues, ideas and experiences of dissociators, their supporters and allies. We welcome letters inspired by any article or other material published in the newsletter.

Please write to:- Kathryn Livingston, Editor, First Person Plural, c/o 25A Belvedere Gardens, Claregate, Wolverhampton, WV6 9QL or email fpplural@aol.com

For this preview issue we've included some excerpts from letters we received in response to our offer, in the last issue of "Collective Consciousness", to co-ordinate a new newsletter.

Extremely isolated

I would be very interested in a new newsletter for people with DID. I am in therapy at present and found Collective Consciousness very helpful and positive. I am extremely isolated in as much as I know no-one else with this problem so reading letters and articles by fellow multiples expressing both thoughts and situations which would appear to be common for us and extremely anxiety provoking for others, is helpful. [Melanie]

Just not recognised

I would be most interested in subscribing to a newsletter. I was very sad to hear Collective Consciousness was coming to an end. I am multiple and feel that, in this country, we are just not recognised. When I was first diagnosed five years ago my husband and I had no information at all. I really looked forward to receiving Collective Consciousness. It gave me insight into how other multiples/dissociators cope with their pain and I found them to be courageous and very talented people. [Sally]

Spira, James L (ed) : Treating Dissociative Identity Disorder; Jossey-Bass, 1996

Shreiber, Flora Rheta : Sybil; Penguin, 1973

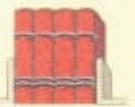
Walker, Moira : Surviving Secrets; Open University Press, 1992

Disheartened

It is good to know that someone is prepared to continue with a newsletter as it is the only contact we have with others who are going through similar things. One thing I would like to say is that we were at times disheartened that although we had letters published in Collective Consciousness not one person has ever responded. This is a shame as we feel that the newsletter should partly be about helping and supporting one another. [Julia & Co]



From the Editor's Bookshelf



Casey, Joan Frances : The Flock - Autobiography of a Multiple Personality; Abacus, 1993

Cohen, Barry M et al (eds) : Multiple Personality Disorder from the Inside Out; Sidran Press, 1991

Cohen, David : Alter Egos - Multiple Personalities; Constable, 1996

Duncan, C.W. : The Fractured Mirror - Healing Multiple Personality Disorder; Health Communications Inc, 1994

Friesen, James G : Uncovering the Mystery of MPD; Nelson, 1991

Mollon, Phil : Multiple Selves, Multiple Voices - Working with Trauma, Violation and Dissociation; Wiley, 1996

Voices in a new world

Can you help us all find a voice.

We were a client for six years in a youth counselling agency. After our ending we wanted to give the agency feedback/information on the issues related to Satanic Ritual Abuse (SRA). We wrote a paper to give counsellors some knowledge of the issues that we brought into the counselling relationship. We aimed to help them decide how best to help such clients in a thought out way with clear boundaries. This feedback paper, entitled "What I would like my counsellor to have been aware of" is divided into the following sections:-

Possible problems with phone contact; Contracting and boundaries; Presenting issues; My expectations of counselling; What I needed to know about the counsellor; What I needed to know about the agency; What I needed from my counsellor; Key Issues and Themes - a) Trust, b) Shame, c) Guilt, d) Eye contact, e) Confusion, f) Touch and dangers of touch, g) Loss of time, h) Asking for help in the counselling situation, i) Referrals; Fears; Dissociation and seeming inconsistencies; Self-injury and injuries of unknown origin; Headaches and body memories; Suicide; Child protection. Appendices include:- Common triggers, Key words, Satanic belief system, Significant dates.

If you would like a copy of "What I would have liked my counsellor to have been aware of" please send an A4 sae to the address at the end of this article. SRA survivors should note that some of the appendices might be triggering. Please advise us if you would like us to send the paper without its appendices.

Writing the feedback paper for the youth agency was a first step in our aim towards giving people the information needed to help victims of ritual abuse. Now, we want to produce an information booklet for counsellors/therapists drawing on many ritual abuse multiples' views. **If you are a multiple and SRA victim or survivor we want you to let us know what you would like counsellors to know about ritual abuse and multiplicity. We want to know of your experiences of referral and funding. Please write to us at the address below.** We know this is a lot to ask but if you do have the time, energy, co-operation and safety/support to send us your views and experiences it could help all ra survivors find a voice to create a new world where well informed, effective counselling is freely available. If you wish to write to us anonymously that is OK but if you do feel able to give a name and contact details it would help if we need to clarify what you've written and enable us to send you a draft copy of the information booklet if you wish. Any details you provide will be kept confidential.

What we would have liked our counsellor to know

What we needed from our counsellor changed over time. At the beginning of our therapy - when each of us knew so little about each other; when the barriers between us were very high; when our outside person knew nothing - we needed a good basic therapist with experience of working with victims of sexual abuse. We needed a counsellor who was self aware; able to offer a high level of honesty; and who could cope with anything we said.

Having had the experience of working with such a good counsellor and having learnt more about our history and our way of being we were able to give quite a detailed summary of our life at an assessment with a new counsellor. We were able to write about our multiplicity and be clear about what we needed from a counsellor now. Doing this prevented us from being trapped in a therapeutic relationship that could not answer our needs.

It was our journey through his process which made us realise that we wanted counsellors and others to be more aware and informed about multiplicity and sra. We didn't always want us, or others like us, to be the ones educating the therapist about our issues.

Our experience of referral and funding

Before ending at the youth agency we were introduced to a very good therapist who had the experience to enable us to do the work we needed to do and stay safe. However, she was a private therapist. We couldn't pay the £30-£60 needed and she did not fit into the local health authority funding criteria so we were unable to see her. Our GP referred us to a group of behavioural therapists. We had an interview and were invited to go through a two week assessment with a selected therapist to see if our needs could be met locally. We wrote to this therapist giving her information about our history, issues and telling her we are multiple. We also told her what we needed at this stage of our therapy. She decided that she did not have the experience to work with us and said she would look for an alternative therapist for us who had the experience we needed. She was able to identify two such therapists but we are still waiting for an appointment.

Conclusion

It seems to us that SRA survivors are facing now what sexual abuse victims faced in the 1970's and 1980's. Then, too, counsellors did not feel experienced enough in the issues the clients were bringing. Fortunately counsellors rose to the challenge. Many listened and believed their clients and gained the knowledge and experience needed to help more survivors. Our hope is, that with your help, counsellors working with ritual abuse survivors will also rise to the challenge. Please, if you are able, respond to our request for your views and experiences so we can compile an informative booklet from the clients' perspectives to help counsellors meet the challenge and so make it easier for all SRA multiples to get the help they need.

Thank you.

AALia , c/o 93 County Road, Swindon, SN1 2EE

A Multiple's First Fusion

No voices burn with questions or whisper whimpering sighs;

No sound of Angies' laughing nor tears from fearful eyes;

No tiny, scampering footsteps bring children to my side;

No arms reach out for hugging though mine stay flung out wide.

Nobody said that joinings meant empty rooms are left;

Nobody warned of losses which leave my heart bereft.

Nobody told of sadness as we aim towards our goal;

Nobody spoke the price I'd pay in tears for being whole.

Our Tribe



We can be a lot of things

I can draw an I can colour an I can
do fancy reading an potting an I can
play an dance a bit if it suits



John can look after us an we can burn
a dinner an be sad an love us an drink



Emma can fight an punch an kick an bite
an hurt an be angry



Rebyn can paint anything an cut an scream
an be angry an wreck things an be kind and
mind me and I love her daughter Rosie



Flozzie can eat dinner an have a fat tummy
an pick flowers from her garden



Joe can count pence an know lots of birds an
flowers an butterflies an make hats an she can
wait for her 1991 hummingbird who won't ever come



Ther can make beautiful things from feathers
an things an work an batik an from broken
treasures



Anne makes magic places for people to play an
play



Em takes photographs that Ther makes cards from
an people buy them sometimes



Fiona looks specially after all the things from
the big mountain glass an a sky



George writes slow letters an lives in a
balloon in a sky an can do slow work an puzzle

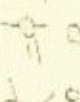


Zakariah can write poems an read
about books

 Zephyr can be something I don't know it

 Azlak can shoot things on an like machine on motor on bones

 Hori can be big on strong on death work

 Ffrenza can do tiny writing

 Hoppity can fly. I would like her to come back on play with us on by my friend

 Hori an Holly an Eneh's just babies they can't talk or walk but they still can be in a tribe

 Thalia can talk a lot of ordinary things

 Bliet can be very good on hurt us to make us stop so that can be all for 2917

On these more like Melanie who's shy an Mithra that we don't know very good on others that my tribe an some still on tribe An Jennifer an John Francisco

 Then these people who can do jobs like build things on drive on car do other things well.

 That's our Tribe an most of us can work long way on talk on / get an write. Most of us can't yet now I will but not all of us is in a baby. We can cry an shout

 On we can let very special people inside us. We can have a bubble an a blanky an a space.

 It we like

15519

Transcript : Our Tribe

We can do a lot of things

I can draw and I can colour and I can do phonics
reading and adding and I can play and dance a bit
if it safe.

Chloe can look after us and her can burn a dinner
and be sad and lover us and drive

Gemma can fight and punch and kick and bite and
hurt and be angry

Robyn can paint and knit and cut and scream and
be angry and wreck things and be kind and mind
me and I love her best after Rosie

Flossie can eat dinner and have a fat tummy and
pick flowers from her garden

JoJo can count pennies and know lots of birds and
flowers and butterflies and make lists and she can
wait for her real mummy who won't ever come
Thea can makes beautiful things from feathers
and stones and wool and batiks and from broken
treasures

Anneka makers magic places for people to dance
and play

EMF takes photographs that Thea makes cards
from and people buys them sometimes

Freya looks specially after all a Tribe from the big
mountain place in a sky

George writes clever letters and lives in a balloon
in a sky and can do crosswords and puzzles

Susquahannah can write poems and read clever
books

Zephyr can do something I don't know what it
called

Azlak can collect fossils and can like engines and
motors and bones

Herl can be big and strong and breathworks

Francesca can do tiny writing

Hoppity can fly. I would like her to come back and
play with me and be my friend

Israel and Holly and EhEh's just babies they can't
talk or walk but they still can be in a Tribe

Thalia can talk a lot of ordinary things

Blaize can be very cross and hurt us to make us
dead so she can be boss all herself

And theres others like Melanie who's shy and
Mipascal that we don't know very good and others
that are inside and some still outside. And
Jennifer and Joan Frances

Then theres people who can do jobs like mind time
and drive and can do other things as well

That's our Tribe and most of us can walk long
ways and talk and read and write. Most of us can
feel now as well but not all of us is in a body. We
can cry and shout and we can let very special
people cuddle us. We can have cuddlies and a
blanky and a spout cup if we like.

Lizzie

Maze

*There is so much going on in my head and so
much I want to say, but am unable to, as I feel
so lost. My arms are stretched out before me
searching the dark long corridors for a clue
that will help me find my way, but each time I
think I've found something it disappears
further into the darkness of the maze. Still
searching I continue, further and further into
what can only be described as a feeling of
nothingness, yet it is so powerful and
overwhelming it takes my breath away and the
pressure feels as though it is going to crush me
as it bears down. On my hands and knees I
crawl looking for a gap so as to escape. But
something is preventing me from being able to
go any further. Yet before me I can see a
graveyard, cold, damp, dark and bleak,
overgrown with neglect. As I look at all the
death around me, my heart wants to cry out in
pain and sorrow for all the graves are parts of
me that have died. But what has died? This I
do not know for none of the graves have
anything written on them, but I know I feel the
need to mourn for them. First, I have to know
what has died.*

Julia & Co



Spot the Dissociator!

Can't?

Well that's probably because
we're not freaks!

(POEMS & RHYMES)

A Desperate Minute

I feel so full of pain,
 Despair for the endless sorrow
 for what should, could have been
 Now, yesteryear and tomorrow.
 Alone at twenty-six;
 Yet another Valentine coming, going.
 Not even a glimpse of the love I crave
 Yet I fear, will it ever be safe?
 Never had an adult relationship.
 Is this what I am doomed to?
 From now till I drop dead?
 How I long to know what lies ahead.
 Yet, at times, I know the unknown is best;
 fearful too, alas
 I now see a future
 Cloudy though that sometimes is.
 Does the pain of the past ever fade?
 Its old, yet it stays
 Like a light that will not dim
 Or so it seems
 How do you recover
 from a wound, endlessly deep.
 Fear of closeness, fear of distance
 Yet all I ask for is love that's free.
 Free from conditions
 I'm expected to meet
 In this world of hurt
 And deceit.
 Alone in the world so needy and hurt.
 Is this what life is like?
 I fear I will never find
 The heart to give the love I need to receive.
 The sadness I feel
 Enough to fill the ocean
 So massive and wide.
 Will I drop dead if I curl up and hide?
 Why do men need to be involved.
 Do I want children or do I not.
 If the abuse had not happened
 I would have had a lot.
 I fear I cannot give
 The love and presence
 Every child needs and deserves
 if I have no children, no suffering occurs.
 Only mine
 So familiar, yet no ease
 Sadness prevails.
 No happiness, not at peace.

Life's Autumn

When the leaves begin to fall
and the start of Autumn calls
It takes away the summer nights
and the cold wind starts to bite.
In Autumn life begins to die
and my heart in silence cries.
The sun that shone upon my face
has fallen down and left no grace.
The Spring is gone and Summer lost
and Autumn fall must be the cost.
There's darkness now instead of light
and life has gone like birds in flight
With Autumn comes the Winter chill
and frost in beauty comes to kill.
All life that was has gone and died
yet fell with dignity and pride.

Julia & Co

A Child Inside

*A child inside appears again
To tell her tale, to share her pain
So let her speak and show you've heard
Let her know you believe her word.
She does not lie, she's not insane.
Don't let her brave her fear in vain;
Reach out to her; do not profane
The horrors which befell and stirred
A child inside.
We need your help to loose the chain
Which binds us to that past domain
So I can fly free as a bird
And she can sleep in peace unstirred
By terrors cruel and inhumane.
A child inside.*

Anon

Rhymaster

Questions and Answers

1. What is MPD/DID?

Multiple Personality Disorder / Dissociative Identity Disorder (MPD/DID) is a survival tactic. It is the creative attempt of highly traumatized children to protect themselves from the trauma and abuse (e.g.: "It isn't happening to me.") When these children dissociate (block) trauma, their "compartments" of trauma become separate identities/personalities/parts within their one self. Only children have sufficient flexibility (and vulnerability) to adapt to trauma by means of creating alter personalities.

2. When can a person get MPD/DID?

MPD/DID arises in childhood, mostly ages 3 to 9 years. There is juvenile diabetes and adult onset diabetes, but there is no adult onset MPD/DID. Only children have sufficient flexibility (and vulnerability) to respond to trauma by breaking their "still-coalescing" self into different, dissociated parts. Adults do not have the capacity to adapt to trauma by forming alter personalities. (The exception is that adults who became "multiples" in childhood can continue to make more alters during adulthood.)

3. Isn't MPD/DID really just a way for people to get attention?

It is often thought that MPD/DID is a sham, a bizarre form of "play-acting" that is perpetrated by manipulative, attention-seeking individuals. It is not. MPD/DID is a "disorder of hiddenness". 80-90% of MPD/DID patients do not have a clue that they are "multiple." Most know that there is something wrong with them; many fear that they are crazy-- but few know that they are multiple.

4. "Isn't MPD/DID just an exaggeration of the different parts of our personality; aren't we all really "multiple?"

This is an enticing question. Yes, we all have different parts to our personalities and in that sense yes we are all multiple. However, MPD/DID is not "just an exaggeration" of these parts. We are not all MPD/DID.

5. How many parts are there?

The typical female multiple has about 19 alter personalities; male multiples tend to have less than half of that.

- 1) the severity of the trauma;
- 2) The chronicity of the trauma; and,
- 3) the degree of vulnerability of the child.

Thus, the male multiple from ages 7 to 10 who was sexually abused half-dozen times by a distant relative is going to have far fewer alters than a female multiple who was severely physically, sexually, and emotionally abused by both parents from infancy to age 16. The latter patient, in fact could quite easily wind up with 30 to 50 (+) alters, even in the hundreds

6. How common is MPD/DID?

Data from the USA gives an estimate of the prevalence of MPD/DID of about 1% of the population. This estimate would translate into about 500,000 cases in the UK.

7. How impairing is MPD/DID?

The range of impairment across different persons with MPD/DID can be analogized to that of alcoholism. Impairment due to alcoholism a) ranges from skid row bums to high functioning politicians and corporate executives; and, b) varies in any given alcoholic from one period of time to another as a function of binges, patterns of drinking, life stresses, etc. It is much the same as MPD/DID. There are some multiples who are chronic mental patients, others who undergo recurrent hospitalization due to self-destructive behavior, and many more who raise children, hold jobs, and may even be high-functioning lawyers, physicians, or psychotherapists.

Divided Hearts on the World Wide Web

This selection of questions and answers is taken (with some amendment) from the FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions) page of a Web Site called "Divided Hearts". This extensive multi-award winning support and information web site was founded by Deb Griem, a talented young American woman who is herself DID. The site includes:- 7 message boards including one for child alters, one for teens and one for supporters; a monthly newsletter; a comprehensive reading room; links to other MPD/DID and related sites and much much more. "Divided Hearts" Internet address is :-

<http://www.dhearts.org/>

DividedHearts
DID/MPD info & support web

The number of alters is explained by 3 factors:



The Donkey's Grave by AMAM of the Collective

.....WANTED.....WANTED.....WANTED....

**Articles; letters; queries; stories; poems; artwork; book titles and reviews;
resource details; information about conferences & training events etc. etc.**

**Contributions to *First Person Plural* wanted
from dissociators/multiples; from adult & child alters / parts; from friends &
relatives; from therapists & counsellors; from other supporters & allies**

Deadline for next issue = Friday, 12th June, 1998

Subscription Form

If you wish to subscribe to "**First Person Plural**" please complete the form and return it to the address below enclosing a cheque / PO made payable to First Person Plural

First Person Plural
c/o 25A Belvedere Gardens
Claregate, Wolverhampton
WV6 9QL

Please tick boxes

£5 Annual subscription rate

I experience a dissociative disorder ☐
I am a friend / relative of someone who experiences a dissociative disorder ☐
I am a user of mental health services ☐
We are an unfunded user/survivor group ☐

£10 Annual subscription rate

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Psychologist ☐
Nurse ☐
Social worker ☐
Other mental health worker ☐
Other professional ☐

We are a....

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£10 Additional cost for overseas subscribers to cover extra postage and handling

I/We are an overseas subscriber ☐

Total enclosed..... £ _____

Preview Issue

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Your comments on **First Person Plural**:-

Please note: An annual subscription entitles you to receive 4 issues of **First Person Plural**. To simplify administration new subscriptions received after Issue 1 has been published will include back issues missed in the current subscription year to a maximum of 4. The schedule of publication for the current subscription year is:-

Issue 1 : July, '98;
Issue 2 : October, '98
Issue 3 : January, '99
Issue 4 : April, '99

First Person Plural will only become a regular publication if the demand indicated by subscriptions received from this preview issue is sufficient. If demand is not sufficient full refunds will be made to those who have subscribed.

CONFIDENTIALITY

The details supplied on this form will be entered onto a database. Only members of the **First Person Plural** steering group will have access to the database and it will only be used for the purpose of distributing the newsletter or other **First Person Plural** business. Personal details will not be supplied to any other person or organisation without your permission.

