

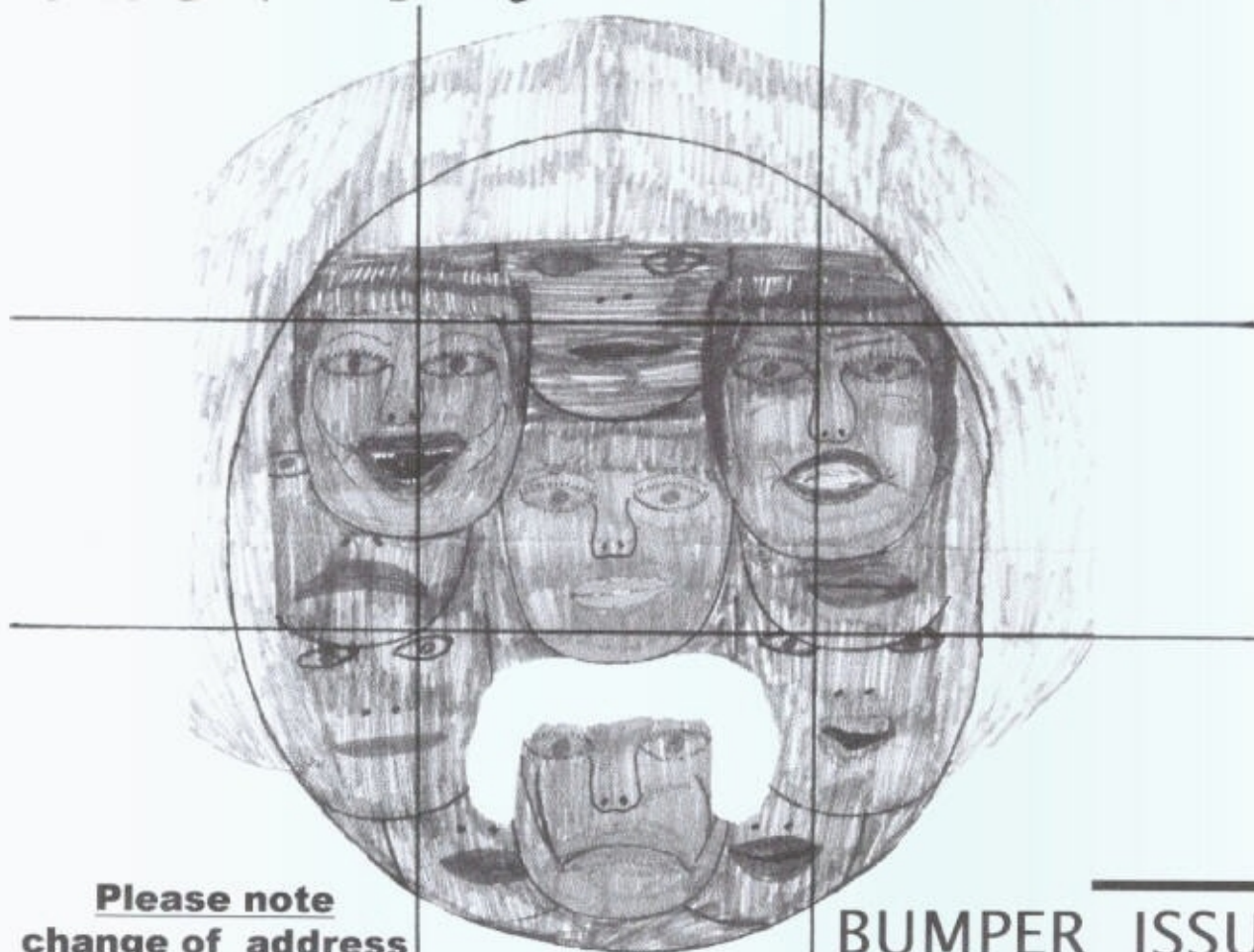
First Person Plural

Newsletter for Dissociators and their Allies

July, 1998

Vol 1: Issue 1

'ALL IN ONE' BY AMAM



Please note
change of address

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BUMPER ISSUE
includes 6 page
ISSD(UK) Conference
Supplement

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 the editor 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 reproducible 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, 11th September, 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.

If you are asking for replies you must send a large 31p s.a.e with your letter which the editor will use to forward any responses received.

*If you wish to respond to a letter please place your response inside a sealed envelope with the letter number clearly marked on the outside and then place inside another stamped envelope addressed to **First Person Plural Letters** at the address below*

*Please write to:- **Kathryn Livingston, Editor, First Person Plural, PO Box 1309, Wolverhampton, WV6 9XY** or email **fpplural@aol.com***

How can I help?

I have a friend who is a dissociator and I'm confused about how to handle a couple of things. If anyone has any insight into these situations I'd be glad to hear from you.

Firstly, my friend told me some very traumatic things that happened to her when she was a baby. She was speaking from her baby personality and when she woke up didn't remember anything about it. She has told me other things and I try to tell her as much as I can afterwards, but she really didn't want to know about this. I feel I can't hide this from her, but also can't push her and need to wait until she's ready. What do you think?

There are very strong feelings between us, and the baby in her is desperate for a mother. I don't know what to do when she wants to stroke my breasts and to suck. I often end up going further than I intend and have very strong maternal and sometimes sexual feelings. We have talked a bit about it and neither of us feel we really want a lesbian relationship.

She has told me to be firm with her and decide on my boundaries when she is in baby mode. I find this very hard though and am afraid she will feel rejected and become withdrawn. I really want to be there for her and am committed to our friendship. I want to support this little baby girl in whatever way I can.

Joanne
Letter No = 0001

Funding dilemma

HELP! Is there anyone out there who's therapy was funded through their GP for going to a private therapy centre and had their funding stopped. Therapist and GP both agree it should continue.

I am on benefits and cannot fund myself. I desperately need to get a grant or some sort of funding. Can anyone suggest organisations we can approach for this?

Mandy & Co
Letter No = 0002

Disagreeing comparison

Great start! However, I didn't like the analogy of a high functioning dissociator to an alcoholic on the Questions and Answers page. What do others think?

Caroline
Letter No = 0003

Sabotaging alters

As a student two efforts to complete assignments have been sabotaged by a part of my system who I cannot yet internally communicate with and who has not been forthcoming in therapy. The sabotage includes tearing up the written copies of the assignments, deleting computer files and destroying floppy disks. This destructive activity is hard to understand and is very disheartening. My tutor is aware of my DID and has given me extensions but it is difficult to settle to rewriting the assignments. Has this kind of thing happened to others? Any suggestions to help.

Carer
Letter No = 0004

RESOURCES PAGE



The Bookshelf



Braude, S: First Person Plural - Multiple Personality and the Philosophy of Mind.

In this first full length philosophical study of multiple personality disorder the author argues that most explanations of this condition fail to distinguish it clearly enough from related states, such as hypnotic trance, dreaming and mediumship. He maintains that even deeply divided multiple personality contains an underlying psychological unity. This recent revised edition Stephen Braude updates his work to discuss recent empirical and conceptual developments, including the charge that clinicians induce false memories in their patients, and the professional redefinition of 'multiple personality disorder' as 'dissociative identity disorder'.

Braude, S : Multiple Personality & the Structure of Self

Goodwin, Jean : Credibility Problems in Multiple Personalit and Abused Children

Goodwin, Jean : Eating Disorders in Survivors of Multimodal Childhood Abuse

Hocking & Co :Living with Yourself

Marshall, A : People in Pieces: MPD in Milder Forms

Sessions, D : My Mom is Different



Audio Cassette

People Kept Below produced by Claire Hunt; Facilitated by Jeanie McIntee. An audio tape made with a group of 6 people who have D.I.D. The tape is intended to inform professionals working in education, health, mental health, social work, therapy and counselling. It may also be of use to people with D.I.D. and survivors of abuse. Available from ISSD(UK) 01244 390121



Conferences

Self Harm, Self Care & Risk

Reduction - One day conference from National Self Harm Network (NSHN) for men and women with personal experience of self-harm, looking at how to maintain safety while living with self-harm. The conference is FREE and open ONLY to people who have self-harmed in the past or present. London - 5th Sept, 1998; Manchester - May, 1999. Details from NSHN, PO Box 16190, London, NW1 3WW

Effectiveness in mental health -

Mind Annual Conference - A limited number of mental health service user places are available FREE for this major 3 day event (does not include accomodation and meals). Brighton - 3rd to 5th Nov, 1998. Details from Mind Conference & Training Unit, 0181 519 2122 ext 213/4. Closing date for applications for free places 21st August, 1998

Video

"Denial"

First video documentary about MPD

Brigitte talks about her early life and records everyday events when other personalities 'take over' her behaviour. Includes therapy sessions with Richard Erskine & Erika Stern. Excellent for education & training purposes

Difficulty obtaining dissociation resources? Try Smallwood Publishing Group mail order service. The Old Bakery, Charlton House, Dour Street, Dover, Kent, CT16 1ED. Tel: 01304 226800, Fax: 01304 226700

The Patchwork Quilt by Jenny of the Crew.

The beginning of a patchwork quilt, bright and clean in its newness lies on a bed. At the very centre, a tiny pink newborn heart surrounded by circles. That pink heart is all a new life begins with. A heart waiting to be written upon, waiting to hold love and laughter, joy and sorrow, tears and smiles, acceptance of itself and others.

A small first circle, the palest grey, the murky world immediate to the newborn heart. This baby heart sees only blended shadows when it is first brought into being. Then a circle of lemon yellow, symbolic of the brightness of the world yet to be discovered. A circle of pale blue, the endless sky where someday perhaps that newborn heart will soar with the eagles. There are other circles surrounding that baby heart, but their colours are not yet defined.

The seamstress responsible for the beginnings of this quilt quickly tires of it. No longer wishing to be responsible for its continued expansion and growth, she consigns it to the floor of a closet for a time. Like the unfinished project it represents to her, she chooses to ignore it. Never even looking at it again, never picking it up to feel its warmth and softness, never realising how beautiful it already is.

Time goes by and finally the closet door is opened and the quilt rediscovered by the seamstress. Yet, she still wishes to have no part in its completion. And so she lends it to strangers. Never caring about what they might add to it, or whether they will even bother to keep it safe.

The quilt is treated shabbily for many years. Ugly, garish, clashing squares are added to it. Colours representing shame, guilt, anger, pain, despair, terror, and much more. All of them woven together with the threads of worthlessness. The strangers never wash the quilt, never care for it in any way. Its centre grows worn and grey. No longer a pink newborn heart, it is instead a heart with holes in it where the stuffing is leaking out. No longer vibrant in its newness it appears instead to be something that belongs in a trash barrel. Yet it never quite falls apart completely.

The quilt once more ends up on the floor of the closet for a long, long time. The door is opened one day and the quilt discovered by someone who sees past the ugly colours, the unravelling seams, the leaking heart. It is opened by someone who sees the quilt as it should have been, and believes it still can be.

The quilt is gently washed clean in warm, scented water. Slowly, painstakingly, its squares are joined once more, this time with threads of hope. Once more the quilt is washed. Something very strange appears to be happening. Those garish, ugly coloured squares seem to have softened their shades just a tiny bit.

The quilt is gone over carefully, slowly, with great care. One by one, its worn thin places are rewoven with stronger threads, threads of faith, acceptance, belief that it can survive and flourish. Once more the quilt is washed. Slowly, it appears that each separate square is joined more closely to its neighbours.

Others come along and decide they too would like to add to the quilt. There is an occasional square of friendship added, bright and sunny and covered with a multitude of flowers. Sometimes a square of accomplishment and triumph mysteriously appears, added without even realising it, vibrant green for life lived well. Each time something new is added the quilt is gently washed clean once more.

The quilt will continue to grow forever now. An occasional worn spot will be found from time to time. Sometimes a rip will need mending, or a hole need to be re-woven. But all of that is possible now that it is no longer consigned to the closet floor.

No longer belonging to the seamstress who started it all those years ago, the quilt now belongs to those who love and care for it, those who add to its beauty.

TRY THIS

SOME OF OUR FAVOURITE HEALING HINTS

HOPE JAR

Take a glass jar, paint it or cover it with stars. Every time something good happens to you, something special, an insight or wish, write it down on a piece of paper and put it in the jar. Alternatively, you can keep a little book of such messages. When you are feeling down and despairing, take out your messages and read them through, and remember that there is hope for happiness and healing in the world. You may also want to write a letter of hope to yourself, then give it to a friend to post back to you, as a surprise some time when they see you are in need of encouragement.



**Heavenly Hurt it gives us
We can find no scar
But internal difference
Where the meanings are**

The Healing Road

Draw the course of your life from the past, through the present, and into the imagined future. Start with where you've come from - for you, this may be your childhood, or it may be when you first began to remember. Then track your progress & forecast your future way. What is the surrounding environment like, and how clear are the boundaries between it and your path? Where are you on the path, and is there anyone/anything with you? Can you see the end of your path? Does it lie straight ahead, or branch off into different possible futures? If you keep this picture, you'll be able to come back to it later and see what progress you are making on the journey, and discover that things may have changed for you, including the view you have of your future.

Hide messages of self-nurturance all around your house - in books, under cushions, in coat pockets - places where you will find them unexpectedly, little reminders of your worth.

Resource Tree

Draw a tree with all the things that keep you going in life as its leaves. People, books, music, rain or sunshine, the feel of the earth under your feet or the thought of god in heaven, stuff big or small. Use colours to express feeling. Show your roots. Keep your tree, do another in two months' time, and see how your life (and you) are changing. Remember to record with each tree what things are like for you at the time, and how the picture makes you feel.

SPREAD SOME HAPPINESS

Practice random mindless kindness, and commit senseless acts of beauty. For example, put inspirational poems or dried flowers inside a library book. You'll soon find that what goes around comes around.

Daily Schedule

Create a pie chart to represent your daily schedule, so you can evaluate and reconsider time-sharing amongst your alters or inner parts, and maybe work out a better balance.

Turn to page 14 for more healing suggestions

4th International Society for the Study of Dissociation (UK) Conference
Chester, 1-3 April, 1998

First Person Plural - Vol 1 : Issue 1
Supplement

A Personal View by Kathryn Livingston

Your editor attended this conference after being approached by the organisers to present a poster display of artwork and poetry by people who experience dissociation. I would ask you to note that the organisers invited me and while I certainly viewed the opportunity as mutually beneficial I also took the invite to mean that the display would be an integral part of the conference on a par with other presentations being given. I don't think this was an unreasonable interpretation but in pre-conference contacts, during the conference itself and post conference I was repeatedly left with the impression that the conference organisers did not consider the *First Person Plural* display of equal value or even worth mentioning in any publicly available document.

I was sent a personal thank you note (see insert) with the Report of the conference (see p12) but neither the Report, nor the more substantial Proceedings make any mention of *First Person Plural*'s display presentation. Co-incidentally, the 'star' of the Conference, Stephen Braude has written a

Dear Kathryn,

We are writing to you following the 4th ISSD (UK) Conference to express our appreciation of your involvement as a presenter.

We feel that your presentation of poems and art work greatly contributed to making the days both interesting and thought provoking for the delegates.

Once again, thank you for all your hard work, and we hope we can look forward to meeting you again in the not too distant future. We wish you well with First Person Plural.

Yours Sincerely,

Jeanie McIntee, Conference Organiser, ISSD(UK)

book called "First Person Plural" which does get a mention. Delegates eating a Tapas buffet is seen to be more significant than a presentation of dissociators' poetry and artwork inspired by the dissociative experience and its traumatic origins which was on display throughout the 3 days of the conference; received much positive verbal feedback from delegates; and represented a significant amount of my time and energy to produce a professional and attractive display; not to mention the enormous amount of emotional energy represented by the works on display. My only consolation is that only one British presentation did get a mention in the Report.

My disillusionment began soon after I had accepted the invite. A request for confirmation that I would be entitled to the reduction in delegate fees being offered to all other presenters received no response. In the end I made the assumption and paid the

reduced fee which was not queried. A request for information about the availability of display equipment at the venue received the response that use of such equipment would be charged. I doubt if any of the other presenters were asked to pay for the equipment (ohp etc) needed for their presentations. I borrowed some display boards rather than pay a charge and conveyed these heavy and unwieldy boards to the venue in Chester by train and taxi. Not an easy task, I can assure you. I received a request from the organisers for a preview of the display to help them with conference planning. Fair enough if the preview material I sent impacted at all on their plans. It didn't except for a veto on my use of graphic artwork in the display. The request for preview began to feel like an insult to my 'professionalism', like I couldn't be trusted to put together a suitable display. I complied but then had to chase them up for a response and return of the original artwork. Similarly, my request for a flyer for *First Person Plural* to be included in the conference pack had to be chased. And although we were providing the benefit of free copies of the preview to all delegates by way of a launch (admittedly a mutually beneficial arrangement) we were told that flyers could only be included if we provided enough copies, so we did. They were not prepared to photocopy for us. Despite all these disempowering hurdles I arrived in Chester the day before the Conference complete with the *First Person Plural* poster display.

My personal thanks to

Julia & Co; The Tribe; The Collective and Anonymous
who sent work for inclusion in the display

I had been advised to take the poster display to the Chester Therapy Centre (the base for the ISSD UK) from where someone would escort me to the venue to set up the display. I hadn't anticipated being kept waiting for more than 2 hours, nor being left by my 'escorts' to tag along like a stray dog pulling the boards on their luggage wheels behind me with little assistance, nor being abandoned at the venue to find my own way to the pre-booked accommodation on site with not a single enquiry about any needs I might have.

Remember, I was known to be a person with a dissociative disorder invited to present at a conference on dissociation held in a city in which I am a stranger. Hadn't any thought been given by these professional 'experts' in dissociation about what this service-user involvement might mean? Obviously not. Fortunately, I had made my own arrangements to meet my support needs but a little indication that the conference organisers had given some thought to my possible needs would have been reassuring.

The conference itself was unsurprisingly professionally dominated although I spoke with 3 delegates who disclosed that they were also dissociators. It did seem that their presence was almost chance. This certainly was not a conference where the good practice concept of clients/service-users learning and contributing alongside professionals as equals had been taken on board. It was sad and hurtful to realise that although the organisers, presenters and many of the audience professed expertise in dissociation the whole set up, style of presentation etc. gave no consideration to making the conference accessible to the real experts - those who experience dissociation first hand.

I was pleased that the flyer for the **First Person Plural** poster display and newsletter had made it into the conference pack and happy that the display had been given a prominent position near to the registration desk in the room where all breaks were taken. Looking through my conference pack however I was dismayed that an otherwise comprehensive evaluation form which asked delegates to rate every single presentation and workshop individually excluded the **First Person Plural** poster display presentation. This 'oversight' (as it was explained to me) meant that there could be no formal collection of feedback from delegates about the display. I gracefully accepted the 'oversight' explanation at the time but it is difficult to continue doing so when after the 'oversight' was brought to the organisers attention it was repeated in the post-conference Report and Proceedings.

All in all, I am at a loss to understand why the organisers thought it was a good idea to have the poster display of dissociators' artwork and poetry at the conference but couldn't bring themselves to view it as an integral part of the conference with at least equal potential for impact as all the verbal presentations and workshops.

Although many of the verbal presentations were interesting and engaging it wasn't until the final session I attended on the final day that I really felt I 'belonged' and was welcome at this ISSD (UK) conference. More by chance than by design it was a very small group of 7 who attended this workshop session. The group were discussing the similarities in the symptomology of schizophrenia and dissociative disorders. The discussion was stimulating and enjoyable. It also helped me understand why schizophrenia has been one of the many misdiagnoses I acquired before my dissociative experiences were recognised. My sense of 'belonging' came about because of the small size of the group. Their apparent friendliness and acceptance meant I felt able to disclose more about my dissociative experiences than I had throughout the rest of the conference. In doing so, I had the experience of feeling valued - other group members commenting that they felt privileged to have a 'real expert' with them. My disclosures encouraged another group member to admit that she was a dissociator and we both shared our 'expertise' with the group. Afterwards, I was thanked genuinely and openly for my contribution to the success of the workshop. After all the negative it was good to be able to leave the conference with this very positive experience.

The verbal feedback I received about the **First Person Plural** poster display and the preview issue of the newsletter was mostly positive. I was a little disconcerted after the veto about graphic artwork and the difficult decisions faced about what to include and what to leave out to hear a few people comment that they were surprised by the 'tame'ness of the artwork as they had seen much graphic art by dissociators in their clinical practice. Fortunately, I was able to point these dissenters to a supplementary portfolio of graphic artwork which I made available to delegates despite the veto by clearly marking it as containing potentially triggering or upsetting material. While I had understood the reasoning behind the veto it seemed wrong to have to 'sanitise' a display of dissociators' artwork at a conference exploring the dissociative experience.

The conference was stressful, challenging, fulfilling, stimulating and healing. Despite my criticisms I do not regret having attended. I thank the ISSD(UK) for inviting me to present the poster display. I thank my therapist for providing the necessary support to enable my attendance. As a delegate I learned much and made contacts with many interesting people. Just imagine how much better the next one will be for me and other dissociators if the conference organisers heed my criticisms!!!!!!

There follows a summary description of all the conference sessions I attended.

Kafka Paper : Metamorphosis - the self assumes animal form - A fascinating if complex presentation by Jean Goodwin analysing Kafka's novella "Metamorphosis" as possibly an autobiographical account of Kafka's own undiagnosed dissociative disorder which featured animal alters.

Somatoform Dissociation and Trauma - Ellert Nijenhuis looking at a comparison between somatic (i.e. sense of body) dissociation and psychological dissociation and introducing a new screening test for dissociation based on somatic symptoms.

A Proposed Application of Beck's Model of Personality to Dissociative Phenomena - Fiona Kennedy introducing a model of dissociation which might be helpful in explaining to non-psychological clinicians and lay people the various levels of dissociation. Not sure it's effective, much of it went way over my head. The most memorable thing about it is the concept of a 'hot cross bun' type of dissociative phenomenon.

A Beginner's Guide to the Neuropsychology of Trauma - Andrew Cuthbertson and Vicki Killen doing their best to guide me through the differing pathways in the brain for data which ends up dissociated. Think I need the complete idiot's guide!

Healing through Separation - A Case Study of Infant Trauma and the Role of the Expressive Arts in Re-integration - Dorothy Scotten presenting what turned out to be her own healing journey using the visual arts. Ultimately it proved too triggering for me to 'stay with'. I do recall the presenter was very caught up in giving the 'right' interpretation of her artwork even when this went against her own experience of what the artwork represented for her. She would say things like "in Jungian terms this is..... but that's not how I experienced it" but then didn't say how she had experienced it.

Identification and Treatment of Dissociation and FMS by Psychologists and Psychiatrists in the UK - A very relevant presentation by Jeannie McIntee of some important UK research but unfortunately the speaker didn't have enough time and had to skip through the data. Unsurprisingly the research shows that dissociation is underdiagnosed by these professionals in the UK.

Dissociation among Inpatients at a Psychiatric Unit - Results of an Audit - Remy Aquarone presenting another important piece of British research which shows dissociation in the UK at comparable levels to the US and other countries where it is more readily recognised. One disturbing aspect of these results is that although the audit picked up 6% of inpatients screened as probable for Dissociative Identity Disorder this will not change their official diagnosis or treatment and no further assessment is planned.

Pregnancy and Parenting in Women with Multiplicity : Critical Issues in the Treatment Frame - Fascinating and encouraging presentation by Elizabeth Bohun and Marge Grahn-Bowman outlining the case studies of two women with unplanned pregnancies during therapy for DID and the surprising beneficial effect of the pregnancies and births on their healing.

Dissociation in Norway - A short presentation by Tor Boe of statistical research from Norway. The most profound feature was its illustration that Norway has the same problems of non-recognition of dissociation that the UK has.

To Work with Symbol drama, after Trauma, Dissociation and Sexual Abuse - A n unstimulating presentation (probably because of the style of presentation i.e. reading the paper, rather than content) by Doris Nilson on the use of an imagery technique called Symbol drama to help clients find stabilising factors inside themselves.

Deliberate Acts of Self-Mutilation in Women with Learning Disabilities - Too triggering for me to 'stay with' but I remember the speakers, Elizabeth Lloyd & Tamsin Cottis, focused on the additional difficulties in this field because of communication problems in people with learning disabilities.

Dissociation in the Caring Profession - A Multi National Perspective - David Crook speaking about research he has been doing with a missionary organisation doing relief work in the third world.

The Body Speaks - Jean Goodwin and Ellert Nijenhuis in an interesting conversation workshop looking at how trauma gets expressed in our bodies, in our body image and in our images of self before we have memories of the trauma. Suggested this could be used to connect to the trauma memories. The speakers again used Kafka's "Metamorphosis" as an autobiographical account to illustrate this. Therapists were advocated to return again and again to what was happening in their clients' bodies to help move them into understandings of their body image, images of self and memories of trauma.

Dissociative Cross-Dressing - June Conboy presenting two case studies of dissociative cross dressing in men who suffered repeated incidents of abuse in which being cross-dressed and sexualised was a theme.

DID and Psychiatric Diagnosis - A Cultural Perspective - Rupert Khan taking a social anthropologist's view of the cultural construction theories of MPD/DID.

The Importance of Assessment in Conducting Successful DID Groups - Jane Lamont outlining her experience of running groups for DID survivors. This was an encouraging presentation as Jane is a Clinical Psychologist working in the NHS and treating 5 DID women both on a one to one and group basis.

Images of the Body in Transformation - Another complex but fascinating presentation by Jean Goodwin looking at four body image syndromes - the body in bits and pieces; the dead body; the enemy body; and the poison body. Exemplary cases, paradigmatic scenes and stories drawn from legends, fairy tales or published historical cases were used to explore the way in which the reworking of past trauma can allow a beginning resolution of bodily symptoms and body image problems.

Dissociation and/or ADHD, Autism, Schizophrenia - This workshop led by Marise Maddison and Vivienne Turley was my most positive experience and is outlined above.

The following are the titles of sessions I did not attend:-

A Relational Psychotherapy Model for Group Work with Women with Dissociative Disorder - Elizabeth Bohun & Marge Grahn-Bowman

The Connection between Trauma, Dissociation and Deliberate Self-harm - An Experiential Workshop - Alan Cockett and Patricia Stewart

Credibility Under Fire-Some Encouraging Words - Stephen Braude

Masterclass on the Administration and Interpretation of the SDQ and treatment of Somatic Dissociative Symptoms in Dissociative Disorder Patients - Ellert Nijenhuis

Copies of the Conference Proceedings are available from ISSD (UK) 01244 390121. Further brief details from my notes of any particular session I attended are available by writing to me at the **First Person Plural** address enclosing a s.a.e.

Report from the 4th ISSD (UK) Conference
Psychological Trauma and its Effect on the Body
Depersonalisation, Psychosomatic symptoms

1-3 April 1998

The stunning, historic city of Chester welcomed the fourth ISSD (UK) Conference for what promised to be the most exciting conference yet. The venue was the University College Chester. The aims were not only to provide a forum for informative, interesting presentations and workshops but to unite professionals in our endeavour to increase the awareness of dissociation in the UK.

We were extremely fortunate to have been able to welcome many distinguished speakers who shared their expertise and intellect and brought great richness and variety to the proceedings. Key note speakers included Professor Stephen Braude, author of "First Person Plural", and "Limits of Influence", who is a lecturer at the Faculty of Philosophy in the University of Maryland. Professor Braude treated us to a motivational talk - "Credibility Under Fire-Some encouraging words". Dr. Jean Goodwin from the USA, presented her Kafka Paper: Metamorphosis-The Self Assumes Animal Form, and also her paper Images of the Body in Transformation. On Thursday afternoon Dr Goodwin teamed up with Ellert Nijenhuis from the Netherlands for a conversation workshop- "The Body Speaks". The presentation was clinical in orientation and attempted to incorporate questions and input from participants. During his own presentation Ellert Nijenhuis shared with the ISSD delegates his ground breaking research on Somatoform in- "Somatoform Dissociation and Trauma", particular attention was paid to the SDQ-20, the SDQ-5 and the association of Somatoform dissociation and reported trauma. For those who wished to explore the subjects further, Ellert gave a Master Class on "Somatoform Dissociation: Administration and Interpretation of the SDQ-20" where he showed videos of clinical work and explained how to use body language to identify alters and hidden issues urgently impeding the client's well-being.

Elizabeth Bohun a Licensed Independent Clinical Social Worker and Family Therapist, together with Marge Grahn Bowman also a Clinical Social Worker and Family Therapist from New York, held a workshop entitled-"A Relational Psychotherapy Model for Group Work". They were able to demonstrate, using their vast experience, how they

handle the emotional intensity of group therapy, and presented guidelines for those involved in groups. Elizabeth Bohun presented a paper on "Pregnancy and Parenting in Women with Multiplicity: Critical Issues in the Treatment Frame" which discussed clinical realities and dilemmas that women experience on becoming pregnant and proposed a method of working to support those mothers choosing to carry the baby. Dorothy Scotten joined us from the USA to give a workshop on "Healing through Separation: A Case Study of Infant Trauma and the Role of the Expressive Arts in Re-integration". She offered us insight into infant psychological trauma through the eyes of one survivor, which results in dissociation and finally natural inclinations towards self healing. Another popular item on the programme was an experiential workshop by Dr Alan Cockett, and Tricia Stewart, from the Orchard Lodge Young Peoples Unit located in Somerset, UK, looking at self harming behaviours.

The Conference drew professionals from all over Great Britain and also all over the United States, The Netherlands, and Canada. And finally we are extremely pleased to report that we had one delegate who joined us from Northern Ireland.

The table below shows the number of those attending in their professional groupings in order of their frequency:

<u>DELEGATES BY PROFESSION</u>	<u>NUMBER</u>	<u>DELEGATES BY PROFESSION</u>	<u>NUMBER</u>
Clinical Psychologists	13	Hypnotherapist	1
Students	6	Administrator	1
Psychotherapists	4	Solicitor	1
Psychologists	3	Educational Psychologist	1
Counsellors	3	Speech/Language Therapist	1
Community Nurses	3	Trainer	1
Family Therapists	2	Charity Worker	1
Senior Lecturers	2	Physician	1
Centre Proprietors	2	Day Care Officer	1
Teacher	1	Psychiatrists	1
Social Worker	1	Social Anthropologist	1
Expressive Therapist	1		
		TOTAL	52

On the first evening of the Conference the Lord Mayor of Chester, welcomed delegates to Chester at a reception at the Chester Town Hall. This was followed by a wonderful, relaxing evening of good company and a tasty Tapas buffet accompanied by live jazz music, at Alexander's jazz Club in Chester where once again we were amazed by the multi-talented, Stephen Braude.

Finally, we are very excited at the plan for the 1999 ISSD Conference which is going to be the International and UK Conference combined. The favoured location at the moment is the Manchester Conference Centre, and proposed dates are the 7th, 8th and 9th of April, 1999.

Anyone wishing to purchase proceedings from this years conference or from previous years should contact the ISSD UK office on 01244 390121

TREASURE BOX

Create a box for your children (or anyone, for that matter) into which you can put messages of encouragement and praise, nice pictures, spare money, special treats. You can write little stones

about what you did during the day, especially if young alters/inner parts don't get much body time, so they know how the life is being spent and get a regular reminder that this is "Now", not back then. You can ask the children if they would like to make or decorate the box themselves, or it can be a surprise for them - a box belonging to the good fairies who watch over them. You can paint it, cover it with beautiful paper, or put stars all over it. Have a removable lid and a slot in the top. Every evening at a quiet time that you have to share just between yourselves, the children can open their box and see what you, others, or "the good fairies" have put in there for them. This is a nice way to spend some safe, positive time with your children, acknowledging their existence and repeatedly showing your appreciation for the fact that they are there. You're not only saying that you love them, but also WHY you love them. And you're teaching them about what it feels like to get gifts in a SAFE way, which is something they may never have experienced before. This is reparenting at it's most enchanting! Xmas every day! One warning - please make sure a reliable adult checks the box first to make sure there is nothing scary or negative in there.

THE LAYERS OF YOU

This exercise is especially good for those who have large, complex systems. Using sheets of transparent paper, draw each layer of your system on separate pages and then bind them together. Each self may be represented by a symbol, and their various relationships with other selves may be denoted by different types of lines (ie. solid, dashed, dotted, coloured).

... OR ...

For this you need a photograph of yourself, sheets of white tissue paper, turps, and a rag. Lay the tissue paper on a hard surface. Do an enlarged photocopy the photo and place it face down on the tissue paper and rub its back hard with a turps-soaked cloth. Do this for about a minute. See if the image has transferred by gently peeling back one corner of the photocopy. The result should be layers of images on each of the sheets of tissue paper, representative of your layered selves.

Make a plaster impression of your hand



A SCAPECOAT

Make a scapecoat from cloth or other material. Detail in painting, writing, and with things pinned and stitched to it all the insults, traumas, wounds, scars you've endured in your life. "I've kept the coat hung from the ceiling in the hallway and every time I walked near it, instead of feeling bad, I felt good. I found myself admiring the [spirit] of the woman who could wear such a coat and still be walking ... singing, creating, and wagging her tail ... some times we call them battlecoats, for they are proof of the endurance, the failures and the victories of individual women."

(From Women Who Run With the Wolves.)

Share your healing exercises with us ...

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Processing Memories - A Five Point Plan

by Sara Lambert

Re-associating memories of abuse without processing them is retraumatising. The whole point of going through the anguish and horror of remembering is that, as you process your memories, you learn valuable information, develop more self-awareness and understanding, that will help you with your current life.

My stance is that healing from abuse does not have to be hell. Many people think processing memories is such hard work it is easier to avoid it. But the real hell is holding inside yourself a writhing mass of knowledge and feeling and not knowing what on earth to do with it. A five-point process, if followed through in a safe and courageous manner, will give containment, meaning, and ultimately peace, to abuse memories.

Each of the five points is essential to healing completely. Some people try to skim through, or miss some points altogether, - perhaps because they do not know what they are doing; because they are scared or in a hurry to be 'fixed'. Most therapists agree that, if you do not process memories thoroughly, the unfinished material will keep coming back in one way or another until you deal with it.

Before we look at the points it is worth reminding you that, to ensure processing is as safe as possible, with a minimum of pain, you need to have completed some safety and trust work with your therapist. Trying to delve into this work without those basic foundations in your therapeutic relationship is a disaster waiting to happen.

1. Knowing What Happened. This means getting the memories, through flashbacks, abreaactions, dreams, intellectual awareness, stories told by other selves etc. In the early days of your healing, all you may know is that you were abused. As you go on, you may be able to say to yourself, "I wasnever loved..... raised in a cultbashed on my 3rd birthday had my hand put on the stove and that's why I have this scar....." Each level of knowledge, and each piece of information, must be processed. Some, of course can be processed as a group. So, for example, you do not necessarily have to go through all five points of processing for each episode of physical abuse if it is fulfilling enough for you to process the fact of the physical abuse as a whole. This condensing of material is especially helpful for survivors

who went through extreme, chronic abuse and so would be in therapy all their lives if they had to process each episode individually. But some people do need to do a thorough, itemised accounting of their abuse. If that includes you, it does not mean you are doing it badly or inefficiently. It is just the way you need to do it, and that's okay. And it is true that, the more you process memories, the easier it gets. You get to know yourself, your system, and the methods that work best for you. You develop an instinct for when you are on the right track. In short, you become an expert at it.

2. Feeling the Feelings. This is the scariest part of healing for many, who have gone through their lives dissociating and constantly distracting themselves from their feelings. The most common assumption is that, if you are not crying half the time and raging the other half, you are not healing 'properly'. This is not true! There is no value in becoming lost in feeling. On the other hand, you cannot avoid the emotions altogether. The main damage done by abuse is upon a survivor's psychological state. If this damage is not addressed, true healing cannot be reached. This does not mean you have to be so overcome with misery that you are constantly suicidal. Yes, you do need to touch on how you felt when you were being abused, but only so you are able to understand why you have the emotional difficulties you have today. It is enough to feel part of it for a short time, and no more. You do not have to relive the depth, intensity, and duration of the feelings you had during the abuse. There is no purpose in doing so, apart from wanting to hurt yourself.

Before you enter this phase of processing, it is essential to make sure you have a number of techniques for dimming down intense feelings, distracting yourself in healthy ways, controlling feelings as if they were subject to an on-off dial, and putting yourself in a calm happy state. It also helps to have a list of fun things you can do to take a break from healing work for a while. In fact, having time out is important for therapeutic reasons. Keeping up a relentless pace and forcing yourself to deal with abuse and recovery issues all the time replicates the pressurised, uncaring environment in which you grew up, which makes it self-abusive.

3. Understanding What It Means. This is the point at which you look at the information you have gathered (what happened and how you felt about it) and relate it to your life right now. This can be a fascinating, affirming time as you start to make sense of the strange problems you have always had. On the other hand, it can also be devastating as you realise just how badly the abuse affected you. Feelings of outrage, desires for justice or revenge, and wanting to confront your abuser(s) are common during this time, as are despair and suicidality. It is important not to act on any of these impulses. You are only half way through the process. If you act before it is completed, you deny yourself the chance to act from a place of true choice, a place of wholeness.

Write down the understandings you come to as soon as possible. It is easy to lose information through dissociation and denial and, although that might seem like the best option at the time because it stops the pain, you will regret it further down the road. A safe container for information is one of the most beneficial therapeutic tools a survivor can have.

Again, if you have poor safety foundations with your therapist, you may find it hard to get through this period without crises. You need someone trustworthy to talk to about your growing comprehension of just what the abuse means to you. Isolation may also become a major issue as you realise just how 'different' your life has been from many people's lives, so this may be a good time to join a peer support group. At the same time, it can be invaluable to spend time with non-survivors enjoying 'ordinary' life, to keep yourself grounded and to act as a reminder that there is more to you and your life than only abuse survival.

4. Mourning Your Losses. Abuse takes a lot from children. Not only are the innocence and joy of childhood stolen, but also the unfolding freshness and delight of growing up, the security of maturity, and the hope for the future. You need to mourn the loss of these precious things. If you don't, they will never be laid to rest.

Mourning is about accepting that something is irrevocable - that it has happened and cannot be changed, only accepted. This has the potential to be the most deeply painful

aspect of processing abuse memories. But the wave of emotion you feel this time is a benevolent one that, if you allow it to happen freely, will sweep you forward to a better perspective. Things you can do to help yourself at this time include drawing, talking, writing, and moving to express your feelings; comfort and gentle self-nurturing; and really making an effort to listen to yourselves - listen to your grief and also, equally important, your hopes and dreams for who you would ideally like to be. While the mourning stage can cause great desolation it can also be the moment when you realise that the abuse is past, and that you are in control of your life and where it is leading now. Try to take this opportunity to create some good out of all the bad you have suffered.

5. Integration. When you have integrated a memory into your conscious mind, it's like regaining lost senses. Before, when you were triggered by something, you did not know what triggered you, understand why you were feeling so bad, or know what to do about it. Now you have all those answers. This does not mean that suddenly you won't be triggered anymore - what it does mean is that you will be able to understand the trigger and know what to do to help yourself in a safe and healthy way. And as time goes on, the trigger's power over you will lessen and eventually disappear.

Some people recover a memory and believe they should immediately be at this last point, as if all the process in between will magically sort itself out. They may seem to speed through therapy and have wonderful results very quickly. But the real work has not been done.

I can imagine many of you are feeling overwhelmed now, thinking, if I have to do all that for each memory, I'll never get out of therapy. But in fact a process may take half an hour or half a year. You may have little need for mourning for some memories. For others you may need to repeat the process a number of times. It will probably never be easy, but I do believe it will be a lot easier and less painful, ultimately, than just leaving memories raw and bleeding at the back of your mind.

(Article first appeared in "Team Spirit", Vol 31)

POEMS & RHYMES

Remembrance Hour

Tempting to me,
 to sing with others
 of the un-named dead,
 inspired by poets,
 carrying the spirit of their people
 through darkness.
 Like the story of the man
 pulling out his own heart,
 to light the way.
 And the sounds you've woven
 hit the right chord, in me,
 as I remember my people,
 of this land,
 those I have known
 and those unmet,
 sacrificial victims
 to the same evil,
 as in Chile, in Russia.
 Children ungrown,
 in mothers' wombs,
 babies, newborn, and older,
 slain by knife, by fire,
 encloaked in hatred, in terror,
 all those who've died since,
 in a nightmare never ended,
 whether by their own hand, or not.
 I remember, Tania, of my age,
 it could have been me,
 but I was destined
 to hold the knife,
 to live to be free,
 as your blood was spilt,
 your heart ripped out,
 then devoured,
 and somehow you lit the way,
 for me to remember,
 to remember to this day,
 our shared life in the nightmare,
 your cruel death, your life ended.



So I'd like to sing with you,
 but can not
 as I'm not here enough
 to learn the songs true,
 but I may not have been here
 even if I stood with you
 hearing the screams of the dead,
 "I see, I hear, I touch
 you drawing near",
 as they've penetrated my being,
 in times past, times passed,
 and reach me again,
 in this "remembrance hour".

by Kali

Time Traveller

*I'm a traveller through the ages
 With sci-fi time machine,
 Turning history's pages
 Back to my chosen scene.
 The mists of time are clearing,
 Doors open to the past.
 My nemesis is nearing,
 Revenge is mine at last.
 No more am I the helpless
 Child paralysed with fear.*



*You see me now a tigress,
 A huntress to rovere.
 Claws sharpened to perfection,
 Teeth honed to lethal bite,
 Joints held in ready flexion;
 A paragon of might.
 With cunning perseverance
 I track my childhood's bane
 And wreak my awesome vengeance
 For a life of fear and pain.*

by Rhymaster

Through the Looking Glass

I stand before the glass:
Searching it's mercurial depths
For hints of who I am
Beneath the lacquered surface,
Hoping to find my shadow
Reflected in high relief.

First I see a survivor's body
Clear in my own mind's eye,
Then come the hidden child-
ghosts

And sepia echoes of the past:
I am everyone and no-one,
Searching for an eye witness.

Her in sobering maturity,
I play the model citizen:
Acting good wife and mother,
Tending my tiny grandchildren,
Cleaning windows, cutting grass.
Doing what is needed.

Except in those growing times,
When muted voices call my name
Then I become disconnected,
The polished surface cracks
To reveal a frightening mosaic
Of other people's half-lives.

Yet still I search the mirror
For signs of likeness,
For an image more familiar,
That I might place my hand
In the palm print of another
And know we are one.

For am I one or many?
One of many or one alone?
Does my changing face fit
Within this silvered frame,
Or should I close my senses,
Turn my picture to the wall?

Tell me now how I can be:
Once born but not reflected,
Given no-body, no grasp of self
Struggling for an existence.
I am fighting for my life;
Alone I have no answers.

It seems I am neither mainstream
Nor, perhaps extreme enough,
To see my place clearly
To feel free enough to move
Towards a natural confluence
Of like minds, shining in
certainty

For though I am not like Mother
Yet I do not seem like you:
I cannot see myself reflected
In the images of my mind.
Then how may I know for sure
Just who or what is me?

By Caro Archer



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Prizes

Remembering Trauma by Phil Mollon
A Psychotherapist's Guide to Memory and Illusion



An accessible, readable and admirably thorough look at memory, the false memory arguments, and pitfalls for therapists and others working with abuse survivors. Thoughtful, balanced, emphasising the need to hold uncertainty while remaining present for the client. Avoiding dogmatic conclusions, Mollon shows that uncertainty, ambiguity and confusion are part of the experience of traumatic problems and the real life of the consulting room, a condition that the therapist or counsellor must tolerate and work within. Wide ranging and comprehensive, drawing on cognitive and analytic psychology, this book is a useful guide for practitioners of most therapeutic traditions, who must find ways of understanding and dealing with traumatic memories in the course of therapy. It includes material looking at dissociation and its effects on memory.

United We Stand by Eliana Gil
A Book for People with Multiple Personalities



This short illustrated American book is written in simple layman's language for individuals with multiple personalities, and explains what multiplicity is, why it develops, how to understand it, and when and how to seek help. Multiples have too long suffered with nagging worries about being crazy or so unique that they cannot have friends or companionship. This book defines multiplicity as a creative and life saving adaptive strategy, not as a 'disorder' or sign of mental illness.

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