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Newsletter for Dissociators and their Allies

October, 1998

Vol 1: Issue 2

Contents

Editorial Statement	2
A Note on Terminology	2
A Day in the Lives (MPDtoon)	2
Dear Kathryn.....	3
The Tribe steps up, steps out, gets involved	4
Resources	5
Book Review	6
What is Dissociation	7
Tips for Grounding	10
Checking out potential therapist _	11
Tragedy of Non-recognition of Dissociative Disorders	12
We have a winner!!	12
Poems and Rhymes	13
Last Laugh!	15
Subscription Form	16

EyeStalk by AMAM

(detail from larger un-titled painting)



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Editorial Statement

While every effort will be made to keep contributions complete and unedited we 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. Both lay and professional contributors to First Person Plural can be experts in their own experiences only. The contents of this newsletter are for information purposes only. The newsletter is not intended to be a substitute for competent professional consultation or supervision or to replace other informal networks of support

Contributions to next issue to be received by 18th Dec, '98
articles; stories; resources; book reviews; tips; poetry; artwork; personal experiences

ATTENTION

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

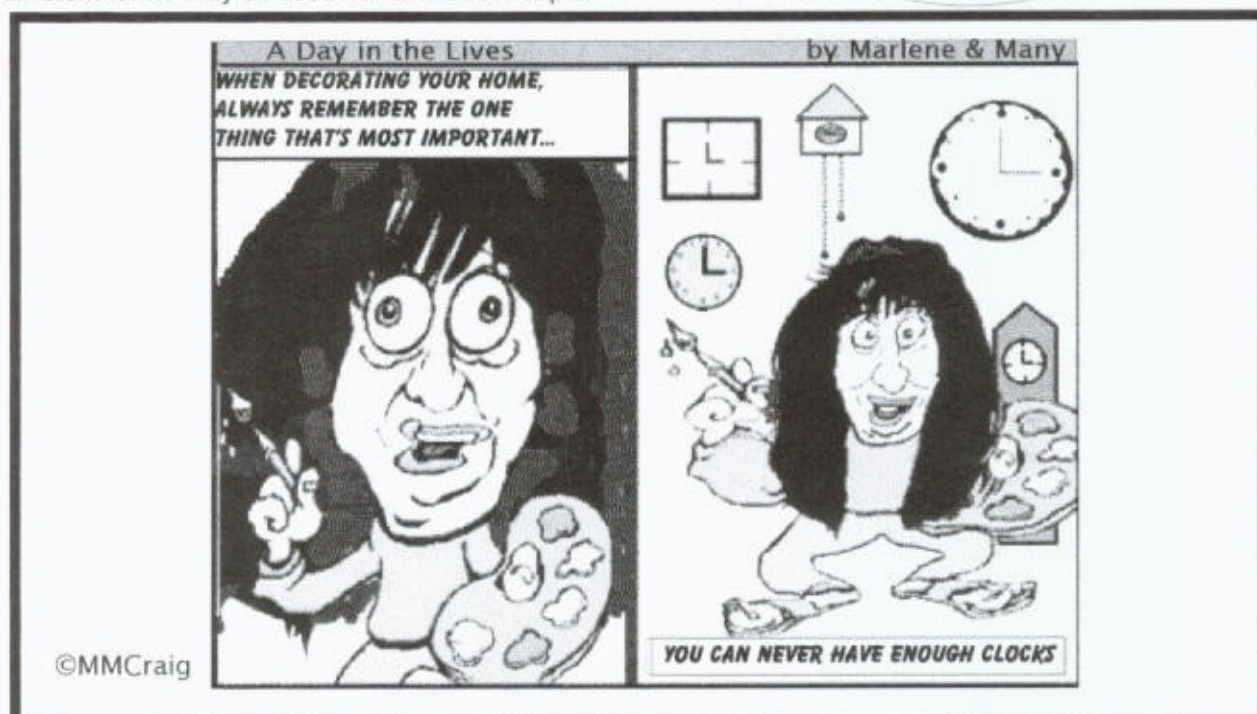
A note on terminology

Multiplicity; Multiple Personality Disorder; Dissociative Identity Disorder; MPD; DID; DDNOS; Multie; Dissociator; Multiple Personality Gift; Host; Core; System; Alters; Parts; Ego States; Switching; Fusion; Blending; Integration; Out Front; Gone Deep; Fragmented; Co-present; 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.

Art work wanted

The cartoon below is a sample of the art work of an MPD survivor from USA. More of her work will feature in future issues. But this is a UK newsletter. Where are all the talented British dissociative artists? I know you are out there. Your work could feature on these pages too. Any kind of artwork, not just cartoons, as long as it will reproduce by photocopier. Black and white line drawing is best but we have the technology to convert colour drawings to black and white



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 and other topics of interest to readers.

If you require personal replies you must send a large 31p s.a.e with your letter. Your letter, if printed, will be allocated a letter number. If an s.a.e. is not received responses sent to the First Person Plural address below may be published in the next issue. If you are replying to a letter allocated a letter number please place your response in a sealed envelope with the letter number clearly marked on the outside. Place this envelope inside a second stamped envelope for posting to the address below.

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

Fascinated!!!!

I would like to thank you for all the love, work and dedication you have put into the development of First Person Plural. I was fascinated by your experience with the ISSD conference in Chester. I was trying to imagine having to haul everything around in a completely non-sympathetic environment. I think I would have believed I must be in the wrong place! I guess that practicalities and the need to respect the needs and contributions of all participants was something that didn't enter the planning agenda. I ended up with the impression that it was an "academic" conference which included a bit of "realia" for credibility and impact. I hope that your comments are taken on board. It would be lovely to see professionals wholeheartedly working together with survivors rather than "treating" them.

Helen D

Editor's comment: - I agree with Helen, it would be a step towards greater recognition and more services for dissociative survivors if the professionals worked more with us rather than treating us as research objects or "a bit of realia". In fairness to the organisers of the conference however I would point out that a) they don't pretend their conference is anything other than an event for professionals; and b) the organisers are a small band of people who put on the conference through sheer dedication to the subject area while carrying on their normal duties in their various practices.

More praise

I got FPP in the post today! How wonderful. Congratulations on doing a truly excellent job, especially for your first issue. I am honestly impressed - and I wouldn't say that if I didn't mean it.

Sara L

Editor's comment: - Crikey, you've got me blushing. It's always rewarding to be given compliments, if a little embarrassing too. Sara's praise is particularly rewarding as she has been producing Team Spirit in New Zealand for 3 years so has some first hand experience of how much effort and heartache goes into producing a newsletter of this type. Thanks Sara!

Any Scots out there?

I am interested in e-mail or pen pals. I would like some one in Scotland. I am a SRA survivor who is a co-present DID. I am a middle aged female from west of the Rockies U.S.A. I am actively seeking spiritual awareness and growth and would like to correspond with others who are also doing this. Religious preference is unimportant to me, however I am currently involved in a Quaker Friends community. I am primarily from Cherokee (cougar clan) and Scottish (Campbell of Cawdor clan) bloodlines. However, I know that there is also some connection with Egypt, that I have not been able to completely sort out. I am interested in genealogy, crafts of many types and cats of any type. I have a son in his early 20's and several former step children I helped raise in the 20's to 30's. I am also involved in support groups for SRA survivors, DID's and DE's. It is ok to reprint my letter with e-mail and snail mail address. E-mail correspondence is preferred for me because of cost and manual dexterity. I have difficulty writing much by hand and don't have a typewriter or personal computer. I borrow a friends computer or use a public library one. Blessings!

Tess Angelinne

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The Tribe steps up, steps out, gets involved!

by George, with and on behalf of the Tribe

Last November we were one of four people invited to share our stories at a one day seminar called "Psychosis or Spiritual Emergence" which explored the concept of mental illness as a growthful spiritual experience, part of the psyche's attempt to heal itself. It was the first time we had risked exposing our multiplicity in front of a group of strangers. We've felt moved to share this because we're upset at attempts to medicalise what we see as a sacred journey.

In one language our story is one of soul loss and soul restoral; in another one of dissociation and multiplicity. Both accurately depict our history. A new born faced with the trauma of sexual abuse has limited choices, one of which is death. Our choice was to survive through a series of splits; to become multiple.

There were many splits that now form our tribe though not everyone feels safe to be mentioned. There's Gemma, the first to meet the world at school and discover how truly different we were, a first taste of not belonging and knowing secrets too dangerous to be told. Aslak, who carried the NSPCC's number with him until he discovered life imprisonment did not literally mean for life and so telling would lead eventually to death. Robyn, whose reverse 'road to Damascus' experience - being taken by the throat by god and expelled beyond the pale of humanity - haunts her still and Susquahannah, who endured, at 16, our one and only brush with the mental health system. Her memories of witnessing Electroconvulsive Therapy (ECT) have kept us away from doctors, hospitals and drugs ever since.

Overseeing our journey is Freya, the Inner Healer, who somehow gave Gemma the nonce to keep silent, kept the NSPCC's number in Aslak's pocket and gave Susqua a glimpse of the system and its horrors. By 18 there were no emotions, no feelings, no body, soul or spirit left, just an empty shell functioning as pure intellect. Freya devised the Bottle Lady to protect us, she mirrored the outside world and functioned as quasi-wife, mother, friend, committee member, facilitator. Inside we knew it was all a lie, totally disconnected to any inner core place, but the world was well deceived and we were kept safe until we were ready to start this quest in earnest; until we found the right therapist to care, to support us through this process.

Aliena miseriordia - the kindness of strangers - have been a huge feature of our journey. Whether the strangers be animal or human they have an uncanny knack of manifesting at the blackest moments of greatest need. We count Death, suicide, amongst their number. All our lives we've walked alongside death as an ever present possibility, a real choice, a good friend whose presence allows for another hour, another day, when another breath feels unbearable. Owl, eagle, wolf, bear, the headteacher who rescued Susqua from hospital, Ann who reached out when we needed her most, each one feeds our sense that the Universe is overseeing our journey at a level beyond our mind's encompassing.

Starting this journey in earnest 7 years ago we still lived in the world of house, children, work and friendships.

As the process became more intense "normal" life became increasingly impossible to sustain until 4 years ago we walked out on our whole past. Since then our journey has been a full time occupation. We find we need almost total isolation to safely be as we truly are and we often walk a tightrope keeping the volcanic eruptions of rage of some of the most hurting members of the Tribe under control. Only our collective tenor of incarceration makes it possible. As we dissociate into the numb, grey fog less often the frequency of emotional eruptions escalates.

Beyond the loving container of therapy we have been helped by the holotropic breathwork developed by Stanislav and Christina Grof whose cognitive maps of the unconsciousness have helped our understanding.

Gabrielle Roth's maps of the dance, the 5 rhythms, has led us deeper and deeper into discovering and expressing our authenticity and truth. They are directly responsible for our refusal to hide our multiplicity. Beyond that we walk, we paint, draw and write, read story books, play with dog and make things.

During the last 7 years, and before, we've felt drawn by a sense of destiny, some internal force sending us not only on our personal quest for healing but a sense of something bigger - some intangible but very real feeling that what happened to us has a purpose beyond being the capricious whim of some vicious, punishing god. Frequently, we struggle blind, groping towards a sense of rightness, trusting that "way will open" and that the Universe will, at each step, give us what we need.

I agree for my name to be used in this piece - Gemma, Azlak, Robyn, Susquahannah.

RESOURCES



The Bookshelf



Goulding, R A & Schwartz, R C :
The Mosaic Mind
(see p 6 for a review)

Hacking, I : Rewriting the Soul

Haydn, T : Ghost Girl

Khan, M. : Hidden Selves

Phillips, Fred : Healing the Divided Self

Singer, J : Repression & Dissociation

Waites, E : Trauma & Survival : Post -
traumatic and Dissociative
Disorders in Women



NEWSLETTERS

Interested in subscribing to overseas newsletters but put off by the hassle and cost of sending foreign currency abroad? Then write to the Editor at FPP.

If enough people show an interest I would be willing to act as agent for multiple subscriptions for a small fee to cover the cost of foreign currency bank draft i.e. you'd pay your subscription for the overseas newsletter plus a share of the bank charges by sending a British currency cheque/PO to FPP and I would arrange your subscription to the foreign newsletter, sending them a multiple order covered by one foreign currency bank draft to cover all your subscriptions. If you are interested in such a scheme **send no money now**, just write and let me know which newsletters you'd like to subscribe to and I will contact you with further details if there is enough interest in the scheme

Many Voices, PO Box 2639, Cincinnati,
OH 45201-2639, USA European subs.
\$48US for 6 issues (c£28.25)

Team Spirit, PO Box 21-503, Henderson,
Auckland, New Zealand (new address)
Overseas subs. \$36NZ for 6 issues (c£11)



Book Review by Caroline Archer

The Mosaic Mind : Empowering the tormented selves of child abuse survivors by Regina A Goulding & Richard C Schwartz; Norton, 1995

Teaming up with Regina Goulding, an attorney working mainly on child abuse cases, Professor Richard Schwartz, a psychotherapist with many years experience has produced this magnificent account of fragmentation of the mind which occurs in individuals who experience repeated abuses. Moreover, he does this in an incisive, inspirational manner, without minimising or pathologising the hurtful consequences of these challenges to the survivor.

Schwartz proposes an Internal Family Systems (IFS) model to make sense of the dissociative features which he sees in his adult clients. IFS can be compared to the way individuals function as part of a family. He suggests that each of us, however healthy, has "parts" which express differing aspects of ourselves - clusters of feelings, experiences, responses, beliefs, thoughts. For most people these "parts" are accessible at appropriate times and work in relative harmony. However, in people who have been severely abused, there may be far less awareness of these disparate parts; far less choice about how they feel or act, and far more conflict between the parts.

What makes Schwartz's model so valuable is his proposition that everyone can get in touch with all the parts of their "inner family" by engaging in an internal dialogue. For survivors, this can become a direct route to greater emotional health, since it allows those less familiar, dissociated parts to communicate and be acknowledged. Gradually, greater coherence, collaboration and integration can be achieved, as even the most "unacceptable" parts are validated and transformed.

The most powerful message from this book is that each and every one of us has a true self, a central core or essence, which remains intact and capable of acting in a powerful leadership role, even after the most horrendous childhood experiences. Schwartz suggests that other parts act as protectors of this true self, allowing the child to survive, but in adulthood denying the essential self her true power. An empowered true self is accepting, uncritical and capable of acting always in the best interests of the whole person.

The therapeutic interventions described in the book are focused on acknowledging all parts of the self and taking responsibility for them. Schwartz suggests that the parts tend to fall into three groups - "exiles" (hurt child parts); "managers" who are very strong, fiercely protective of the self, and highly focused on appearing "normal" at all costs. "Firefighters" are highly reactive and can be both destructive and intimidating within the self-system and outside. However, Schwartz reminds us they are never the only parts in existence and are best understood as once functional ways of protecting a very hurt and scared child.

As a dissociator who does not wholly fit the diagnostic criteria for DID, I found the book extremely validating. It has offered me a therapeutic way forward which is evolving with the support of my therapist. It is rare to find a volume so free of judgement and so directly empowering. I bought my copy in the US and it may not be readily available in the UK but it can probably be ordered through specialist UK book suppliers or from virtual bookstores on the Internet.

What is Dissociation

by Sara Lambert

Dissociation is the act of separating something from your awareness. It is an important defense mechanism that everyone has against becoming overwhelmed by the noise and visual chaos of daily life. When things get too much, we simply switch off pieces so we don't have to hear them, see them, or know about them. Usually we don't actually decide to do this. Our brain does it automatically for us. When a child is being overwhelmed by the pain and fear of some traumatic event like being beaten up or raped, she may use dissociation to mentally escape a situation which she can not escape physically. Children are especially good at this. They still have wonderful, unlimited imaginations that allow them to shape their world beyond the boundaries of "reality". So during trauma they can float up to the ceiling, disappear into a wall, or sit with Jesus on a cloud, and so escape experiencing the trauma being done to them. Multiple personality defence is one variation of this dissociative process. Alter selves are created by a child to take her place while she is being traumatised.

Dissociation is a highly efficient defense against physical and emotional pain. It works quickly and thoroughly. Because of this, it is very addictive. A child who is being traumatised repeatedly learns to use dissociation as an automatic response to anything dangerous or frightening. The problem is that she has to dissociate as soon as something looks like being dangerous, or else she will experience pain. So she becomes hypervigilant for any signs of potential danger and, the moment she sees one, she dissociates. She does not wait to find out whether it really was dangerous or not. After a while, it isn't even her choice. Her brain and body have habituated to dissociation. So, even when she has grown up and the trauma has stopped, she is still living in constant fear. It's a sad way to live.

Dissociative experiences can, for the sake of simplicity, be divided into three sections:- dissociation of the outside world, the inside world, and memory (including MPD/DID). You may be able to relate to elements in some or all of these. As you read through the lists, remember that every item is a clever defence mechanism that tries to protect you from experiencing any more pain and trauma in your life. Also, you do not have to experience every item on every list to qualify as a dissociator. *[Editor's note:- Some items in the lists are common to all people; some could indicate problems other than dissociation. You are advised against defining yourself as a dissociator solely on the basis of a checklist of experiences. However, it can be a first step to deciding if professional assessment and help for a dissociative disorder is advisable.]*

Dissociative Perception of the Outside World.

A common example of this type of dissociation is "highway hypnosis". This is when you are driving in your car and suddenly realise you can't remember the last few miles of your journey. You were in a kind of trance which took your mind away, perhaps to rest, perhaps to think about other things, while the rest of you continued operating on automatic control. Everyone does this sometimes. But when a person has been traumatised, they may dissociate from the environment in more extreme ways. This is because otherwise they would be paralysed in terror of all the potential dangers out there.

One form of dissociation from the environment is to "focus in" on a small part of it to the exclusion of everything else. If you do this, you might relate to the following experiences.

- You bump into walls and furniture a lot.
- You become so engrossed in a task that you don't hear someone talking to you.
- You have daydreams so vivid that they feel like they are really happening.
- You don't have a startle response to sudden loud noises.
- You drive past your house without recognising it.
- You see objects in the world as if they are flat or two-dimensional.
- You sometimes see things as being blurred, dwindling away, or shadowy.
- You get "stuck" looking at something and feel that you can't look away.

On the other hand, you may experience “focus out” type of dissociation, which means that you are always so aware of everything going on around you that you can’t connect properly with the small details. This is because you are hypervigilant for possible threats in the environment.

- *You have trouble concentrating.*
- *You can never follow the plot of a tv programme and have trouble reading.*
- *You have an overactive startle response and people call you nervy.*
- *You get dizzy and confused sometimes from always trying to see everything.*
- *You tend to be hyperactive.*
- *You have been diagnosed with Attention Deficit Disorder.*

You can have both types of dissociation at different times. The best way of dealing with them is to do grounding activities (see page 10 for some suggestions). This involves connecting yourself to the world in some way. Choose an activity that feels best for you and try it for a short period every day, increasing the duration each time you try. The most important thing to remember is to take it slowly. If you force the process, you may get frightened or overwhelmed, and your dissociative defences will strengthen even more to protect you.

Dissociation from your Inner World.

Dissociating from difficult emotions and physical feelings is often necessary in order to continue functioning in the world. For example, a business woman who has an important meeting but fought with her husband that morning will manage to “switch off” her anger and sadness about the fight so that she can perform on a professional level in the meeting. Or the person who has just lost a loved one but will put their grief aside so they can efficiently organise the funeral. While it is important to be in touch with our feelings, it is equally important that we are able to disconnect from them temporarily at times when we need to. During trauma, emotions and physical sensations can be so extreme that it is wise to dissociate from them or else we might go crazy or die from shock. The problem is that, when we constantly teach our brain to dissociate from feelings during trauma, it gets the message that it has to dissociate from all feelings at all times. Soon we realise we no longer control whether or not we dissociate in this way. Our brain does it automatically.

Trauma survivors may dissociate from their inner world (self-dissociate) because they can not tolerate being themselves. They may also be frightened of getting in touch with themselves because that will mean getting in touch too with memories of the trauma.

If you self-dissociate, you may experience the following things.

- *You feel like a stranger to yourself.*
- *You can't connect to your inner sense of self.*
- *You feel like you are just going through the motions of life.*
- *You laugh/cry but don't really feel the emotions beneath the actions.*
- *You know you love certain people, but can't feel it.*
- *You watch yourself from a different space.*
- *You feel like you don't have control over what you say or do.*
- *You hear yourself talk but the words don't seem to belong to you.*
- *You feel like a puppet under someone else's control.*
- *You laugh or cry for no apparent reason.*
- *You're talking to someone and realise you don't remember part of the conversation.*

- *You feel as if you live behind a glass wall or in a different dimension from other people.*
- *You feel like your self is broken into many different parts.*
- *When you feel, its like there is someone else inside to whom those feelings belong.*
- *You have multiple personalities (other selves).*
- *You don't feel pain.*
- *You find bruises on your body but don't remember how you got them.*
- *All or parts of your body don't feel like they belong to you.*
- *Parts of your body seem to change size or fade away.*

Trance or "spacing out" is also a variety of self-dissociation, but many people experience it without having any other type of dissociative experience. It is very common for people, including those who were never traumatised, to trance out when they are stressed or tired.

- *You stare vacantly into the middle distance, not thinking about anything.*
- *You feel like you have gone somewhere outside of yourself.*
- *While in trance, you may perform rhythmic self-soothing motions, such as rocking.*

While trance is a helpful release, you don't want to be using it too often, otherwise it becomes addictive and soon you find yourself spacing out at the slightest difficulty. Instead, you should learn about what things tend to stress you and what physical and emotional signs you get when you are stressed. With this information, you can then try to work out practical solutions to difficult situations, rather than just spacing out.

Dissociation from Memory.

There are two types of dissociative memory. One is called "event amnesia" and means that you dissociate from something to the extent that you forget it happened at all. Many dissociative survivors have event amnesia only when it comes to part or all of their childhood trauma. Other survivors continue to experience "blank spells" in their adult life. Sometimes this is because they have multiplicity and do not know what happens when one of their alter selves is out. Sometimes it is because they are triggered. Examples of event amnesia are:

- *You don't remember part or all of your childhood.*
- *You discover that things you thought happened in childhood actually did not happen - these are called "cover memories".*
- *Your childhood medical records indicate you were abused but you don't remember it.*
- *You have no memory for important events in your life (eg, wedding, graduation).*
- *You have experienced waking up in a strange place with no memory of how you got there.*
- *You discover that you have just spent hours/days that you don't remember.*
- *You find evidence that you have done things you don't remember doing.*
- *You find items in your possession that you don't remember buying.*
- *You are wearing clothes that you don't remembering putting on.*
- *You are not sure if you did something or just dreamed about doing it.*
- *You are often accused of lying but don't think you have.*
- *Strangers act like they know you and may call you by another name.*

The other type of dissociative memory is "identity amnesia". This is when you do not remember who you are, and may think you are someone else. It is more than just feeling out of control of yourself but still knowing you are you. With identity amnesia, your sense of selfhood or "I-ness" has been transferred to a different identity. Often this is because you are multiple and have switched into an alter self. Regression to a younger part of yourself is also a form of identity amnesia. If you experience this type of dissociative memory, the following may happen:

- You believe you are a different person and have no memory of your original self.
- You experience yourself as another person although part of you is still aware of your original identity - as if you have been possessed by another person. In multiplicity, this is called co-consciousness.
- You believe you are a child although you are in an adult body.
- You don't recognise your face in the mirror.
- When you look at your body, it has changed size, hair/eye/skin colour, gender.
- You can't remember details about yourself, such as your name and address.
- You can't get a sense of your selfhood.

The answer to dissociative memory problems is to work on why you feel compelled to forget certain events or your identity. Usually the reason is because you are trying to defend yourself against some trauma or conflict.

(This article first appeared in Team Spirit. Reprinted with permission)

Tips for Grounding

Breathe Slowly!!!

Colour in a colouring book

TAKE A WALK..... Hold An Ice Cube..... Eat Something!

**REPEAT TODAY'S DATE
AND TIME OUT LOUD**

Whistle..... YELL!!!!!!! Sing..... Laugh.....

Create a safe place, in your home or visualised as a safe place you can visit inside

WALK BAREFOOT ON THE CARPET..... Sniff something with a strong smell - Olba's Oil

Write or draw in your journal.....**Talk to someone..... CUDDLE A SOFT TOY**

Checking out potential therapists

Unless you see a therapist privately you may have no choice regarding who you see, but you are entitled to ask any therapist about their training, qualifications, experience and approach. If you have a choice it can be helpful to see more than one therapist to assess which one you feel would be best for you. The following is a list of general questions you could ask at a first meeting:-

✕ What training, qualifications and experience does the therapist have? ✕ What approach does the therapist take? ✕ What professional organisation(s) do they belong to, and could you have a copy of their code of ethics? ✕ Do they receive supervision for their work? ✕ Have they had therapy themselves? ✕ How long is a session and how often are they held? ✕ Is the therapy offered time-limited, e.g. a specified number of sessions? ✕ If there are fees to be pay, what are they; when are they payable; what happens in the event of cancellations and holidays? ✕ Is there a sliding scale of fees according to an individual's ability to pay? ✕ Is it a totally confidential service? ✕ Are there circumstances when confidentiality is broken? For example, would the therapist pass on to other professionals information about child sexual abuse or about clients putting their own lives or the lives of others in danger? ✕ Under what circumstances might the therapist refer clients to somebody else? ✕ What are the arrangements in the event of an emergency? ✕ Does the therapist require the client to make and keep a 'no self-harm' contract? ✕ What are the consequences if this is broken? ✕ If you were dissatisfied with how the therapist behaved or treated you what is the procedure for making a complaint?

You should ask yourself if you feel comfortable and safe with this person. Do you feel you could risk telling them intimate details about yourself? It is important to try to trust your feelings in this matter, although this might be difficult if you are seeking help because you are in a crisis or feeling very negatively about yourself.***

^^^ In the UK where very experienced DD/MPD therapists are not common the therapist's DD/MPD experience may be less important than their general qualifications and experience; the relationship you feel you could build with them; their belief in and attitude to the concept of dissociation and extreme dissociative disorders such as MPD; and their willingness to learn more and to make a long-term commitment to seeing you. You may want to ask the following exploratory questions:-

What does the therapist know about dissociation. ✕ What is their attitude towards it? ✕ Do they believe in the existence of DD/MPD? ✕ Is the therapist willing to learn more about the treatment of DD/MPD and appropriately amend their usual methodology if necessary? ✕ Is the therapist able to have supervision with an experienced DD/MPD therapist? ✕ Is the therapist willing to make a long term commitment to seeing you?

If seeing an experienced DD/MPD therapist is important to you, you may want to ask the following: -

What qualifications does the therapist have specifically in the treatment of DD/MPD? ✕ Has s/he attended any relevant specialist post-qualification training? ✕ Approximately how many DD/MPD clients has the therapist treated and over what period of time? ✕ What is the average length of time these clients have stayed in therapy with her/him? ✕ What methodology does the therapist use with her/his DD/MPD clients? ✕ What does the therapist see as the goal of therapy for DD/MPD? ✕ Does the therapist treat DD/MPD clients differently than other clients? If so, how?

Article to *** amended excerpt from the Mind booklet, "Getting the best from your counsellor or psychotherapist" available from Mind Mail Order, Granta House, 15-19 Broadway, London, E15 4BQ. £1.00 plus 31p p&p

Article from ^^^

by Carer of the Collective

The Tragedy of Non-Recognition of Dissociative Disorders by KL

Dissociative Disorders are linked to trauma in childhood. International and British research indicates that severe dissociative symptoms affect 1% of the general public and between 5 and 6% of the psychiatric in-patient population. Up to 30% of people who are referred to specialist psychiatric services show some level of dissociative symptoms.

When treated appropriately good outcomes and indeed recovery from **Dissociative Disorders** are common. Appropriate treatment usually means long-term psychotherapy and adjunctive treatments.

Despite this high prevalence and good prognosis the **Dissociative Disorders** too often go unrecognised and untreated within mainstream mental health services in the UK. It is known that dissociative survivors of childhood abuse may spend many years in contact with statutory mental health services, experiencing the whole range of traditional psychiatric drug and ECT treatments for ever-changing (mis) diagnoses without their probably 'curable' **Dissociative Disorder** being identified and treated.

Tragically, the treatments they do receive may, in fact, aggravate their **Dissociative Disorder** as they experience the interventions as, not only ineffective but, abusive which triggers their dissociative defences.

"A large number of patients who self-harm and hear voices, but who are not schizophrenic, are sometimes diagnosed as having a borderline personality disorder, but may often be better understood as suffering from trauma-based dissociative disorder, the most extreme form of which is Multiple Personality Disorder"

Phil Mollon
"Multiple Selves, Multiple Voices
- Working with Trauma, Violation & Dissociation"
Wiley, 1996

WE HAVE A WINNER!!!!!!!!!!

The winner of the prize draw for introducing a friend or colleague to First Person Plural prefers to remain anonymous but receives her prize "Remembering Trauma" by Phil Mollon with this month's issue. No entrant preferred the second book prize so this was not awarded.

12 Thank you to all who introduced new subscribers and entered the draw.

POEMS & RHYMES

Shocking Headlines

The news hits the headlines
They react as if it's new
A wickedness by "monsters"
Not like me and you.

They keep all the names safe;
They speak of "evil rings"
But no-one seems to recognise
That these are common things.

The newsreader's voice is solemn
To show he really cares
Then he reads another item
About cosier affairs.

I want to shout out loud to him
That I know this family too;
It's rape and it's betrayal
Belong to me and you.

How can we "cure" this problem
If we close our eyes and pray
That cover-ups and silence
Can keep it all at bay.

Let's tell it like it really is
In letters ten feet tall
That the pain of little children
Is a pain that hurts us all.

by HCH aged 11 years

This moving poem was written in response to the news which hit the headlines during the summer about the trial and successful prosecution of a sadistic intergenerational child abuse ring in the West Country.

Editors comment: "And they say there is no proof that such things happen!"



Soul Fire

There is a deep resonance of the soul
of abiding mystery and light;
a place where shadows form
to merge and dance in tapestries of fire.
There, in that place of knowing,
the whispered secrets of the flames
silently commune with pain.
Consigned to dreams, our silent selves
abhor the darkness of the mind.
Lonely silhouettes, we dance
against a brighter wall of fear,
painting dragons in the sky -
the mythic shapes of being.
But passion born of stillness
weaves darkness with the light,
and, walking deeper realms of self,
creates a place where souls collide.



by Helen Beth

Poor, Sad Clown

Here I am, a poor, sad clown
With painted smile to hide my frown
From you outside who think I'm fine
And must not ever see the sign
Or find a careless clue to tell
Beyond the smile I live in hell.
In truth I sing a sad lament
But feign for you a heart content.
I look at you with happy eyes.
For you, I stifle mournful sighs
And hold inside my threatening tears
Behind my mask of joyful cheers.
For you outside I play charade;
Maintain my friendly, fun façade
To keep from you the real me -
The poor sad clown who can't break free;
Trapped in time by memory's chain
The poor, sad clown; the child in pain.



by Rhymaster

Rain

Rain drops gliding, sliding
Racing against time,
Slipping slowly down
The once transparent glass,
Like silent, swallowed tears
Across her clouded face.

Grey damp mists insinuate
Her very skin and bone
Whilst breeze clouds scurry,
Hurrying from the scen,
Afraid to stay and witness
The sadness that she hides.

Diamond-sharp sparks
Pierce even her outer clothes
Dampening her dampened spirit,
Large pear-shaped teardrops
Reverberate on stone,
Leap skywards once more.

From behind the curtain
She peers into the mists,
Timidly testing the water,
Nor daring to get wet,
Reaching for her raincoat
Stepping tentatively through the mud.

Raindrops fall on.
Washing away her resistance,
Throwing their full weight
Behind their assault
On her grey half-life;
Trying to reach her.

Casting caution to the winds
Unencumbering herself,
She steps boldly out
Into the moving, feeling rain;
Her dampened heart leaps
Beyond the muddled puddles
- to freedom!

By Caro Archer

The Lost Child

*Give the child the time she needs,
Help us live at last in peace.
Is it really fair to leave a child in fear,
When all you have to do is listen and hear.
Is it really that hard to show
What love is and help it grow.
She needs the help only a cuddle can give,
To show us how to love and live.
Please don't push away the child inside,
Just let her out, and let her cry,
And hold her close as she learns to fly.
She'll fly away and she'll be free,
Then our freedom will come for all to see.
Please love the child, the child inside,
Don't watch her forever run and hide.*

Just Friends

*In the room where I sit
There's a poster.
"Just be my friend"
It says.*

*In a chair in the room
With the poster
Sits Tessa
Just being my friend*

Rhymaster

Diane X

LAST LAUGH!!!!

Membership Rights Association of DIDN'T International

Be it known to all, that _____ is a kard-carrying member of the Association of DIDN'T International, and is afforded all the accompanying rights of said Association. Said rights include but are not limited to:-

- ☺ The right to deny any loss of memory, or to explain said loss with any lame excuse we can think of.
- ☺ The right to claim responsibility for any and all words and actions committed by above named party, and to refuse to accept any others in same body to claim responsibility for same, no matter who dunnit.
- ☺ The right to deny, at all costs, the faintest possibility that others may occupy separate but equal space in said member's body, mind, soul, or bank account.
- ☺ The right to not claim ownership of clothes in our wardrobe which we would never wear, could not possibly have bought, wouldn't fit into and wouldn't be caught dead in.
- ☺ The right to play with all those toys that keep mysteriously showing up in our handbags, cars, desks, etc. we retain the right, however, to never admit we are the ones doing the playing.
- ☺ The right to be anyone else we choose at any given moment, and then to catagorically deny we were ever anyone else.
- ☺ The right to have any illness or disease we choose, and have it mysteriously vanish and not have to explain where it went, and when or if it will come back.
- ☺ The right to stick our heads in the sand any time we like, and to do so without getting sand in our mouths.
- ☺ The right to emphatically contradict ourself (singular) anytime we choose and make up any unbelievable excuse we like and have other people simply nod and accept it as normal.
- ☺ The right to be any age we choose (this here is controllable obviously) and to behave appropriately for that age without people telling us to "act our age" because at that moment we ARE.
- ☺ The right to look surprised when we find things we own, and the right for other people to not look bothered when they have to explain to us where it came from.
- ☺ Tha riit 2 spel eneewaa wot we wan 2 n it don be straanj so theer n it don meen we b shtoopit itha (thanks no wun)
- ☺ The right to spend a small fortune on stuffys just "because we got the urge".

Signed this ____ day of _____, 19__

Fruits & Sarah

Fearless Co-founders, Association of DIDN'T International

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