



December 2014

RAINBOW'S

Volume 15 **END** Issue 3

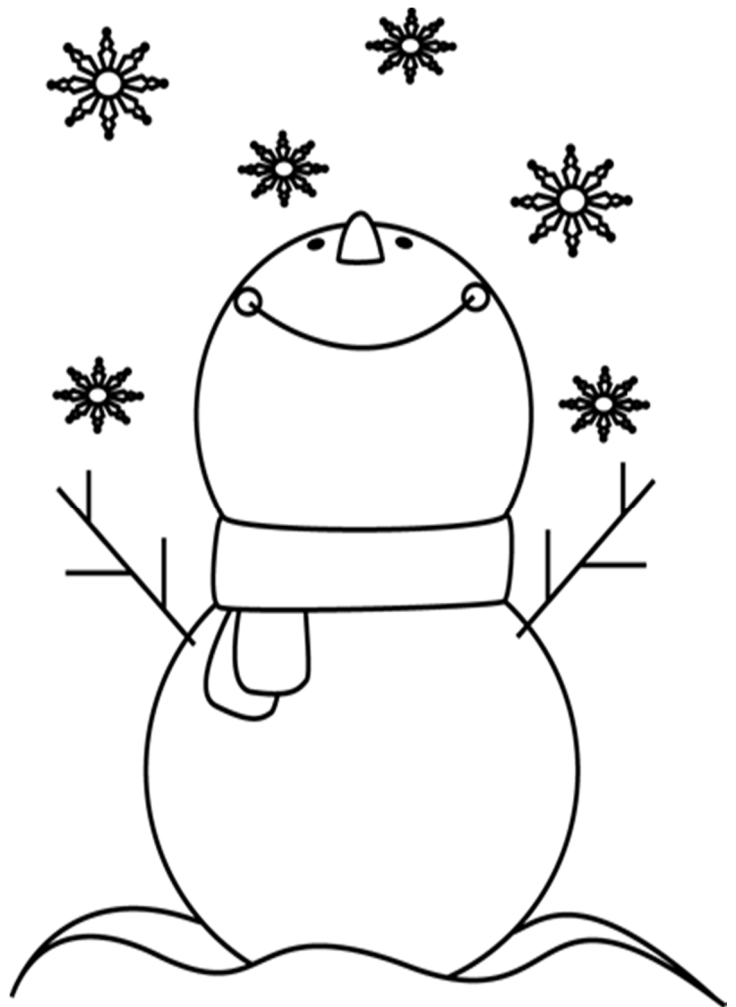
Support & Information Newsletter of First Person Plural

dissociative identity disorders association

Established 1997 - A Charitable Incorporated Organisation - Registered Charity No: 1156602

CONTENTS

Editorial statement.....	2
Making Contact	2
Chair's letter	3
If pain casts a shadow	4
The Visitation.....	5
Ghosts of Christmas Past	6
Play Centre	8
Ghosts of (continued).....	10
Moving House.....	11
Support during the stabilisation phase of therapy	14
Survivors Alliance for organised & institutional abuse.....	16



**MERRY CHRISTMAS
AND A
HAPPY NEW YEAR**

Editorial Statement:- While every effort will be made to keep contributions complete and unedited we reserve the right to make amendments. Decisions about the inclusion and amendment of contributions are made by the editors and are final. Contributions do not necessarily reflect the views and opinions of First Person Plural, members of the executive committee or the editors. Inclusion of any reference to an individual or organisational resource is not a recommendation. The contents of this newsletter are for information and support purposes only. The newsletter is not a substitute for individual therapy or professional supervision. It is an addition to, not a replacement for, other networks of support.

Contributions can be sent in **at anytime**. Stories; resources; book reviews; tips; personal experiences; articles and poems; brief snippets and black & white artwork are desperately needed. It would help if you can send your contribution electronically as an email attachment. Please send to our editorial email address **newsletter@firstpersonplural.org.uk**. This saves times and resources but handwritten and typed material sent by post will continue to be accepted. The next issue of the newsletter is due in **March 2014**; any contributions for consideration for inclusion in that issue must be with us by **6th March**

Originals returned only if a suitable stamped addressed envelope is enclosed

IMPORTANT:- When sending material for publication please clearly mark "FOR PUBLICATION" and say what name or pseudonym you wish to use. We regret we are not able to forward personal replies to contributors. So any responses to articles etc should be marked FOR PUBLICATION if you wish the writer to see it.

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

MAKING CONTACT WITH EACH OTHER? - - - - REMEMBER *SAFETY FIRST*

One reason people join First Person Plural is in the hope of connecting with other members. The newsletter, members open meetings and the mutual support online forums provide opportunities to do so but we suggest you use caution. Do not lose sight of the fact that, initially at least; other members of FPP may be strangers to you, as you are to them. FPP does not check applicants for membership. Anyone can become a member by completing a form and making payment. We have no reason to believe that any of our members are unsafe persons but conversely we can offer no assurances that someone is trustworthy just because they are an FPP member. Also non-members may have access to the newsletter. Clearly we are not saying never make contact but we do advise that you use common sense precautions as you would when meeting or contacting any stranger. Develop your friendship slowly before exchanging personal details such as telephone, mobile or postal address. Set clear boundaries for yourself about what kind and how much contact you wish to have with each other. Listen to & respect each other's need to set and change boundaries. Do not let desperation for understanding, support and friendship cloud your judgement or lead you to try to get more from each other than each wish to give.

Chair's letter

Hello

We have received several enquiries and commissioned bookings for training and awareness events next year, our diaries are already quite full. This is always reassuring and validating of the work we do knowing that there are people who want to genuinely gain a better understanding of how living with complex dissociation makes our lives different and often difficult. I use the word 'different' deliberately although I spend my life denying this! It really hit me a few years ago when I was talking to a group of professional women in my home town where I was the library manager. They knew and respected me for the job I did and there I was sharing that in order to manage that role, a lot of the rest of the time was used by the other parts of me. I said how I fed the external family when I got in from work and then once they were settled, the younger two in bed, older ones doing homework it was our time. I explained how we would do colouring, watch a Teletubbies DVD or maybe eat baby cereal. Their blank faces suddenly penetrated my vision and I can remember saying seriously "you don't have to do things like that do you?" It sounds so obvious but in that moment my reality hit me. Over the many years for us all to have a life that has a quality and a sense of fulfilment we all automatically manage our day to enable this to happen.

We have completed the first training seminars in Norwich based around the chapters on stabilisation, trauma work and consolidation and integration from FPP's film 'No Two Paths The Same'. The first evening we showed our first film 'A Logical Way of Being' allowing plenty of discussion time to help lay a foundation for the more specific sessions. The feedback has been predominantly positive. It is always hard with an audience of very mixed levels of understanding of the impact and reality of trauma and DID. We asked the audience to reflect on the changing needs/roles of the therapists, supporters and clients at each stage. Remy Aquarone of the Pottergate Centre and ESTD and I facilitated these evenings and we were kept on our toes by questions and observations. A lot of FPP's training is about offering insights, the possibility of the need to adapt some ways of working and techniques that might be useful when working with dissociative clients; but stress these are in addition to their therapist/counsellor professional training and that should remain the foundation for all their work.

DID seems to naturally fragment those who are affected, even therapists who are normally confident and experienced don't always automatically appreciate that any training on working with DID needs to be integrated into what they already know and how they usually practice (as long as they are good practitioners). How they already work and feel comfortable with needs to be the foundation on which they build all their therapeutic relationships including with DID clients. Never is it more important to offer clear boundaries, stay grounded and use all the listening skills they have already developed than when working with DID clients.

Volume 15, Issue 3

We so often hear of therapy that has not been helpful, partly because our bottomless pit of needs has managed to de-stabilise the therapist and tempted him/her to offer too much, too soon, sometimes becoming over-involved in their DID clients lives in ways they would never even consider for other clients. Seemingly, offering 'too much' compassion and caring too quickly can lower our dissociative barriers much too rapidly leaving us in a very vulnerable place becoming highly demanding because of this. The more I talk about this subject the more strongly I believe in the importance of the first, stabilisation phase.

The therapist modelling staying grounded, knowing where they begin and end both literally and metaphorically can, from the start, help us to self-regulate. Beginning to teach us how to care for ourselves through containment and helping us to understand there will be time to do trauma work as necessary but first we need to learn how to pace living, how to own living and how to keep living alongside what often feels so painful and hopeless. I think this is what I have learnt during these seminars.

I, together with Chris Ho, another member of FPP's Board of Trustees, attended the first meeting of a newly formed national coalition for survivors of institutional and organised abuse, allies and organisations who support them. There is so much work to be done but I came away re-energised by the feeling of working as part of a team. This group, many of whom are extremely experienced and bring a wealth of wisdom with them are working in the immediacy to do all they can to persuade the government to establish a statutory inquiry with a genuinely independent Chair and panel that commands the support and respect of survivors. But also as a group the coalition are committed to working towards establishing a support system for those survivors who give evidence to the inquiry and ensuring proper help for survivors. This will be a very long term project but together we stand a much better chance of it becoming a reality, the strength I feel lies in a solid working partnership.

I wish you all well and hope this time of year is as peaceful as possible for each and every one of you. DID does not 'go away for Christmas day' and for many the season brings specific difficulties from anniversary reactions to past trauma so you will all be held in my thoughts.

Warmest wishes *Melanie*

If pain casts a shadow over Christmas spirit.....

Being surrounded by people who love you, but don't understand
or perhaps not even know why you feel the way you do,
can be the worst kind of loneliness

**.....Be gentle, compassionate and patient with yourself
- all of you!**

The Visitation : a true story

She was slender, delicate and deeply sensitive and came from a faraway star. She did not know who she was on Earth for her Earth father had hurt her very badly and her Earth mother was so hurt herself she could not show her little girl how precious and sweet she was. So she grew up believing no one could see her. She often lived in places that were rather shabby, with other hurt humans, places that did not reflect the beauty of who she was.

Her natural state was deep inner silence and she valued and felt most nourished by a quiet home environment. Sometimes some of the other hurt humans in the room above hers used loud music and a substance called alcohol to numb their pain and she suffered, especially at night, from disturbed sleep.

She often found solace and healing by going into the forest and lying on the Earth. One day, after a night of greatly disturbed sleep, she left her room as soon as it was light and headed toward the forest. She came to a clearing and stopped near a large bush that seemed to call to her saying, "Come, take shelter under me." So she stood under this being whom she felt to be very kind and gently touched the delicate twigs that reached out beside her, silently beseeching them to bear witness to, and help her release, the deep pain inside that threatened to shatter her being. Her arms fell limp by her sides as this pain seared her soul and she began to sob.

After a minute or so, she happened to look again at the twig to her left and saw a black and orange butterfly fluttering toward her, which, to her amazement, alighted on top of her hand still hanging limp by her side. She could feel its tiny feet on her skin as it stayed perfectly still. After a minute of awestruck communion with this delicate creature, she reflexively went to wipe away a tear with her other hand and the visitor flew away.

"An angel," she thought. "An angel took the form of a butterfly to show me I am not alone." Later, back in her room while contemplating the experience, "A butterfly came and took me by the hand," floated through her mind and she felt deep joy.



Two days later and still catching up on her sleep, she returned to the forest and went back to the large bush to bask in its healing presence and to express her gratitude toward it. She stood under it holding a plastic rain poncho and a dark blue fleece blanket for she intended to sit upon the Earth for rest and healing. Suddenly, to her amazement and delight, the same butterfly fluttered to her just as before, only this time it alighted on top of her leg. She stared down at it, thanking it for its love and support. A few moments later, she reflexively tensed her leg muscle and it flew away. She knew it was the same one not only because of its coloration, but also because it was the same small size with rounded wings, unlike a typical monarch.

Volume 15, Issue 3

She again recognized this as a message from the Universe reminding her she is not alone; and that in fact, she is deeply loved by all of Creation. She spread her poncho and blanket upon the ground and sat basking in the warming rays of the sun under the bush, a deep peace filling her entire being.

Growing sleepy and noticing that the ground was too hard and bumpy to stretch out upon, she found another spot in the clearing. Resting on her side, she spoke to the Sun and thanked it for its warm love, then turned and greeted the half Moon which hung faint white in the azure sky. She admired all the trees for their deep Beauty and Love and with a tear in her eye, bent and kissed the ground.

by StarGirl

Ghosts of Christmas's Past

an anonymous blog reprinted from www.thefword.org.uk

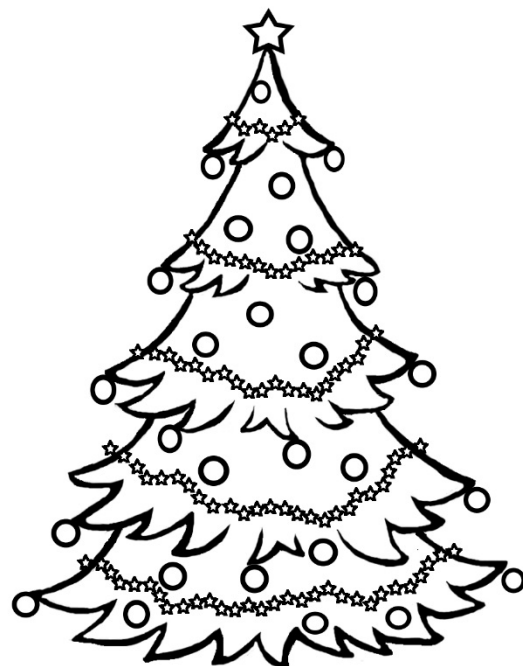
So, it's that time of year again. Compulsory happiness and lots and lots of family time. For some, the happiness comes naturally and the family time is cherished. But for some who are survivors of childhood sexual abuse, the Christmas season can be agonising.

For me, though the abuse happened all year round, it always happened on Christmas Day. Because we always spent Christmas Day with them.

While most of the family was laughing and joking, I was taken elsewhere in the house by one or both of my abusers. The fact that it was Christmas day made it more memorable somehow. It could be that it always happened on August the 8th or April the 27th too, but why would I remember that date?

I dreaded Christmas every year. I was supposed to smile and be happy and enjoy the time we all spent together, but I loathed it. As an adult this continued, until I realised I did not have to do it anymore.

The first year I didn't spend Christmas with the family was awful. I felt so guilty, I felt like everyone thought I was being 'difficult' (the rest of the family do not know about the abuse), and I felt like even though I wasn't there, with them, this crap was still haunting my every thought. I took a big overdose, and was dismayed to wake up. While getting away from that environment was good, the abuse was still so present in my mind. I could not get rid of it just by being somewhere geographically different, though this was definitely a start. And it made me more safe.



But the following year was better. I had already taken my stand, and dealt with the family reaction to me not spending Christmas with them, and rather than spending the whole time in a crisis, I felt like I was taking positive steps to make Christmas into something I wanted it to be, rather than something I had to do.

There is an awful lot of societal pressure to 'do' Christmas. Even now, after years of doing it my own way, I have learned that you can never tell people you are doing NOTHING on Christmas day. They look horrified! They invite you to their home, they suggest alternatives. They can't imagine that anyone would want to opt out of the celebrations altogether. Thankfully though, I do do something, but it is so much on my own terms, and so far removed from the traditional family day that I feel more in control, and more like I'm making it my own.

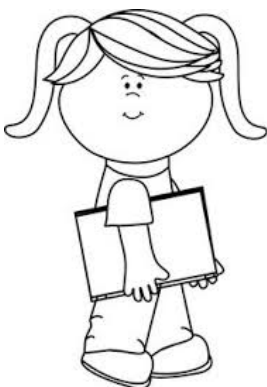
But it does not remove the memories.

Even if I can avoid the actual abusers, it is harder still to avoid those around them who were complicit in what was happening, by not doing the things that should be done to protect a child. I can cope better with those people now, but would always rather have no contact with them.

Even if your abuse wasn't directly related to Christmas that does not mean that it has to be an easy time of year for you! If the abuse was in the family, then family gatherings and strange nostalgia can make you feel as isolated as ever. If they knew about the abuse, and the abuser is still involved in celebrations I can only imagine how devalued you can feel. And if, like me, they don't know about it, then 'innocent' mentions of the men involved feel like a punch in the stomach, but I do feel I have to smile and nod when I hear their news.

And if the abuser was a stranger, or family friend, a trusted adult, or anyone at all, enforced cheer can be so hard. Of course we are sometimes happy, and sometimes sad. But the pressure to be on top form, when you might be having a difficult period of flashbacks and nightmares and memories, is so painful

Spending time with children, be they relatives; or friends' kids, can bring you face to face with a tiny person the age you were once, and the realisation that however much you might blame yourself at times, when you look into that 4 year old, or 8 year old, or 12 year old's eyes, you know without a shred of doubt that there is no way that anyone that age - including yourself - could EVER be responsible for the bad things that happened to you. And that is both reassuring and shocking.



Personally, I give myself a hard time with, 'Well, I was a very grown-up 10. I wouldn't expect most 10 year olds to be able to find a way out of that situation, but surely *I* should have done'. Then I see a 10 year old and realise that no, 10 years old is (while disputed by 10 year olds!) really, really young. And in any case, if I was a 'grown-up' 10, that was almost certainly due to the abuse that had occurred before, which had also groomed me to 'accept' the further abuse as normal.

Continued on page 10.....

A Picture to colour

PLAY



What falls in the winter but never gets hurt?

Snow



What's brown and sneaks around the kitchen?

Mince spies



What is in December and not in any other month?

The letter D

D

CENTRE

WINTER WORD SEARCH GAME



P	E	N	G	U	I	N	A	B	S	M	G
O	S	H	I	G	N	R	J	R	G	I	R
L	G	N	N	S	C	A	R	F	M	T	S
A	S	A	O	S	G	V	S	R	R	T	B
R	G	R	S	W	V	J	S	O	N	E	V
B	S	V	S	I	F	F	R	S	T	N	T
E	Y	I	L	N	L	L	K	T	L	S	H
A	S	A	W	T	E	R	A	C	O	A	T
R	T	U	U	E	N	G	R	K	T	Y	U
K	D	F	N	R	J	A	O	E	E	S	R
L	K	D	E	C	E	M	B	E	R	W	R
S	N	O	W	M	A	N	G	J	M	J	H

SNOWFLAKE
SNOWMAN
WINTER
PENGUIN
POLAR BEAR
FROST

SCARF
MITTENS
COAT
DECEMBER

<http://printthataday.com>



New Year's Resolutions

By Iram Khan

Just think, think, think,
Of things you can do,
To make yourself better,
Before the year's through.
Resolutions can be tough,
Or simple as can be,
Making resolutions,
Are great for you and me!
So what will you promise,
To help yourself my dear?
Through 2015
Have a happy new year!

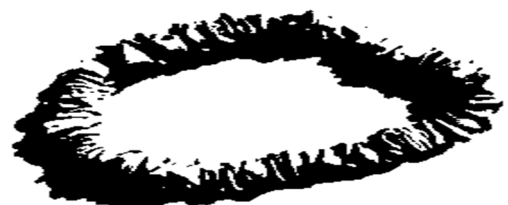
Make a balloon bracelet

What you need

- Different coloured long balloons. (the kind you use for making balloon animals)
- Scissors
- 1/4 inch (7mm) wide flat elastic

Instructions

- Cut elastic large enough for a comfortable bracelet plus enough length to tie off. You can always cut off any elastic you don't need when you are finished.
- Cut the balloons up into small pieces approximately one inch in length. Make sure both ends are open.
- Thread a piece of balloon onto the flat elastic and scrunch down leaving enough room at the end to tie off. Keep adding balloon pieces of different colours until the elastic is covered but enough room is left to tie off the bracelet.
- It may take a little patience to open the balloon ends so you can slip the elastic through, but you'll love the end result.



Volume 15, Issue 3

Ghosts of Christmas's Past Continued from page 7

Being with children at Christmas makes me scared too. Scared for them. When you are a survivor, there can be times when every child you see seems to be at risk. You get overwhelmed by the dangers we all face.

But in the context of coping with Christmas, trying to relate to children in terms of how sweet and lovely and childish they are, can put into perspective not just how little power you had, no matter how much you have told yourself otherwise, but also how, while you may not have done it consciously, chances are you have hated your child self at some point, for having been abused. Spending time with kids will also show you that there is no way that you could have been such a hateful child, because, as a rule, children aren't hateful. They are trusting and loving and kind and funny and mischievous and always full of surprises. And when they're naughty, even that doesn't make them deserving of hate, it makes them normal children.

This can help you to see that the child you were was not hateful, evil, dirty and responsible. She actually was a little child, doing little child things.

Other things to bear in mind when facing Christmas as an abuse survivor are where you are and what you do. Some people with the right jobs choose to work on Christmas day. It's a legitimate reason to not participate in all the celebrations, and it gives people who want the day off more of a chance to get that. Many people volunteer at homeless shelters and crisis centres, serving up Christmas dinner, offering health care or providing entertainment or a friendly chat. If you have funds, you could go away somewhere, perhaps somewhere where Christmas isn't even acknowledged, never mind celebrated.

You can also start to create your own rituals. If you want to celebrate Christmas, but not in a way that's inherently linked to a difficult childhood, then imagine what you would really like to do to celebrate, while trying to remove all society's pressures about the season from your mind. The day might start with an early morning stroll. You might write and illustrate a cartoon. You might clear out the clutter from the attic! You could also look at how other societies, cultures and religions celebrate special days, and get some alternative ideas.

Those also work if you opt out of Christmas altogether. Once you get used to people fretting about your lack of plans, then it's all yours. You can get on with it as if it's no different from any other day, perhaps using some self-made rituals if you find yourself feeling left out of the loop.



You may want to be with family too, and coming out of it unscathed is all about working out how best that happens for you. If your abuser/s was a family member, your plans might involve seeing the rest of the family but not them. If no-one in the family was involved in the abuse it may be easier to negotiate creating your own terms around what you do, and don't, want to do in the mad few holiday days.

But that's just the day itself. The lead-up to Christmas can be tough in different ways. I find that it is a time when my flashbacks will increase, both in frequency and intensity, and that I think a lot more about the abuse too (chicken? egg?). Sometimes this makes me angry, other times upset, most times I feel very vulnerable and fragile. This, on top of the usual stress and angst of the build-up to the dreaded day, can mean that the weeks beforehand can feel unbearable.

During the most difficult periods of coping as an adult survivor of childhood sexual abuse, some of the things women can really benefit from are firstly, being really gentle with yourself. You are feeling bad enough already, without increasing that by beating yourself up for feeling so bad!

Secondly, make a conscious effort to place the blame where it should be - on the abuser, not yourself.

Thirdly, look after yourself as best you can, or let those around you who may offer to. Eating as well as you are able, not drinking too much alcohol, trying to maintain a sleep routine, can all help to strengthen your physical and emotional defenses against onslaughts of awfulness. You know yourself what helps you and what harms you, so follow your own self-knowledge and do whatever you need to, to cope.

Moving House - A tribute to Waveney Lodge

During the last few months all I have learnt in therapy over many years has been tried, tested and pushed to its limits. We have moved for the first time in over thirty years leaving the place where our lives fell apart and our reality came into consciousness. I was lucky enough to live in a very old house that has stayed faithful and solid round me while my life completely disintegrated and has slowly and often extremely painfully been re built.

This house has witnessed great depths of pain and anguish expressed both physically and verbally as gradually our dissociation became less; sharing our childhood experiences, the coming into consciousness of the abuse, the names and images of the perpetrators, the living hell we walked through for years. Like a good therapist this house was able to bear witness, stay grounded and not be destroyed by what it heard and saw.

Volume 15, Issue 3

It offered containment often gently holding us, not necessarily together but preventing further fragmentation. As the pain began to ease it allowed us to see its beauty and steadfastness developed over 500 years as we all began to be able to start living in our life rather than observe it passing us by.

We have reached a place in our journey where everyone trusts me to keep the whole of us safe and provide a home. It is only very recently that we have managed to define what safe is for all of us, it is not being hurt.

So simple but only possible after years of struggle and body pain whenever the word 'safe' was used, to reach this definition that resonates throughout. This has made the move easier as I have been left to 'get on with it'. It was essential that as I moved our belongings into our temporary home I unpacked and positioned everything in place. We were never without familiar surroundings, never without a home and this has been so important.

Like external families who are secure there has been an internal feeling of let's get on with this, what is all the fuss about, you have told us it is alright so it is. Then a blind panic where have you put the teddies we still have but are not out; the need for all that we have accumulated over the years stayed physically with us until the last moment and is now 'safely' stored under our bed when much of it has been in a cupboard for many years.

A natural, slight regression that would be accepted as normal and healthy with external children and feels so right and solid for us.

I was concerned how the final leaving would be; I was physically and mentally exhausted but was worried how hard it might be for others. It has been amazing. We left a house, not our home, and somehow we have managed to make this transition, writing this I realise all the children have found it easier than me in the end.

How true this is again as a mum, how often do we support and reassure our biological children that it will be alright while feeling very apprehensive ourselves.

I will not pretend it is easy and that the future is going to be straight forward but at this moment we have all managed this stage and are determined that we do this together, I feared throughout that another part might come when the going got tough but this has not happened. Younger ones have lost interest until I have picked myself up, they understand the need for some recovery time and know they are loved, safe and they will continue with their own journey when I have both the internal and external home in some order.

Therapy does work, thank you
Waveney Lodge! *Melanie*



Support during the stabilisation (stage 1) phase of therapy

What is support; I think it very different for each of us, changes overtime and depends a lot on the role of the individuals offering it. I am going to break it into family and friends, a support worker and a therapist's support. I have a personal aversion to the word 'care'. There have been times when I have wanted and needed someone to 'take over' for a brief period of time, a few hours, a few days at the most. At those times I needed looking after, being cared for, guided through my life but for the rest of the time I wanted support to enable me to manage, cope, live my life as well as possible and not be stifled. I need a space to reach my potential while recognising, naming and gradually accepting appropriate support.

I think my strong sense of independence was essential to survive as a child when I was so often rendered powerless and like with most areas of being persistently abused there were no grey areas, I was either fine or unable to move. During the journey in adulthood an important part of my learning has been to understand there are grey areas but I am not rendered powerless during them. I retain the ability to choose and manage, sometimes on my own at other times with help given that allows me to feel supported without feeling out of control, like I have handed over my body, my life.

Support from family and friends is very important. Unfortunately there was very little knowledge available about DID twenty years ago so many have battled alone through a frightening wilderness. This is still so often the situation as people have to fight to get their DID recognised and the right treatment in place. This puts extreme pressure on relationships and often leads to a complete breakdown. People who are severely abused in childhood often do not have the resources of communication and the ability to express needs to handle this stage As children it is unlikely they will have grown up in a house where their needs were met and respected With help it can be the beginning of change but it does need an external person, therapist to help navigate this area.

Historical, habitual reactions that are more complex and profound with people with DID do need to be recognised before any change can occur and then of course the many varying view-points of someone who is DID can make this very challenging. By both people being helped to understand about complex dissociation will often open up the channels of discovery and conversation. A growing recognition that changes in behaviour and what appear to be mood changes is totally outside the person's control, they are not being aware and trying to make life as difficult as possible for you. It maybe another part of that person's system who is amnesic to the others. Learning about this together may allow the partner to point it out when it happens and the other person to be able to hear what is being said and not feel so defensive. It can be offered more as an observation rather than a frustrated criticism.

Volume 15, Issue 3

So much is about trying to stabilise the person with DID and to keep the relationship as stable as possible, developing a working partnership a feeling of being in this together. It might help the person with DID to begin to understand her system, who reacts to what situations, explain some of the before unexplainable inconsistencies. By his/her reality being validated rather than condemn and criticised may help to establish the beginning of internal co-operation and communication. The feeling of working together rather than protecting each other individually has to help begin to build a foundation that is unlikely to be present in an already existing relationship. It allows for both concerned to say what they find hard, for the person with DID this is often the first time they will have been able to hear this and not feel completely overwhelmed, shredded or disrespected.

It is important for all concerned at this time to remember that the outside, adult part may have developed extensive, though superficial skills, they are a part of the whole so their reactions to what might be difficult and painful are likely to still be more like those of an abused child of three. It is unlikely they have developed a strong core of age appropriate responses. A lot of frustrations are based on the non-DID partner experiencing an apparently, highly mature person who then reacts like a very small child. By both people understanding how DID evolves in childhood and the losses experienced through this can help to make sense of situations that previously seemed nonsensical.

Through this developing relationship, a growing understanding of DID and relating it to their own personal situation enables to both parent their children, show an united front that is so important, offer consistent attachment behaviours and patterns that allows their family to develop securely. Through discussing together what and how to share with the children at the varying stages of their development again alleviates the fear of the unknown for them. During peaceful times it is important to discuss how to manage the inevitable crisis times so it offers the best possible outcomes for all concerned. Being open and honest age appropriately children encourages the family to feel they can talk about anything with their parents and can help to prevent a feeling of alienation as they get older. Handled carefully this can become empowering for all the family. Not understanding, consequently feeling helpless is an important component of feeling disempowered

It is important that the whole family life is not controlled and dominated by a parent's DID. The supporting partner needs to develop their own life, take the children on holiday, swimming, and do normal things even if this means doing it on their own. It is hard for everyone, many things may need to be put in place to allow these things to happen but it offers a place for all, including the person with DID to learn and trust both in their family but also in their own strengths and skills.

At times the best support can be practical, getting the meals ready, doing the shopping, running the children around, do this through discussion as you would with anyone, don't assume, take over. It can be very grounding to be consulted as an adult.

In many ways the roles of other support is based a lot on a mixture of the therapeutic boundaries, these need to be clearly established together, another working partnership and the things that help within the family. This applies from full time support to the occasional input. The clarity of what can be expected may need to be repeated many times. Obviously there are constraints that make this an unequal relationship but all aspects that can be discussed and negotiated need to be. It is a mirroring of what needs to happen between the parts as well as the support person. Psycho education plays an important role for everyone involved. What is possible, what is appropriate, this might include talking about touch. There is a need at this time to build on the strengths of the person with DID, look at strategies that can be put in place to help begin to develop a sense of continuity in a life that possibly has previously not experienced this. Help the person to see what others might be able to do that is healthy and supportive, reaching out when it is tough.

Talk about needs, often a mystery to people who have been abused. See this as a time for developing the foundation that will enable the difficult times to be managed more effectively and the skills that will be needed so strongly during trauma work. Help the different parts to develop communication and co-operation and a sense of compassion and respect for each other. This time is about living now while preparing for the future.

Therapists might be able to offer support outside the therapy sessions, again this needs to be extremely clear exactly what is being offered. If e-mailing or texting is possible then establish how often and what can be expected in response. I think it is important that both of these are used as a validation of your reality at that moment and offer a metaphoric holding. Texts and e-mails are so often misinterpreted causing a lot of unnecessary pain and high levels of anxiety.

It is important for those offering support at whatever level that openness, honesty and clarity are maintained at all times. Abused children will have had their trust broken so often so this is going to take a lot of time for these people in adulthood to begin to trust. It is also essential to remain aware that others inside, possibly many, will be listening, judging and protecting at all times so the need to be genuinely respectful helps to establish a relationship with the whole system even if it is not obvious externally. Please do not offer support at whatever level that is not sustainable, abused children have been let down time and again and this relationship is helping to heal those wounds through developing slowly, not rescuing, working in partnership, with the person with DID leading whenever possible.



**FPP attends inaugural meeting of
Survivors' Alliance for Organised and Institutional Abuse**

On Thursday November 27th 2014 First Person Plural was represented by Melanie and Chris (FPP Board of Trustees) at a meeting of survivor groups from across England and Wales which met with the aim of establishing a forum for agencies and individuals representing and supporting survivors of institutional and organised child sexual abuse. This was in the wake of the Home Office's making a complete mess of setting up the independent panel inquiry into these kinds of abuse without any meaningful consultation with survivors or survivors groups. This has seen the resignation of two successively appointed Panel Inquiry chairs following challenges by survivors and others about their lack of independence. Despite now being without a chair the Panel has started to meet, amid further controversy about the panel selection process and widespread calls from survivors for the Inquiry to be re-established as a Royal Commission which would have statutory powers – as has been the case in Australia. An independent panel inquiry, as the inquiry is currently set up has no such statutory powers.

The Survivors' Alliance established at that meeting on 27th November has been set up to incorporate as many groups as possible to ensure they are all effectively represented and supported to engage in the Inquiry process. Membership will also include expert advisers, campaigners and supporters.

The five aims of the Survivors' Alliance are:

- **To strive to represent survivors nationwide in engaging with the Inquiry**
- **To co-ordinate support for survivors nationwide engaging with the Inquiry**
- **To communicate with different survivor groups nationwide in relation to the Inquiry**
- **To be a consistent point of contact for the Inquiry and survivor groups**
- **To educate and inform government and relevant people on the effects and dynamics of abuse**

As members of The Survivors Alliance for Organised and Institutional Abuse, First Person Plural has already agreed to be a signatory to two letters sent from the Alliance – one to the Home Office and the second to the Inquiry Panel. The closing paragraph of these letters sum up the position of the Alliance..... “The success of the Inquiry depends on open and transparent processes which survivors and survivor groups are able to trust. The Survivors' Alliance pledges to inform and continue to offer its varying and unique expertise in this subject so that survivors can safely and effectively give evidence and testimony of their experiences, but we cannot support the Inquiry and Panel as they are currently constituted.”

The next meeting of The Survivors Alliance is on 18th December and will be attended by Chris Ho, one of FPP's Board of Trustees.

Prior to the establishment of The Survivors Alliance, Kathryn had attended a speedily organised meeting on 13th November which was arranged by The Survivors Trust to give the Home Secretary an opportunity to hear the views of a small group of individual survivors Kathryn was invited to ensure that there was an organised (but not classically institutional) abuse survivor present. She was also able to speak out for survivors who have complex dissociative disorders as a consequence of abuse in childhood.

As I finish this article (on 15/12/14) I have just heard on the radio that the Home Secretary has said that the Inquiry should be given statutory powers, after survivors withdrew their support for the inquiry as currently established. I'll pause and see what actually happens but am cheered to hear that The Survivors Alliance and some individual survivor campaigners seem to have had some influence.