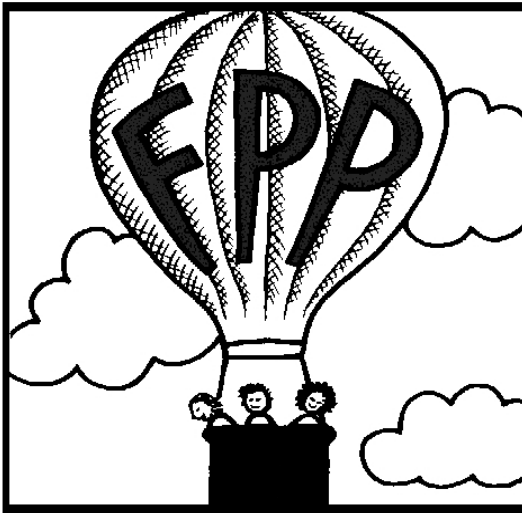




Volume 3 : Issue 3

FIRST

PERSON

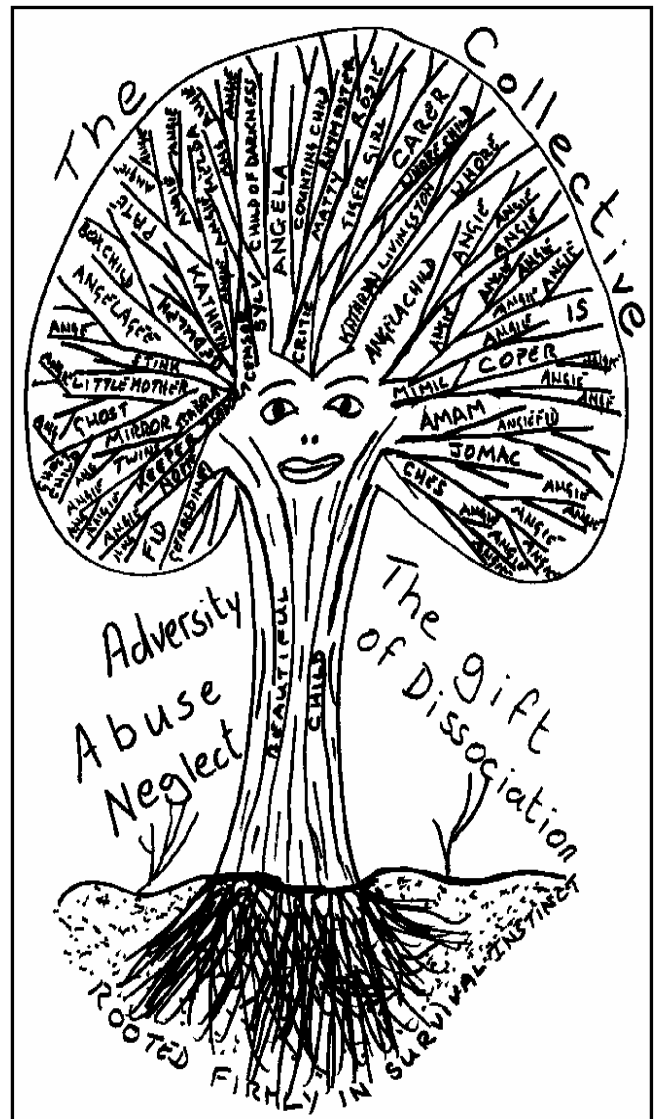
PLURAL

June, 2001

Newsletter for Dissociative Survivors of Trauma and Abuse and their Families, Friends & Professional Allies

CONTENTS

Editorial Statement.....	2
A Day in the Lives (MPD Toon)	2
Dear Kathryn.....	3
Multiple Personality Disorder - Victim or Survivor.....	4
Positive Steps for Mental Health (picture).....	5
Logo Competition - two more entries	6
Paradox of Feelings	6
Drawing by Sheelah.....	7
Play Centre	8
Wimbledon Champion may be Dissociative.....	10
Goran the Great is Multiple	10
How the press reported.....	10
Back to Basics	11
This page left BLANK.....	13
Sitting with Feelings	14
Poems & Rhymes	15
Subscription Form.....	16



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 First Person Plural, members of the steering group or the editor. Inclusion of any reference to an individual or organisational resource should not be taken as a recommendation. The contents of this newsletter are for information and support purposes only. The newsletter is not intended to be a substitute for individual therapy or professional supervision. It is intended that the newsletter will complement, not replace, other networks of support

Contributions to next issue to be received 22nd Sept, 2001

articles; stories; resources; book reviews; tips; poetry; artwork; personal experiences

IMPORTANT : - When writing to First Person Plural please make it clear if your letter, article or other contribution is for publication and say which, if any, of your personal details can be printed. **The editor will assume permission to publish if you do not make your wishes clear.**

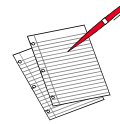
ATTENTION

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



See more MPD Toons on the internet at <http://www.mirrorlady.net>
or in future issues of FPP

Dear Kathryn....



First Person Plural encourages respectful open comment and debate about the issues, ideas and experiences of people who are dissociative, 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.

To reply to a numbered letter place your response in a sealed envelope with the number of the letter you are replying to marked on the outside and place inside a second stamped envelope addressed for posting to:-

First Person Plural, c/o PO Box 2537, Wolverhampton, WV4 4ZL
Email: fpp@firstpersonplural.org.uk

Hi Kathryn.

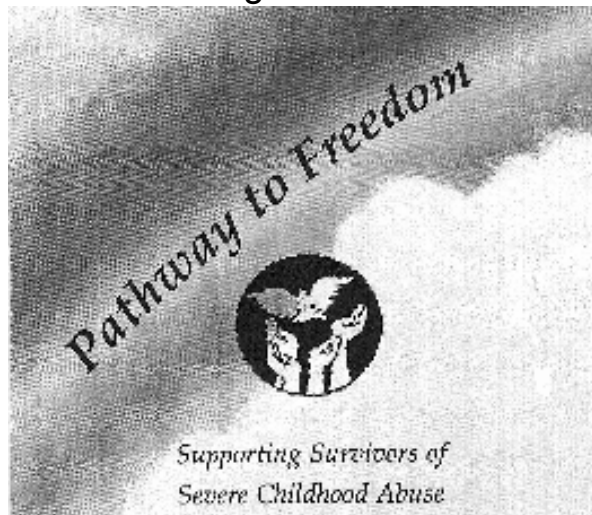
The helpline is a project of Milton Keynes Rape Crisis.

Pathway to Freedom

The helpline is open -

We have opened a telephone helpline for women survivors of severe, prolonged child sexual abuse, which may include brutal or sadistic abuse. The volunteers on the line have experience of working in the field of Dissociative Identity Disorder. They are trained in counselling skills and listening but are not therapists.

Mon - Fri 12 - 2pm on
01242 706473
and
Wed 7pm - 9pm on
01908 608754



I am working on the helpline.

Take care
Much love & light

***Rhiannone
& Crew.***

Writing to

Dear Kathryn.....

- Keep your letters brief
- State clearly that your letter is for publication.
- If you wish to receive direct responses give permission for your contact details to be printed.
- If you wish responses to be forwarded from the FPP address **it is essential you send a large 33p s.a.e.** Your letter will be printed with a number.
- Replies will **not** be forwarded if you have not sent an s.a.e.

Multiple Personality Disorder Victim or Survivor?

By Linda D

What makes someone with Multiple Personality Disorder (MPD) not a victim but a survivor? Is it merely a positive outlook to life? Is it false hope? Is hiding in the role of victim just a waste of energy that might be put to better use in the healing of ourselves?

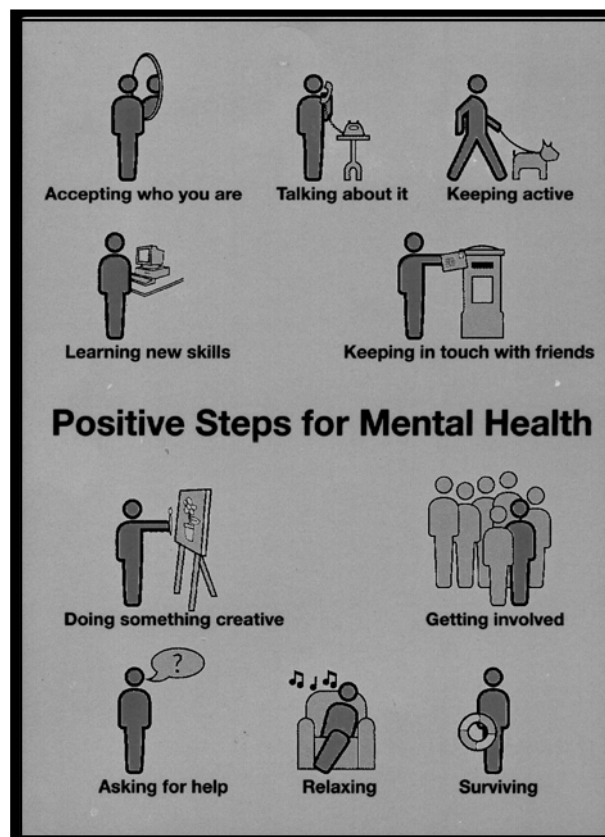
I/we are a survivor of sexual, physical, emotional and ritualistic abuse. We used the tool of dissociation as our coping skill early in life to deal with unspeakable horrors. Now, at age 35 years, we stand with 26 'personalities' who do help us cope but also cause many problems. We have been so obsessed with this amazing thing called 'Integration' that we forgot to see each of ourselves as valuable human beings. Instead of dreaming about something that may take forever to occur or never happen, we should have been learning to care, nurture, value, support or that often-unused word 'love' one another, which in itself is a path to healing. We failed to acknowledge that having MPD is

not an emotional death sentence and does not make us any less human than anyone else, but unique and special in that dissociating was our way of dealing with an impossible situation.

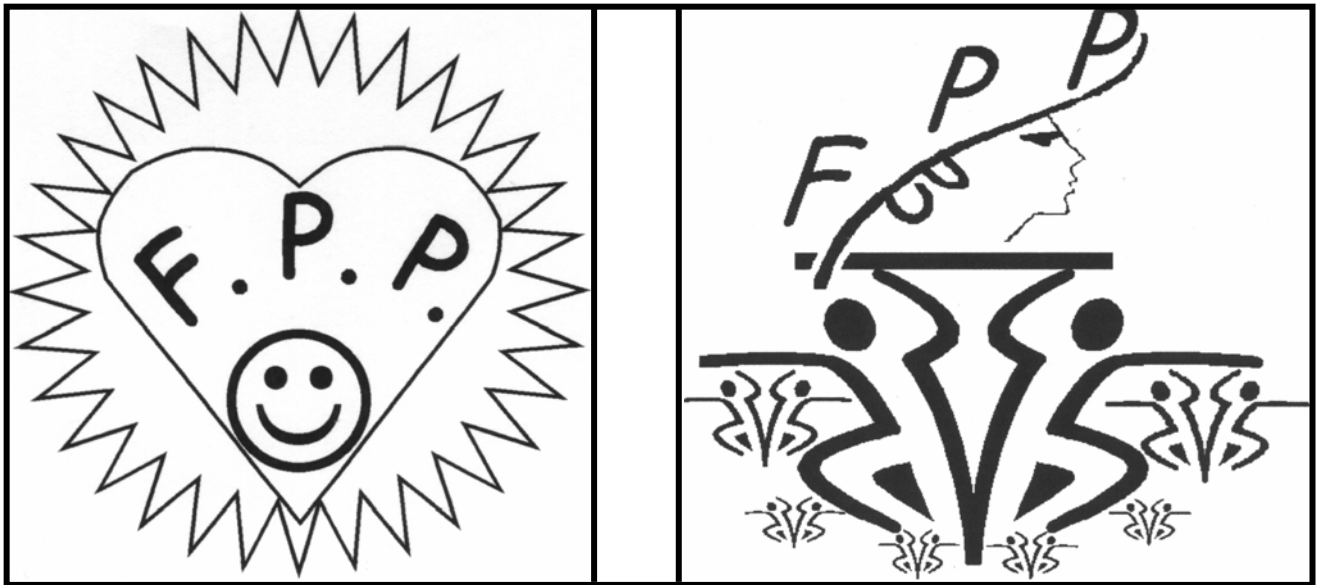
At times we have never been a total success as far as the power of positive thinking goes! But we feel the basic element in surviving is acknowledging to yourself that you are worthwhile, special and NORMAL. Believing in this does not come easy! Each multiple will have their own unique way of heading towards this path. All we can say is what helps us. Feeling like you have to 'fit in' by either having a personality for every occasion; or coping how 'normal folk' do things should go right out the window. We are NORMAL. Copying others or fitting in is so exhausting. Why put ourselves through that? We want a life that is uniquely ours and equally valuable as anyone else's and what's more we deserve it. It has taken us many years to get to this point ourselves.

Having coping skills like being aware of trigger factors, and keeping a journal helps immensely. We all write how we feel; what we like, appointments which can help us with time-loss. The journal is ours and we decide if and who gets to read it. Another major step is learning to share, not only objects, but time that allows us to learn and experience that feeling called 'enjoyment'. We know that for many abused people enjoyment in the past was often followed by pain. You can change this now by choosing who you are with; where you are and what you do. Its okay to have needs, wishes and desires..... you are valuable.

Most folk with MPD don't go around advertising the fact...but why should we slink away from life. It is ours as much as anyone else's - okay, albeit more chaotic - it is still ours. Finally can I say that integration is not the be all and end all of life - nothing is written in stone as to when and how this occurs. Don't put your life on hold. Surprisingly, by the changes we have made, it has brought all our inside personalities closer and this in turn creates its own sense of peace and harmony. We hope this article helps create some peace in other multiples' lives.



Copy of Health
Education Authority
postcard for World
Mental Health Day,
1999



Kathryn of the Collective

Judith et al

LOGO COMPETITION - two more entries - What a difficult choice

Paradox of Feelings by Carer

How can I describe my experience of feelings? How to explain this paradox of feeling things and at the same time feeling nothing. I sense that others with me have intense feelings. I KNOW when there is terror or anger or sadness or even the simple joy of playful little ones. I sometimes know who is feeling the feeling so intensely. Angela, she gets mad and "I" KNOW she is angry or she gets despondent and "I" KNOW her hopelessness. I sometimes feel her anger, her despair brush up against me, even hold me in red hot or icy cold tentacles for a while. But the feelings are not mine and do not feel as if they are mine. I don't feel anything at all and I feel so much inside. Feelings, that are not mine but which touch me with vicarious sensation, denting my numbness - not sufficient to support an "I feel something" statement, yet enough to cast doubt on the truth of "I feel nothing".

I feel nothing and I feel everything. Often a great many conflicting feelings simultaneously brush up against me. I am battered in my numbness yet still I feel nothing, nothing that feels as if it is mine. I get confused - is that a feeling? So often I do not even know the names for the emotions that touch me. The dark cloak that wraps me sometimes - is that sadness? If so, I do not know the why of the sadness nor can I find truth in the statement "I feel sad". I cry and do not know why. Tears just rise and spill as the cloak wraps me. My tears, my crying are real but are they really mine? The feeling that feeds my tears is real yet is not mine.

It's so very hard to explain; hard too for me to understand how it is I don't feel anything and feel so much. Or is it just that it is too hard to accept the explanation offered?



© SHEELAH 2000 NO:4



JOKES

What do you get if you cross a giraffe and a dog?

An animal that chases low flying aeroplanes instead of cars!

What do you call someone who sings while drinking lemonade?

A pop singer!

What is the difference between a fisherman and an idle schoolboy?

One baits hooks, the other hates books

Toy wordsearch

Find and circle 6 words. The pictures are the clues.



hi hi tiger girl, it's me Callie
because we got fpp that you all
make for people to reading, and
i readed your story about the
spcal presents on the train!
and i was being happy for you. i
liked your story soso lots and
reading it. and you get to
keeping a bag to remember you
about it! i was so happy
reading your story and all happy
i know you and there you are
with your story on the page and
it came from you!

Dot-to-dot

join the dots and find what these boys are
playing with.



A Poem by bratfrend

I like jam
I don't like spam.
I like cheese
I don't like bees.
I like kites
I don't like fights.
I like toys
I don't like noise.
I like trains
I don't like drains.
I like me
I don't like tea.

WIMBLEDON CHAMPION MAY BE DISSOCIATIVE!

Goran the Great is a multiple

By Jackie mc

I took great delight when the Wimbledon commentator revealed that Goran Ivanisevic says he has three personalities. I was even more excited when he took off his shirt to reveal his tattoo of a rose, a cross and a shark portraying these personalities. Imagine my elation when he actually won the Championship! I wonder how many of you cried at his success as I did? The struggle and effort he took to win the match mirrored my struggle to get through each day. I am a multiple and a fighter, just like Goran. Go! Goran! Go!

How the press reported

from an article by
Robert Millward,
Associated Press

Ivanisevic "also revealed during the championship that his opponents have to face two or even three Gorans because he has to battle some kind of split personality which often disrupts his game.

He said just two Gorans beat Rusedski in the quarterfinal

'They are together here, playing together, living together, fighting together,' he said. 'And this is just perfect. When these two are together then you can expect anything. I'm proving

right now that I'm playing maybe the best tennis I've ever played at Wimbledon.'

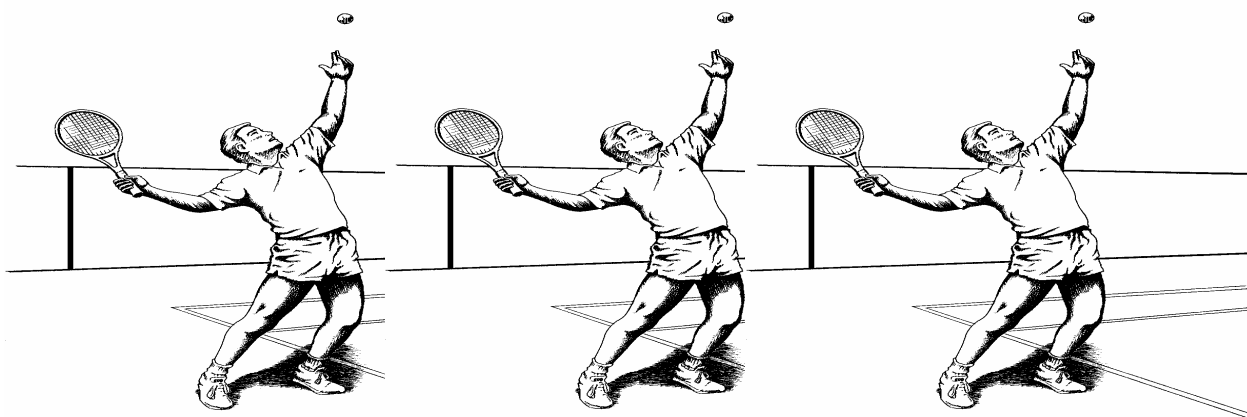
So what does the third Goran do?

'He's a special one,' Ivanisevic said. 'That is the brain one, the emergency one. When it's tough, he steps in. But sometimes he cannot help because the crazy Goran is too crazy or the good one is too good.

'Here (at Wimbledon) he stepped in once and did a good job. Otherwise he was sitting here, watching and enjoying the two Gorans working together.'

KL

*Just goes to show you how functional multies can be
and what internal co-operation can achieve!*



*If only I could as easily create three (or more) bodies
for ourselves with cut and paste! 😊*

Back to Basics by Athena

[This article contains some graphic description of abuse]

The words in the title above are a modern phrase that seems to encapsulate the journey we are making. When we became aware of the small children it was in a detached, logical way with little impact on our whole family. I think this was probably necessary to be able to tolerate their stories and remain functional. Gradually with feeling of containment so we don't become overwhelmed, the small children's feelings and thoughts are seeping through and I am experiencing first hand the simplicity of these confusions created by the care givers. I use the word 'simplicity' to try to show how simple a baby's thought processes are, not to describe the effect caused. How does a small baby store the information that the people who she is totally relying on are capable of causing great physical pain, all mixed up with being played with in an appropriate way. How does she learn to differentiate between what is all right and what is not? Can a baby possibly do this or does play and pain become a confused state from the very early days - long before verbal messages 'not to tell' are necessary from the abuser?

A smiling face leans over the child while digital penetration is performed - what does she do with this experience? She is too small to even rub the area as that association of hand going to hurt part has not yet developed. She can do no more than pull up her knees and cry - but why cry when the face above is still smiling? Why is she crying? What confusion does this cause in her brain? How can this message be stored in a way that can be retrieved in an understood way?

I am trying to understand how this has affected our thinking, understanding and reasoning throughout out life and very slowly I am beginning to see why abuse, especially if started from a very early age causes so much confusion and inappropriate reactions in adulthood. That child has not got enough previously good experiences to call upon. I think you would need to be well into an uncomplicated childhood for that kind of behaviour to be tolerable and then only if you could immediately share with a safe adult and the offending adult reprimanded and removed. A small, unprotected baby doesn't stand a chance of not being traumatically affected for life. I begin to suspect these early experiences

FIRST PERSON PLURAL

have helped us to be reactionary in our behaviour, so often wondering why we responded as we have. Why, when invited to have tennis coaching do we immediately say 'no' and yet feel very sad at the same time; why do we often feel bored when in a safe, pleasurable situation? I suspect boredom may be the external feeling covering fear. Maybe with learning to tolerate the early experiences this will become less contaminated in the present.

Living with a questioning three year old at the moment who asks 'why did Grandpa do that'; if Grandpa plays games with you and touches you why does it make you feel so bad when he touches you at night? Experiencing the child's completely uncluttered view on these situations, realising that she is not mature enough in her development to associate Grandpa's sexual abuse with her subsequent feelings of annihilation to précis her very unique and accurate descriptions of this word. To also realise that at three sexual abuse has a devastating affect leaving the child with many of the older child / adult type misperceptions of herself but having absolutely no connotation of what sex is and the ability for it to be so powerful emotionally. I find it hard to stay with this young child's

view and not attempt to introduce an adult perspective to tidy it up but leave the child in the wilderness. How do you explain that an act that was horrible and frightening, but without the complicating sexual messages being understood, was, to a three-year-old, no worse physically than a bad fall, yet has caused so much distress? How can you help a small child to begin to integrate this complex situation. I expect she will have her won way of working though this at her level but I am finding it hard to say how she can be sure if someone is safe; how can she know what touch is alright.

Why do big people do these things? Why do I feel so sad after Grandpa came to my room? If I , as an informed adult, am so confused in answering her questions, in a way that will help her in her understanding, how impossible for a child, well before any development of awareness of her sexuality has begun to help her make sense of her experiences.

I make no apology for the confusion in my writing. I am living with this inability to rationalise an irrational life, an inability to make it all right. I stand by and hold these children in their own struggles to make their sense of their experiences.

This page left BLANK

***(or might be in future if YOU don't respond)
for you to insert***

***the article or picture or poem or prose writing or cartoon or
book review or tip for coping or personal experience story or resource/service
or conference/workshop report or forthcoming event or letter
or jokes or puzzles or stories for Playcentre***

***that you wrote or drew but didn't send in because you judged it not good
enough or 'knew' others would do better or thought others would send in that
information; tip; conference/workshop report etc... etc...***

***or that you didn't even write or draw yet because you believe no-one wants to
read or see your stuff or you think you can't write or draw well enough or you
assume others will do better or you think others will send in the same kind of
stuff that you'd write or draw anyway.***

***I am betting that everyone reading this will have at least one piece of writing
or drawing that fits the descriptions above. I know it feels risky and takes
energy but PLEASE, PLEASE send in your articles; drawings; poems; jokes;
personal stories; conference/workshop reports; book reviews; letters; tips...***

***I really can't keep producing First Person Plural unless
I receive more of YOUR submissions for publication
and the supply keeps coming.***

***DON'T assume that others will respond to these pleas so you don't have to.
The file of un-used material is almost empty so I need lots and lots of people
to respond. The only thing I have an excess of is poetry but don't let this stop
you sending in your poems if that is what you'd like to submit.***

WANTED!

***YOUR Writing; YOUR Drawing; YOUR Reports; YOUR Reviews;
YOUR Letters; YOUR Jokes; YOUR Personal Story etc... etc...***

***I promise, you do not have to be a Dickens or a Picasso or a Wordsworth or
an Einstein to have your work published in FPP although I suspect we have
some excellent writers and artists hiding their light under bushels.***

***The most important criteria for inclusion in this newsletter is that
YOUR submission is a sharing of relevant lived experience
and/or supportive information which represents YOUR truth; YOUR views;
YOUR ways of coping in the style of presentation YOU want to share it.***

YOU are what makes a submission good enough for publication in FPP

Sitting with feelings

by Sara Lambert

Many abuse survivors find it hard to tolerate having feelings, even positive ones like joy. After a lifetime of automatically dissociating from emotion for self-protection, it can be really scary to allow yourself to feel again. A common defence is to "act out" instead of getting in touch with your feelings. For example, you may throw yourself into work when you are scared about something, in order to divert yourself from the fear. Ways of acting out include compulsively overeating, self-harming, overspending, hurting someone else, damaging property, causing disruption in therapy, creating chaos in life, and so on. Once you have recognised the actions you take to get comfort or distraction from feelings, you can gain mastery over them.

When you have a feeling, resist the urge to act on it. It is important to simply sit for a moment and let the feeling be with you. Ask yourself, "how is it to sit here and not act out? How am I coping?" You may be panicking or in pain. That doesn't mean you are a failure at this feeling business. Rather, it is a clue about how dangerous it was for you as a child to have feelings, and how brave you are going to have to be now, as an adult, if you want to associate with feelings again. It doesn't matter if you don't know what exactly it is that you are feeling.

After all, you probably don't have much knowledge of what certain emotions are like, including what the words for them might be. You may have grown up in a family where expressions of joy were punished, so as an adult have joy and fear/hurt/shame all mixed up. That's okay for now. You don't have to fix it all right away. You just have to sit for a moment and feel the feeling.

This sounds easy, but in fact it can be an extremely difficult thing to do. Do not put any unrealistic pressure on yourself. It's a lot like doing a physical exercise routine. You would not expect to subject your unfit body to an hour of sit-ups at the first session. You would begin with maybe two or three sit-ups and gradually work your way up, always pressing gently against your threshold but not overdoing it. So when you exercise your emotional capacity, sit for as long as you can with a feeling, even if that is only a few seconds, and the next time sit for a bit longer. You'll find that your internal strength will increase as time goes on, and you will be able to tolerate feelings for a much longer time without needing to dissociate or act out.

While you are sitting with the feeling, you do not have to be inactive. You may wish to write down what you are feeling and what it is like for you.

Don't analyse things - just write from the feeling. Or you may wish to draw instead. This is not acting out if you use it to explore the feeling instead of distract from it. Once you have reached the limit of what you can tolerate this time, switch the feeling off. This is one instance where dissociation can be used for good. Use whatever techniques work for you with this, such as turning off a light, closing a door, or unplugging a radio. Once the feeling has been put away for the time being, treat yourself to something small that has good connotations for you.

This may be as simple as a round of applause throughout your system, some time to write the experience down in your journal, a hug, or turning instead to a feeling that you are comfortable with, like happiness.

By following this procedure, you will break your old pattern of automatically responding to feelings, which means you then have real choices about what you want to do with your feelings. You will find yourself empowered to be yourself in a fuller way.

First published in Team Spirit.
Reprinted with permission

POEMS & RHYMES

Rainbows in Our Room by Angela & the others

When living hurts and tears won't come;
When pain is deep but feelings numb,
There is a place we found by chance -
We go to where the rainbows dance.

When nightmares come but we're wide awake;
When we want to scream but fear we'll break
We go and hide ourselves away -
And sit and watch the rainbows play.

A crystal dangling from a golden thread
Sways in a window near our bed.
When the room is filled with winter sun
We've found that's when the rainbows come.

The magic comes in every size,
And just today we realised,
You don't need any rain at all
To see rainbows dancing on the walls.

No longer trapped
by threats of punishment.
Or of being taken away,
That seemed never-ending,
Day after day.
Yes, I am a big girl now and
I can say NO!

No longer bound by chains -
Of guilt and shame,
Now I know its you who are
to blame,
So keep your guilt, your shame -
But better than that,
When you frighten me so,
Just remember.....
I am a big girl now and
I can say NO!

3.3

Post Code:

£5.00 subscription (1 volume = 4 issues)

- £10.00 subscription (1 volume = 4 issues)**

- ## Overseas Subscribers

Return completed form with a cheque / PO made payable to First Person Plural
P.O Box 2537, Wolverhampton, WV4 4ZL, United Kingdom