



Volume 3 : Issue 4

FIRST PERSON PLURAL

January, 2002

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

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Is this the first time you've seen this
newsletter? Are you interested in
joining First Person Plural and/or

getting your own copy of the newsletter? Then write or email for
details giving a postal address. Our contact details are below.

Happy 2002

Better late, than never.....

Well here it is folks, the final issue in
Volume 3 at last. And it's time to....

RENEW SUBSCRIPTIONS

See the enclosed subscription renewal
form for details. There are significant
changes to our membership/
subscription structures and for some a
small increase in annual fee. Please
read the Membership Categories notes
with the renewal form carefully and
apply under the most relevant
category for your circumstances.

REMEMBER to complete and return
the form with correct payment by 6th,
April 2002 to avoid missing any issues
of Volume 4.

Here's hoping it's a good year for all

First Person Plural, c/o PO Box 2537, Wolverhampton, WV4 4ZL

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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 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 6th April, 2002

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

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Line drawings ; cartoons ; pictures to colour.

Funny; serious; therapeutic; expressive

Do others think, as I do, that the newsletter has become too wordy with too few pictures to break up lengthy text?

Text is great and we are receiving some wonderful articles.
We don't want these to stop coming in!

BUT.....

We need pictures too.

Your editor has very little artistic talent and finds it tedious trawling for relevant clip art.

Make your editor's life easier and share your artistic talent

Please send in your pictures – anything that will photocopy

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

I am hoping that your readers can help me. Does anyone have any ideas about how to go about finding someone to work with on "ritualistic abuse" issues.

Are there specific organisations or is it a case of just finding the "right person" who has the ability to be understanding, empathetic and open-minded?

Linda
Letter 3.4/1

Ed's note – at the bottom of p.13 are a couple of possible useful contacts

Many Thanks

I am very grateful to everyone who sent me a letter or card wishing me well after hearing of my hospitalisation last year. Your support and encouragement mean a lot. For me, 2002 has started better than 2001 ended. Here's hoping it continues throughout the year and we manage our first year of all newsletters getting out on time. We'll be doing our best to meet that target anyway. Thank you everyone.

Kathryn Livingston

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.

A Fairy Tale

(this story describes integration)

Once upon a time, there was a garden, as beautiful as any you could ever find. Local children played freely there and were very happy. The garden belonged to a giant who was away from home but the time came for him to return. When he saw the children playing he was very angry that they were so happy when he himself had never been happy and so he ran into the garden, seized the nearest child, and took her away to be his servant. The other children fled in terror. He took this little girl – who we shall call Geraldine – to a part of the garden surrounded by high, dense trees and with access only through his house. There he taught her how to be like him – selfish, narrow-minded, prejudiced, bigoted, critical and condemning. The child, deprived of any other human contact, was so desperate for his love that she learned her lessons well and tried exceedingly hard to please him. However, she never quite managed it because he always felt she could have done better. Eventually, she came to believe that she was just not good enough at anything.

At times, she would hear the family on the other side of the hedge, but they were not her family any longer. In a supreme effort to please the giant she turned her condemnation and scorn on them. They learned to move away when Geraldine approached and so she became even more isolated.

Time passed and Geraldine grew up in her lonely world. She had her own children but she didn't know how to care for them and so left them to fend for themselves. Eventually, the giant lost interest in Geraldine because she was no longer a child and so although she still lived with him, he ignored her existence. Finally, he became sick and died leaving her completely on her own.

She was so lonely that often when she heard voices on the other side of the hedge she would creep closer to experience some human contact even though she didn't know how to join in. She sometimes heard puzzling conversations about how the giant had been very cruel to lots of different ones. This cruelty had somehow prevented them from growing up into adulthood. Geraldine knew their stories could not possibly be true as the giant had not been cruel to her. On the contrary, he had looked after her and taught her all she needed to know over a number of years. For along time she persisted with this belief despite more and more evidence against the giant. The children she could hear had to be liars.

Then one day, on looking round her section of the garden that she had kept so faithfully as a shrine to the good giant, she notice her own children crouching by the hedge. One by one they came and told her the giant had been cruel to them too, causing them to be stuck in childhood as were those outside. Geraldine could hardly believe her ears and felt so ashamed that she had not taken notice of them before. Worse was to come in that, if the giant had been cruel to her own children, what was to say he had not been cruel to others too? She began to doubt the giant's goodness and suddenly her efforts maintaining her garden seemed like a hollow exercise.

An adult outside the hedge had tried for a long time to understand the history of the garden. With help, she came to understand about Geraldine and the world in which she was trapped. She tried to talk to Geraldine through the hedge but years of mistrust made communication impossible. Moreover, Geraldine would never come out and be seen because she was too ashamed of the way she had treated the others over many years.

She thought she would like to live out her days in seclusion and gain what comfort she could from listening to the family outside as they grew to love and understand each other. It was all she deserved.

However, the outside adult – Dorothy – had other ideas. She had been told that the garden was originally one with no parts cut off. She had been told that Geraldine was originally part of the family and her behaviour to do with the way she had been treated rather than antagonism towards others. In order for Geraldine to maintain her view of the giant's goodness, she had had to be more and more cut off. The idea of one garden and one family was like a dream and worth striving for whatever the cost. At length there was a breakthrough and Geraldine agreed to listen to Dorothy. Then occasionally, she would exchange a sentence or two through the hedge.

It was a big day when Geraldine agreed to a gate being put in the hedge so she could sometimes see as well as hear the outside family although she was too ashamed to be seen herself. Once the gate was in position Geraldine and Dorothy could meet there and begin to get to know each other. Dorothy was impatient and would have chopped down the entire hedge at once. Geraldine though had to be convinced that she belonged to the family and hadn't forfeited her right by ally-ing with the giant. She was full of self loathing and felt she would contaminate the family if she were in contact with them. She was afraid to let go of her learned behaviour because she could not see there was any other part of her. It felt to her that she would cease to exist if she did not behave as she always had and that would be even worse than the emptiness with which she was familiar.

A number of years later when all the little children had been gathered up and integrated into larger groups, there was excitement about a big family get together. The hedge came down of its own accord leaving families either side feeling exposed and in the open. Whether Geraldine would come to join the outside family was a source of anxiety because everyone knew it would not be easy for either party. The decision was to invite her last when the larger group had stabilised. But Geraldine had other ideas and came towards the main group of her own accord, lending her strength and drive to the rest of the process.

Sadly, that integration lasted only a few weeks before the family needed to split up again to enable more work to be done with individuals. But the memory is there of feeling complete and belonging. Each child knows where is her rightful place and will return to that position when we get to the next family gathering which I hope will be a more permanent state of 'happy ever after'.

Emails Lost – an apology

If you, or anyone you know has sent an email to FPP in the last few months (Aug to mid January) which has not received a response please accept (or pass on) my apologies. Initially there were delays in responding to emails due to personal crisis. More recently I acquired a new computer and unfortunately lost all emails in the file transfer process. I am particularly concerned that some email-ed contributions to the newsletter may have been lost. Also people making first enquiries or sending postal addresses to receive sample issue will not have had a reply. If you would like to e-mail again please do so – everything is in working order now. In the meantime, I am sorry for the hassle and disappointment caused.

Kathryn Livingston

Multiplicity

By Rhiannone

a survivor working for and on behalf of "Pathway to Freedom" helpline 01242 706473

There are many question marks surrounding Multiple Personality Disorder (MPD) – now also known as Dissociative Identity Disorder (DID). The truth is it is not a disorder or an illness, but a survival mechanism. It is very important to remember this.

It can be very unhelpful for a multiple to go for psychiatric help because the mental health system is not willing to understand them or even acknowledge who they are. When professionals do recognise multiplicity, they have as their main therapeutic goal – "integration", i.e. not the acknowledgement of abuse. Many multiples do not want to integrate because it means dealing with each personality and their memories and letting go of the personalities that have provided so much love and support. .

If you are not a survivor it will be quite hard to understand how a child can endure greivous pain and still survive against all odds. They have survived the most horrendous fear, pain and torment. The ways children find to cope, which continue to be their means of survival as adults, are a remarkable testimony to the resourcefulness, sanity and intelligence of special human beings under horrific circumstances.

Not so long ago the reality of child abuse was not acknowledged. All survivors were trapped in their fear and pain; seemingly alone; too terrified to share their world with anyone. Yet, deep within, anguished questions longed for an answer. Who could ever understand? Who could believe the nightmare I am living when I struggle to believe it myself? If I speak, won't the world outside think I'm crazy and lock me away? With no outside acknowledgement, with no outside reassurance of their sanity, memories remained pushed away; fear and pain remained unseen and uncared for. Voices remained silent and unheard.

As awareness of child abuse has grown, more and more survivors have found the courage to speak out so the terrible fear and isolation is, at last, being broken. Separate worlds of pain are becoming shared worlds. Where fear has thrived in silence, love is breaking through. Those working with survivors are acquiring a greater understanding of how a child learns to cope and how that child's experiences, her feelings and pain, if uncared for, are carried into her adult life, permeating every part of who she becomes. Only when the appropriate understanding, knowledge and care is offered can the real needs of survivors be met. The child has learned to cope alone. There has been no-one to rescue her, no-one to love her, no-one to listen to her, no-one to help her understand what she has been through and why she feels and behaves as she does.

I am a survivor and survived with the help of my multiples (who I refer to as my 'inner's') and I love them to pieces. I wouldn't have been here if it wasn't for them. However, the mental health system is not willing to understand. The professionals do not listen. No-one recognises ourselves. Surely, the question asked should not be does MPD exist but how can those who have such experiences be helped.

The tendency within the psychiatric profession is to pump the person up with drugs or to shut them away into a clinical environment where real needs will not be addressed. The psychiatric system is not prepared to listen or it is not aware enough of what is happening to be able to hear. As a consequence the survivor is being re-abused by the very people who are supposed to be helping her.

If a client/patient reaches the point where she is able to say to her psychiatrist that her head is chaotic, full of voices all screaming at once, pulling her in all directions, voices which seem to come from nowhere and don't belong to her, a voice telling me to get out of here and run, a voice telling me I have to die; if that person frequently blanks out, often had no idea of time or place or reality; if she has what appears to be violent mood swings, forgets who she is and what she has said; if she tries to harm or kill herself without realising it – the chances are she will be labelled in some way, deemed to be out of her mind, beyond all hope. She is likely to be drugged up, forced into modes of treatment which serve only to help the professionals feel more in control, more reassured, safer in their role. What the client is actually presenting points to having multiples. This would explain why there are periods in her life of which she has no memory. The treatment mentioned above will be damaging and abusive; will re-inforce patterns of control, power and abuse which need to be broken.

Previous voices are easily lost in a drug-induced haze and the person will be kept trapped in her pain. What needs to be understood is that each voice in a multiple personality's mind belongs to a separate, unique, special individual with her own memories, feelings and behaviour patterns. If each of these individuals is given the love, care and knowledge that they need they will gradually realise new, healthier ways to behave and will look after themselves and each other. They will begin to understand that nothing terrible or bad will happen now; that it is safe enough for them to begin to change and move towards growth and healing.

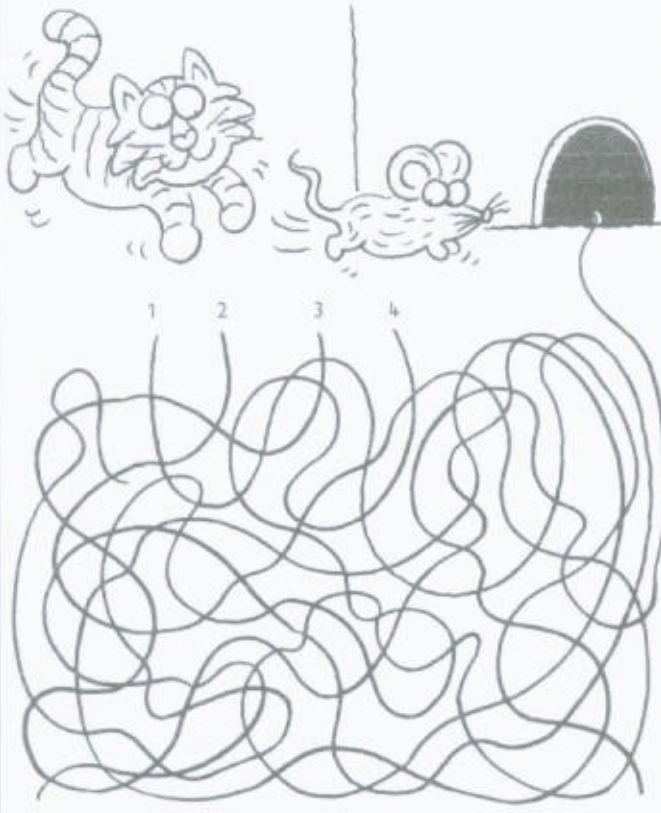
Multiple personality is not craziness; it is not the creation of self-indulgent, egotistical therapists. It is not people possessed or deranged or beyond hope. It is a wonderful and amazing way of coping with the deepest imaginable pain. Denial of multiplicity is a denial of that horror. It is easier to not believe, far easier to walk away. So much damage is done by this disbelief. The effects of denial are insidious. They will always find ways of touching those who, more than anything deserve their experiences and feelings acknowledged and validated. The psychiatric and other caring professions have a clear and urgent responsibility to rise above the media hype; the accusations of hysteria and the denials around multiplicity. They must reach out, listen and respond to what the client is actually saying.

Multiple personality's are the most extreme form of dissociation. This seems to set those who experience multiples as something to be feared, as somehow untouchable and out of reach. Multiple personality's are complex, yet they are also beautiful. Working with multiplicity demands specific understanding and method but most of all deepest respect and admiration are what is deserved.

In today's climate of awareness of child abuse and it's effects the inappropriate and abusive 'care' of multiples should not be happening. It is a deep and sad irony that multiple personalities born to preserve the sanity of an abused child should in adulthood serve as evidence that the person is out of their mind.

Amazing

The cat in this maze is chasing the poor mouse. Can you find the line that can take the mouse straight into his house and away from the cat?



PLAY



Hello
me name
is Sofu
X

I am a bee

Says me

I am a fly

Says I

I am a gnat

Says that

I am a fish

Says this

Well I am a ZOO

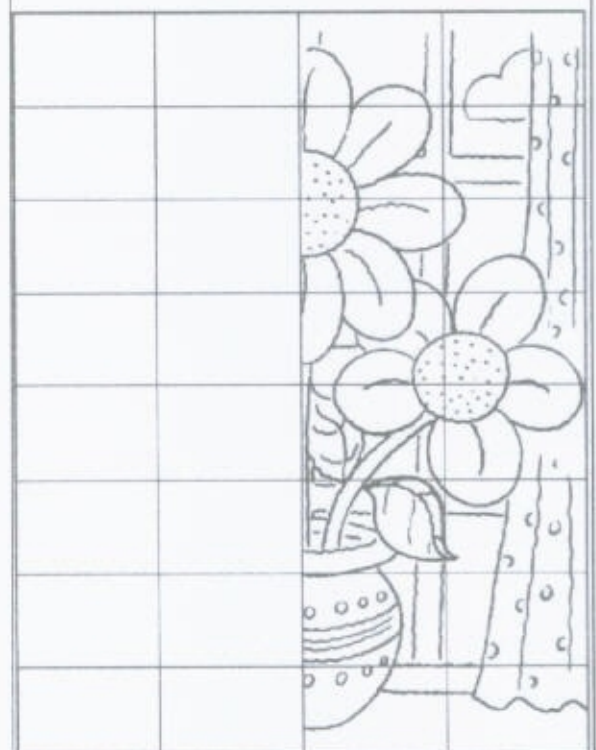
Says you



by 'me girl'

Half a flower

Complete the picture and colour it in.



CENTRE

Jokes

Why do bicycles never do anything exciting?

Because they're always two tired!



What is the difference between a jeweller and a jailer?

One sells watches, the other watches cells!

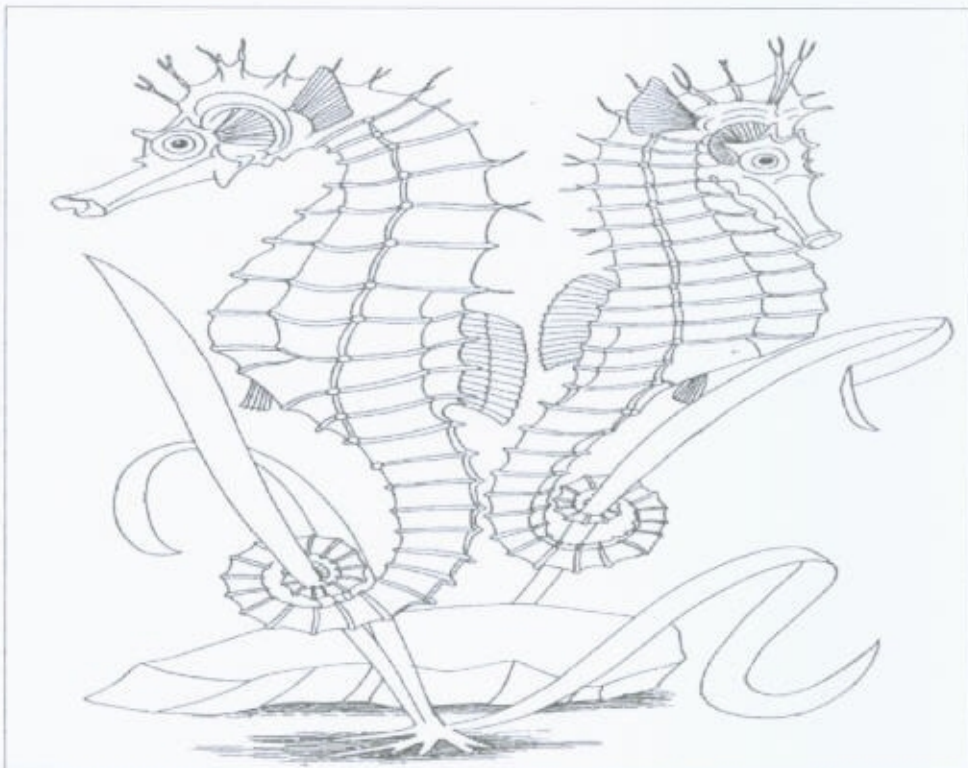


Teacher: If your father gave you £1.50 pocket money and your mother gave you £2.50 what would you have?

Pupil: Someone else's parents!

JOKES ARE FUN! JOKES ARE FUN!
JOKES ARE FUN! JOKES ARE FUN!

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The Dark Side of the Rainbow by Kali
a report from ritual abuse conference - 21/22 Sept, '01

I heard about the second conference in this country concerning ritual abuse, organised by R.A.I.N.S. (Ritual Abuse Information Network and Support) and the Clinic of Dissociative Studies, via my then therapist who had just joined R.A.I.N.S. Five years ago I attended the first conference of its kind over here, " Better the Devil You Know " and I knew I wanted to be there at the next one. So the preparations started for me as soon as I heard the words telling me that another conference was on the horizon ~ " the Dark Side of the Rainbow ".

Over the year life flowed on, application forms and cheques went missing, forcing me to contact the organisers, forcing me into contact with feelings of " oh no, I don't want to do this! ", discovering that mistakes can be identified and rectified.....and so life flowed on until the date of the conference finally arrived, a date that happened to correspond to the Autumn Equinox. In the opening presentation by Valerie Sinason of the Clinic for Dissociative Studies, in which she spoke about "Clinical Research and Treatment Approaches " ~ what was memorable for me, was her acknowledgment of the difficulty for some with the dates chosen for the conference, and the organisers' difficulty of getting any other date for the venue of Reading University. As a dear friend pointed out to me, not only was this weekend a potentially triggering time, therapists who attended the conference were also less available to their clients who had suffered ritual abuse, perhaps at a time when they were needed most.

About one hundred and eighty of us gathered from various countries, survivors, their partners and families, psychotherapists and counsellors, police, helpline volunteers, journalists, lawyers. At times we all gathered in the auditorium to hear presentations followed by the opportunity to ask questions, to raise issues. The second person to offer us a presentation was Jean Goodwin, who flew over from America at this time of world crisis, sharing with us some of her expertise as a psychiatrist and psychoanalyst and as a woman with a big heart. Maybe she reached not only the adults gathered there but also the children within us all, as she delighted us in sharing stories, fairytales, that have been important to her in her work with those who have suffered trauma. She told of "A Thousand Furs", of "Mannaquini", each with their own ways of surviving and being in the world (what a shame I don't have space to retell the stories here). She told of a story we all know, of "Snow White and the Seven Diagnoses", (so common for someone like Snow White who obviously has Dissociative Identity Disorder ~ wasn't she in the forest, not knowing where she was, or how she got there?). She told of the therapist's need to shrink and shrink, to be little, like the dwarves, in fact to be like seven of them, sharing the burden, making sure there's always someone awake who can be a companionable witness to Snow White, even if she herself is asleep, night terrors and all that! Jean explained so well, so clearly, with laughter and her stories. She was one of the presenters who also offered one of the many one and a half hour workshops.

The workshops that I attended varied in content from presentations to more like peer supervision, with therapists bringing in their work with survivors of ritual abuse, and survivors speaking of their own experiences. Many of us there were survivors, in fact compared to the conference of five years ago, it was noticeable how many more people were identifying themselves as survivors and how many shared their personal experiences in the context of the various aspects of surviving ritual abuse that were covered by the conference. I'm aware that no doubt for many reasons, some of us did not identify as survivors.

Over lunch, taking the precious opportunity to meet with a friend, we reflected on an "edge" that was around "coming out" as a survivor, a certain kudos around it ~ a setting up of a certain dynamic perhaps in our relationships, maybe defining a "them and us", therapists and survivors, although many of "us" are "them" and vice versa. We reflected on the restrictions, the limitations imposed by the label of survivor, though it is a word, a concept, that has been personally important to me ~ we spoke of going beyond, of relating as people, unrestricted by our personal past. These talks, informal meetings, were so much an important part of the weave of the conference to me, where I was enriched by another's presence and their sharing of their living experience, and at times I gained valuable insight into myself, my life.

One of those moments of insight happened for me in the workshop that Norma Howes was facilitating. Norma is a social worker and child forensic psychologist, who's involved in training various professions on all aspects of childhood trauma. She is also familiar with working with adults and children with DID (Dissociative Identity Disorder, formerly known as Multiple Personality Disorder). Perhaps this is where I should say that Norma is one of my heroes. At the first conference some five years ago, I attended Norma's workshop concerning how we process traumatic memories in a very different way to every day memories. Since that time my physical health collapsed and I found the key to understanding what was happening to me in the information I had received from Norma. Now, not only do I have an understanding of my own personal life, I also have a passion for discovering the recent research that's being conducted in neuro-endocrinology, how it relates to the immune system and how we're finding more ways to understand body-mind.

So, with my bias revealed I give you my account of the workshop of Norma's that I participated in at this conference. I found that Norma facilitated the workshop that was in the shared experiences style, with great clarity and humour. I very much valued hearing her speak of the need for clear boundaries in therapy, that simple things like the agreed length of the session is stuck to, that "working contracts" are negotiated with the whole system (the organised structure that includes all dissociative identities, whether they are in communication with each other or not, co-conscious or not), every thing being discussed out in the open, developing ways of making life bearable, helping the system to take care of itself, in a way that is not cut off from other people. I suppose that I valued hearing what I believe to be true, it fits in with my world view (very pleasant!) but I also felt these issues concerning boundaries, what I consider to be the basics of therapy, to be crucial in preventing retraumatisation, in developing what Norma termed "good therapy". Over the years, I have heard far too many accounts of retraumatisation during therapy. I believe these accounts point to our need as therapists to honestly address how we are having difficulties working with people who have suffered severe trauma in their childhood's, that has resulted in their experiencing dissociative disorders. It's my belief that such experiences are not that rare, and nor are our difficulties in dealing with them. The circumstances that lead to the natural defence of dissociation becoming a fixed way of being in the world, involve not only systematic repetitive abuse/ violence as experienced in ritual abuse, but also repetitive abuse such as ongoing sexual abuse, physical abuse etc. It seems to me that dissociation is more liable to be chronic, if the perpetrator is also a "care giver" or parent, on whom the child's life depends. For me as a therapist, Norma's workshop highlighted the need for adequate training, she encouraged us to be as knowledgeable as we can, and most importantly attention was drawn to therapists' need of good supervision of their work ~ as we heard people talk of their work with clients, I had the uncomfortable questions resounding again and again, "where is their supervisor? What's happening in the supervision relationship?".

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One of my sources of knowledge is insight into my own dissociative experiences, and during the course of Norma's workshop, I had one of those realisations. For years I didn't know that it was daddy who'd raped me ~ I thought it was a monster. Inside me daddy was very split off from the monster. My realisation was that that split was also very real outside of me, in the external world, there was a split between daddy and the rapist monster. I believe that both my parents are dissociative. I was so brave and trusted Norma so much, that I even shared my insight with all those at the workshop, there and then! I felt that experience from the "inside out" as it were, was as respected as "clinical experience" ~ it's wonderful to feel respected and validated, most empowering!

There were so many people sharing their expertise who I didn't have the opportunity to meet ~ Hilary Traveller speaking of her experience from the "inside out" as a survivor, during the plenary session, at the end of the conference, she made the wonderful comment about how the greatest revenge as a survivor is to live well; Gillian Finch from CISTers, an adult women's survivors of sexual abuse network, talking of facilitation of self help groups; Carole Mallard and Chris Healey speaking of the police perspective, as well as Kobus Jonker from the South African police service; Lee Moore and Malcolm Johnson from A.C.A.L. (the Association of Child Abuse Lawyers) who are collecting data concerning the handling of ritual abuse cases with a view to setting up a public enquiry; Sarah Nelson and Jean Rafferty are journalists, Sarah also conducts academic research in child sexual abuse, together they addressed the painful feelings around coming to terms with failing to protect children and the distortions spread around famous abuse cases; Judy Wheaton represented L.A.S.A. (the League Against Sadistic Abuse), parents of children sadistically abused by multi-perpetrators; there was Alison Baker a pastoral member of the A.C.C. (the Association of Christian Counsellors) and of Care Homes Programming, speaking of people opening their homes to ritual abuse survivors; Heather Bacon a clinical psychologist within the N.H.S., identifying the need for sharing information concerning abuse networks, she was particularly interested in abuse networks within the Armed Services in the U.K. and overseas; Maureen Davies, a veteran in this field, sought to address the cost of working with others with emotional pain to therapists; Sara Scott and Howard Steele both gave presentations, Sara's concerning the often hidden domestic abuse and sexual exploitation in the lives of survivors, and Howard spoke of his experience of others dissociation whilst administering the Adult Attachment Interview.

As you can see, many professions and caring people were present at the conference, and one of the people who I did have the opportunity to meet in greater depth was Judith Issroff. Judith is a Child, Adolescent and Family Psychiatrist and Psychoanalyst. The numbers in this session were smaller enabling us at Judith's suggestion, to introduce ourselves, to find out who else was here ~ enabling us to meet more. Judith's honest humility impressed me and her incredible ability to truly hear and speak from her heart. Judith has lived and worked in Israel with survivors of the Holocaust. She feels this has enabled her to hear survivors of ritual abuse, that it has enabled survivors to know that she can hear, so they can risk telling her, for Judith can recognise what it is that she is hearing. She has not been in this country for long and she has already met many young survivors of ritual abuse. She recognises that ritual abuse is not as rare as we like to think. At one point Judith recognised a process in me as she reproduced one of her client's drawings, which included a symbol that I know only too well, and yet I still don't fully know what it is that I do know. For someone like me who's pretty good at passing as "normal", or at least that's what I like to think, being noticed has quite a double edge. However it did make a connection between Judith and myself, which we expanded in the limited time available, and for this I am grateful.

Another workshop that I participated in was led by Thorsten Becker, a social worker and supervisor from Germany, specialising in relating to ritual abuse and dissociative disorders. This was more of a bluntly honest presentation concerning the highly organised international violence that exists ~ confirming my worst "paranoias". Thorsten spoke of subjects that still remain largely taboo, he spoke of mind control and programming. He spoke of the dissociative difficulties of the German people around issues of the Second World War, of how many scientists, special police etc, of that era, travelled and settled elsewhere in the world, taking with them their Nazi belief system, their expertise in torture, experimentation on people, and mind control. I found Thorsten courageous in speaking the unspeakable.

The workshops with their smaller numbers and greater intimacy, for me held the most impact. Sitting on high, at the back of the auditorium (I'm more at ease with no one behind me), listening to presentations by some who were not able to make much contact with their audience, didn't give me so much to take away. Apart from those previously mentioned, Chris Healy spoke to us of "Police Aspects on the UK", Norma Howes spoke of "Using Science in Therapy, the Neurobiology of Trauma", a subject that I find both fascinating and useful, Sue Richardson covered "An Attachment Based Approach to Therapeutic Work with the Spectrum of Dissociation".

There was a lot of information, rich seams of knowledge, which will take me a while to digest and I miss the conference pack we had five years ago, full of articles and abstracts that we could take away and read later. I also missed more opportunity for meeting with others for reflection, to help to process all that we were experiencing. Perhaps half hour sessions in small discussion groups would help to meet this need that I heard voiced by others too. For me the evenings did not provide such opportunities as I did not want to be around the bar, with alcohol and tobacco smoke. Instead I holed up with my partner who came with me to the conference. We had our own discussion groups, rested and shared time together. One evening we wandered around the campus and found the most magnificent trees, especially wonderful were the majestic cedars. My partner's presence enabled more of me to be there at the conference ~ it was great to play and laugh, to be cared for, and listened to first thing in the morning when so many words just poured out of me. In a way in his presence I was softer, more vulnerable, but amazingly with the support that I received I didn't find this threatening. And so the conference was full of wonders for me, things I couldn't have imagined. Just being with so many people who are facing the reality of ritual abuse as we start the 21st Century, for me is heartening and supportive. It seems to me that in order to be able to face this horrific reality it takes great heart, an open heart. At the conference I saw others who I sensed were able to use "intellect as the language of the heart" and some who I felt had become dissociated from that source.

Will I go again next time round, in maybe another five years time? I know that much will happen in my life over that time period, and that ritual abuse, ritual violence will no doubt remain a major concern of mine. I can imagine that though I will have moved on, such a gathering may well be of benefit to me and I hope to others as we strive to come to terms with our humanness, to find within it some peace and a way to prevent the atrocities we commit on each other.

Here are the contact details of the conference organisers:

The Clinic for Dissociative Studies
10 Avenue Mansions
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F. P. P. at Mind conference
12 – 14th Nov, '01 by Melanie

Myself and Kathryn attended the Mind conference in Scarborough in November. I had always thought of Scarborough as a close relation to Great Yarmouth, so it came as a pleasant surprise to find a beautiful coastline with magnificent castle ruins overlooking the new town. It was definitely not a place for the unfit as the hills are quite something.

F.P.P. had submitted a proposal for a workshop at the conference but it was not accepted so, determined to have an FPP presence at this major annual mental health event we applied to facilitate a networking session for dissociative survivors.

I had never been to a Mind conference before so was not sure what to expect. I found the whole experience very interesting. Many support groups had stalls in the exhibition hall and I gathered lots of leaflet on education, careers and various aspects of mental well-being which I thought would be of help or interest to various friends and colleagues.

Overwhelmingly I felt that this could have been a mental health conference from the Victorian era. This was not because of the way it was presented but because so many delegates and speakers were expressing the need still to educate professionals and public on various aspects of helping people with mental health problems. It may be that there have been major steps forward in mental health but still it was quite frightening to hear so many people in one place expressing this need. There is obviously still much ignorance, as well as arrogance surrounding mental health problems and the people who experience them.

In particular, it seems that the vast majority of psychiatrists, perhaps the single most powerful profession in mental health, are still not listening to or being respectful of the service users. I heard many stories of the arrogance and lack of sensitivity by psychiatrists causing pain and distress. There were also stories of success and positive outcomes; of clients/users successfully accessing what is the right help for them but it seems there is much that still needs changing in the mental health system. In a dark way it was reassuring to hear that it is not only people with dissociative distress who are being unheard and over-medicated. I felt more as if I belonged to the wider field of mental health than I have ever felt before.

Dissociation is a wonderful thing when you are planning to facilitate a networking session and your protectors are refusing to allow any brain space to think about how you might handle it and what you might say. So, we went into the small theatre – (not exactly an ideal setting for the kind of networking session we'd hoped to achieve, but we weren't given any choice about the room) – with nothing prepared and, on the positive side, no time spent worrying about it. About 25 people attended. We began by briefly outlining a wide definition of dissociation to encompass the complete spectrum. Kathryn and I then each shared a little of our experience of daily life as a person with DID and sketched our two very different paths to getting appropriate professional help. We hoped to show our 'normality' as being within the range of normal human experience and thus remove some of the fear, stigma and ignorance surrounding DID. I think we probably achieved this as several participants felt safe enough to share a little of their own life and experience.

Men and women both spoke of their confusion; their sense of 'not fitting' and particularly their inability to fit snugly into other mental health labels that have been attached to them by professionals. For some participants it seemed attending the session may have given them the confidence to say "This is how it is for me, my reality is not how I am told it is" For others, unfamiliar themselves with the experience of dissociative living, we gave them some insight into what DID is like to live with.

My own and Kathryn's experiences have similarities which mean we can relate to each others. However, our

inner and outer lives are, in fact, very different. Some participants seemed to find this reassuring, as they shared their own similar/different experiences.

For me, the FPP networking session at the Mind conference was a positive and successful experience. I believe and hope that we brought a little understanding and opportunity to all those who were kind enough to attend.

As a footnote, this was the first time I have been away alone (i.e. without our children) with my husband in twenty-eight years. Another milestone reached.

Mind to publish booklet

First Person Plural is collaborating with Mind to finally get a UK information booklet on dissociative distress made widely available. The booklet will not just be about D.I.D. but inclusive of the full spectrum of dissociative distress.

Many of our readers will remember that this is not FPP's first attempt to produce and distribute an information booklet. It has been more than two years since we received a substantial personal donation to do this. This funding remains unspent. While we have taken some steps forward in the project – collecting ideas and researching, even a first draft of a booklet for supporters – the most difficult barrier for the steering group has been finding the time [in busy (often chaotic) lives, careers and voluntary commitments] to draw all this work together into a brief enough, yet informative enough final written document.

The collaboration with Mind will help us overcome this barrier. Kathryn Livingston (who works as an independent mental health user-consultant) has been commissioned to write a 3000 word booklet on dissociative distress which will be published in Mind's "Understanding....." series. The booklet, due for publication in May 2002, will achieve a much wider distribution as a Mind publication than FPP could ever achieve alone. In recognition of First Person Plural's involvement in writing the booklet Kathryn has negotiated with Mind to include the FPP logo and an acknowledgement on the back of the published booklet. Mind will be selling the booklet but some of the funding FPP has will now be spent on providing FREE copies to help achieve a wide circulation. As a Mind booklet the publication will receive publicity in Mind's own publications and possibly even in the wider media, if Mind press release at the time of publication. Mind's Understanding..... series is widely respected and many in the series are best sellers.

YOU CAN HELP – please write or e-mail to FPP (not to Mind)

The booklet will be written in a question and answer format. Tell us what **questions** you think should be included with, if possible, suggestions for **brief answers**. We also need **brief personal quotes** about living and working with dissociation. We'd appreciate help from **survivors, supporters and professionals**.

Poems & Rhymes

Anon

Tucked away neatly in her dark,
damp corner
of the house, the playground,
the pub,
the long-forgotten woodland
hideaways, in
her own memory
archives,
is a little, somewhat
similar-looking
girl: A girl she does not
quite forgive
for what she
did
not
do,
and what she
did do,
or might
have done. Now, She is
just another
commuter
on
the
Tube.
Lives in Reading;
works in London;
goes clubbing and
shopping
quite a lot,
with
friends she
barely knows. Pops
Prozac, and
sometimes E,
drinks Bacadi
Breezers,
and thinks
she's
okay
now.

by Paula

The feeling

Something stirs within me,
I can no longer fight the feeling.
The woman has outgrown the child,
It is my will he is stealing.

My anguish makes me cry,
I hate it because it makes me feel weak
I wish the women would die
And the child too
because she is too scared to speak.

The feeling reaches its end,
Appalled and disgusted I leave,
Again I have submitted,
Alone I sit and grieve.

Not knowing by Wendy

I sat in your room feeling shy and not
knowing what to say
You looked relaxed and friendly, but I felt
a long way away
I could see your chair and my chair were
only a few feet apart,
As I sat looking at you I was thinking "just
where do I start?"
My heart was all of a flutter, it's beat as
soft as a feather,
So what do I say that really could help us
working together?
Many times and so many hours have I been
here before
Only to be left wondering, if I should
bother to do this anymore
But I keep trying to reach that part of me
so locked away,
So here I am looking at you again, feeling
very far away.