



RAINBOW'S END

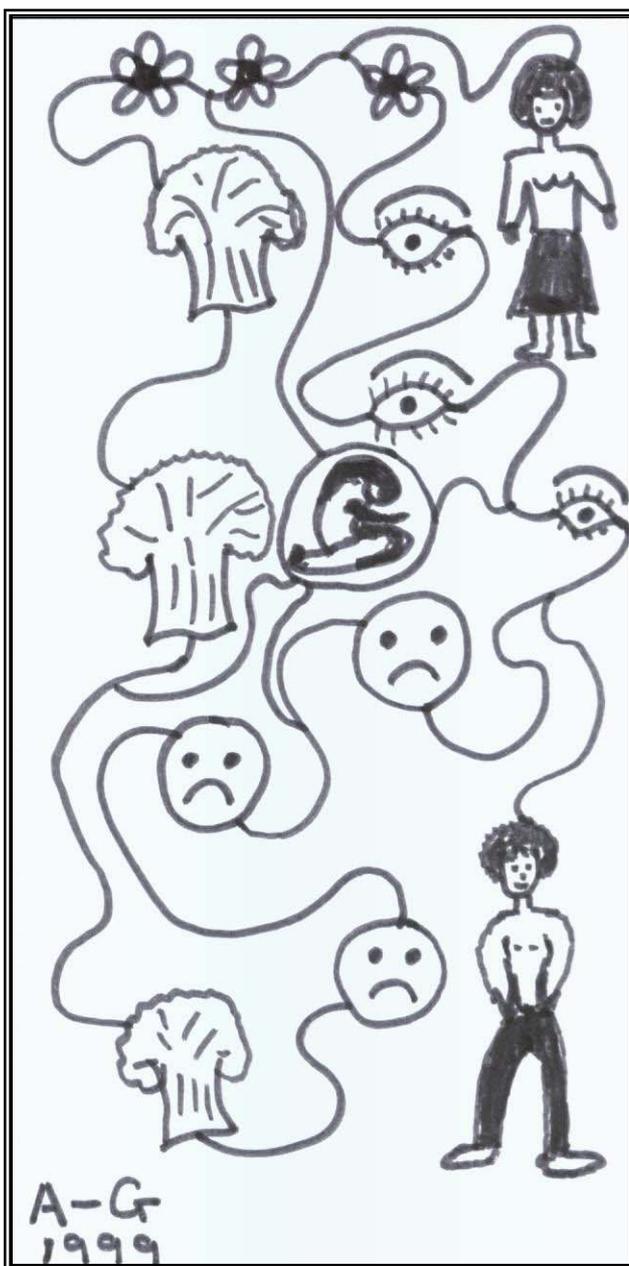
Issue 4 / 1

April/May 2002

Support & Information Newsletter of FIRST PERSON PLURAL
the survivor-led association for survivors of trauma and abuse who experience
dissociative distress, and for their family, friends and professional allies

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Volume 4, Issue 1
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 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 to next issue to be received 19th July, 2002

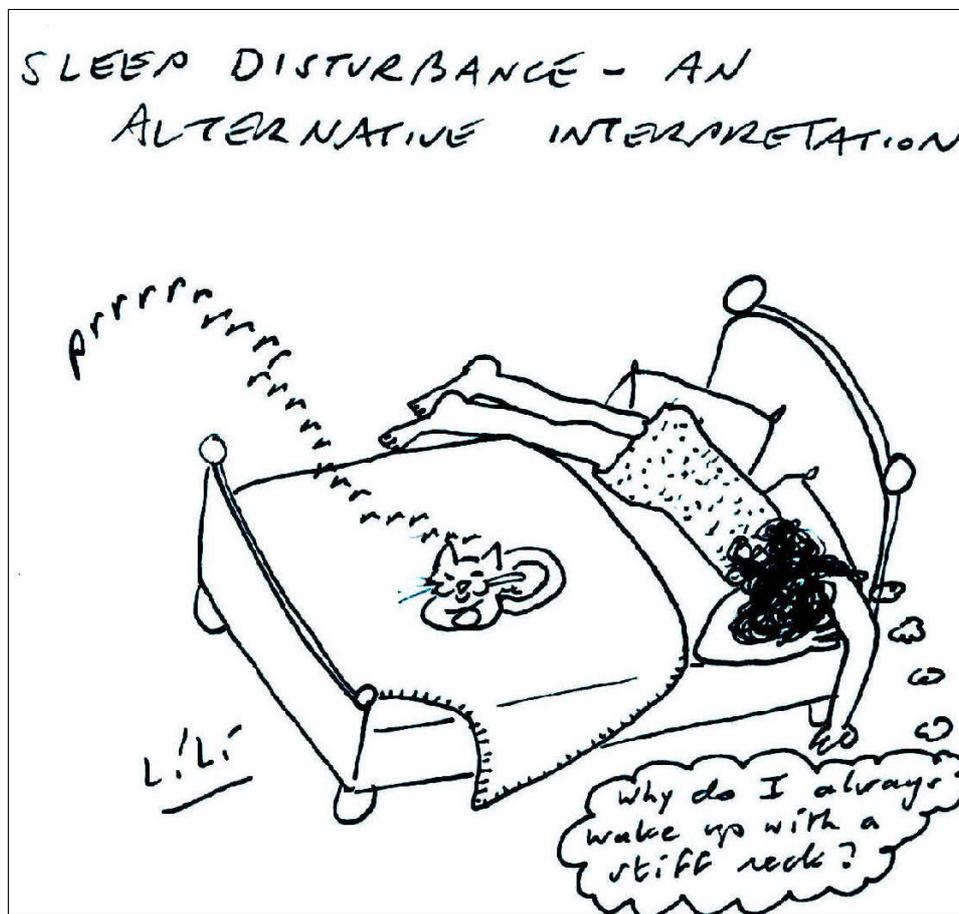
articles; stories; resources; book reviews; tips; poetry; artwork; personal experiences

Originals will be returned 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.

ATTENTION

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



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**

Your last newsletter had an article about 'Multiplicity' by Rhiannon. It touched me deeply. After reading it I understood much, much more. I rang Rhiannon and spoke to her. She runs the helpline 'Pathway to Freedom'. Wow! what more can I say – she's an amazing person. She taught me so much in one hour. I have worked in care homes, hospitals, with Social Services and many other organisations, but I have never ever spoken to a Survivor who works on a helpline. She has really inspired me. She also offers supervision which is brilliant, because she explains herself so clearly no jargon. I thank you for printing her article and telephone number. People like Rhiannon deserve recognition.

Helen (a CPN)

Thanks for yet another first class newsletter which I received yesterday and have already devoured from cover to cover (which considering the amount of professional literature I have to get through says a lot about the attraction of the newsletter!).

It seems to me that dissociation - in all its variants - must be so widespread that it is mind-boggling how little heed is paid to it by so many health-care professionals. I had a severe episode myself, 2 ¼ years ago, of Dissociative Amnesia when I drove my car for 20 miles (some of it through heavy city traffic; other parts on fast open roads); shocked the hell out of my family with my strange behaviour and was rushed off to hospital, to an emergency medical ward where I remained for 3 days before being discharged with a diagnosis of "Transient Transglobal Amnesia". This described the phenomenon but didn't recognise the cause which was my dissociation in the face of a psychological shock that day, relating to serious events a year before which had put me off work for 2 months. I didn't recognise it for Dissociative Amnesia until somewhat later when I pieced it together - and I'm a psychologist!

Name supplied

Jackie's Pain Management Tips

My walls of dissociation are crumbling and I am now experiencing severe emotional pain. I have produced a list of things to help me when I am hurting so much that I forget how to self-care.

- Tell myself that I am important
- Imagine my support circle with me in the centre
- Cry
- Painting, drawing, poetry, journaling, writing creatively
- Build on instincts - curl up, have a drink, cuddle a soft toy
- Sleep
- Medicate - herbal & prescribed
- Relaxation. Listen to a tape.
- Think about my "safe place"
- Imagination not dissociation! - use visualisation
- Distraction. Change the focus.
- Meditation - say my mantra "Love, nurturing, power, joy & respect"
- Yoga - connect to my body
- Aromatherapy e.g. lavender
- Self-massage or ask someone else for a massage
- Be powerful, not helpless. Say "I can" not "I can't"
- Read a children's book
- Wrap myself up in the duvet or blanket
- Sit comfortably
- Have a bubble bath. Use bath oils
- Surf the internet to destroy the isolation
- Read an uplifting book, listen to uplifting music
- Appreciate nature
- Burn some candles
- Buy myself some flowers, toiletries, other treats
- Make myself a cup of tea and put my feet up
- Sing along to music
- Have milk and biscuits
- Watch a film
- Leave the answer phone on
- Pray
- Say "I can stand it", "It won't last forever", "I'm doing the best I can", "It's OK, I am safe now"
- Be aware that I am in safe surroundings
- Decide what is important and what is not

- Keep things simple
 - Pace myself
 - Call on my other personas to help me
 - Compare myself to those less fortunate than myself
 - Maintain a structure. Set a goal.
- Try to laugh about things
 - Remember beautiful scenery
 - Remember the words and deeds of caring people
 - Think about my good qualities
 - Think "I am a strong person who can cope"
 - Get help in an emergency

BOOK REVIEWS



Bitterroot Landing ~ a novel by Sheri Reynolds

Reviewed by Kali

A magic book, a book about the magic of healing. Sheri introduces us to Jael, who for me became a fellow survivor who I was rooting for (they're American!), as she faced life's wonders and challenges.

In Part One we witness Jael's testimony to the abuses inflicted on her as a child, her struggle to survive them and the strength of her spirit. Following hearing the bitter truth where it seemed to me that Sheri described the abuse (sexual, physical, emotional, mental abuse ~ can you ever separate them?) in a very 'human' way, a way that shows understanding of and empathy for, the way that a person may have to survive such atrocities; following the hard going part of this book is Jael's 'journey of healing', of coming into her power, of performing the miracle of 'living well'.

Her journey involves an amazing relationship with the spiritual, not divorced from everyday life but in the very blood ~ something I very much appreciated. The book had a captivating quality for me in which I couldn't wait to find out what happened next, what Jael would do next in her inner and outer world. For me it was a book that highlighted how life provides opportunities to heal, to take that one step further, in all sorts of guises. I felt the book paid homage to the beauty and creativity of both the survival and healing processes, to that mystery within and without that transforms.

Still Surviving – a look at the lighter side of healing from childhood sexual abuse *by Mary Collins*

Reviewed by KL

This is serious stuff! This brief e-book (that means its only available through email after being paid for via the internet) deals with many issues – from co-dependency to therapists; from false memories to naming feelings and paranoia – in a light hearted and easily readable way but if you don't have your sense of humour activated you may find yourself offended or triggered.

I personally found it a wonderful read but even at only 18 A4 pages I had to dip rather than read cover to cover. Different parts with us reacted very differently to some of the articles. Curiously, one was angered by an article called Rage Calisthenics which was a spoof advertisement for an anger expression keep fit programme.

However, I could identify with most of the experiences described and I appreciated the comical writings despite the American perspectives inevitable for a book authored by a US survivor. On more than one level I found it to be a therapeutic read – from the generalistic 'laughter is the best medicine' level to the very specific therapy exercise level of the Association Game which encourages little ones (or adults for that matter) to associate and name feelings accurately.

If you would like a copy of this e-book, have access to the internet and your own credit card visit <http://www.survivorwit.com> and follow ordering instructions on the site. It costs \$6.50 (which at current exchange rate is approximately £4.65). If you'd like a copy but can't order for yourself send a cheque or PO for £5.00 to First Person Plural and we will order on your behalf.

Middle of the Spectrum *by Anon*

I have been in my current therapy for about two years now, having previously struggled for years not realising quite what was simmering underneath. Before finding my present experienced therapist, I tried other counselling, two briefly which were unhelpful and not insightful, and one intermittently in depth over a period of time, which was damaging. I then became physically ill and had to wait until I was stronger to look for a more

professional and experienced person to work with. Over the years, however, I have read quite a lot about counselling and therapy and attended some courses myself. In reading books and articles on this subject, there seems to be quite a lot of material at the extreme end of the spectrum, about people who have DID/MPD – where some of their dissociated parts take over from time to time in their everyday life.

At the other end of the spectrum there is much helpful material on the internal parts that everyone has. I'm thinking of models such as transactional analysis. One of the most helpful books I've come across is John Bradshaw's "Home Coming – reclaiming and championing the inner child". In this he uses his own journey frequently as an illustration. His memories are not hidden ones, but he has been stuck emotionally at various stages of development through neglect, trauma, abuse or hurt of some kind. He offers ways of releasing the emotions and taking in now the nurture and guidance that was missing then.

What there seems to be much less written about is the vast area in between. What about people who have quite severe dissociation, unconnected-ness, not in touch with memories and feelings, and yet the internal parts holding these memories and feelings and beliefs are well hidden and there is no part that totally takes over in everyday life (so the core self does not experience lost time). As triggers occur, the feelings and beliefs sometimes blend with the core self and overwhelm her, but there may be no awareness of trauma or abuse causing these. For me, this has meant panic attacks, migraines and numbing out – not being able to think straight.

I had always felt shallow, and that there must be more to life. I also knew that I couldn't remember early times, but I thought nothing of it. What you know is the norm for you. If memories are hidden and defence mechanisms work well, although there are hints all over the place if you look for them, in the shallowness you just get on with life. After a major triggering event 13 years ago I knew I needed help, but I didn't know where to look. I also thought I only had the triggering event to sort out.

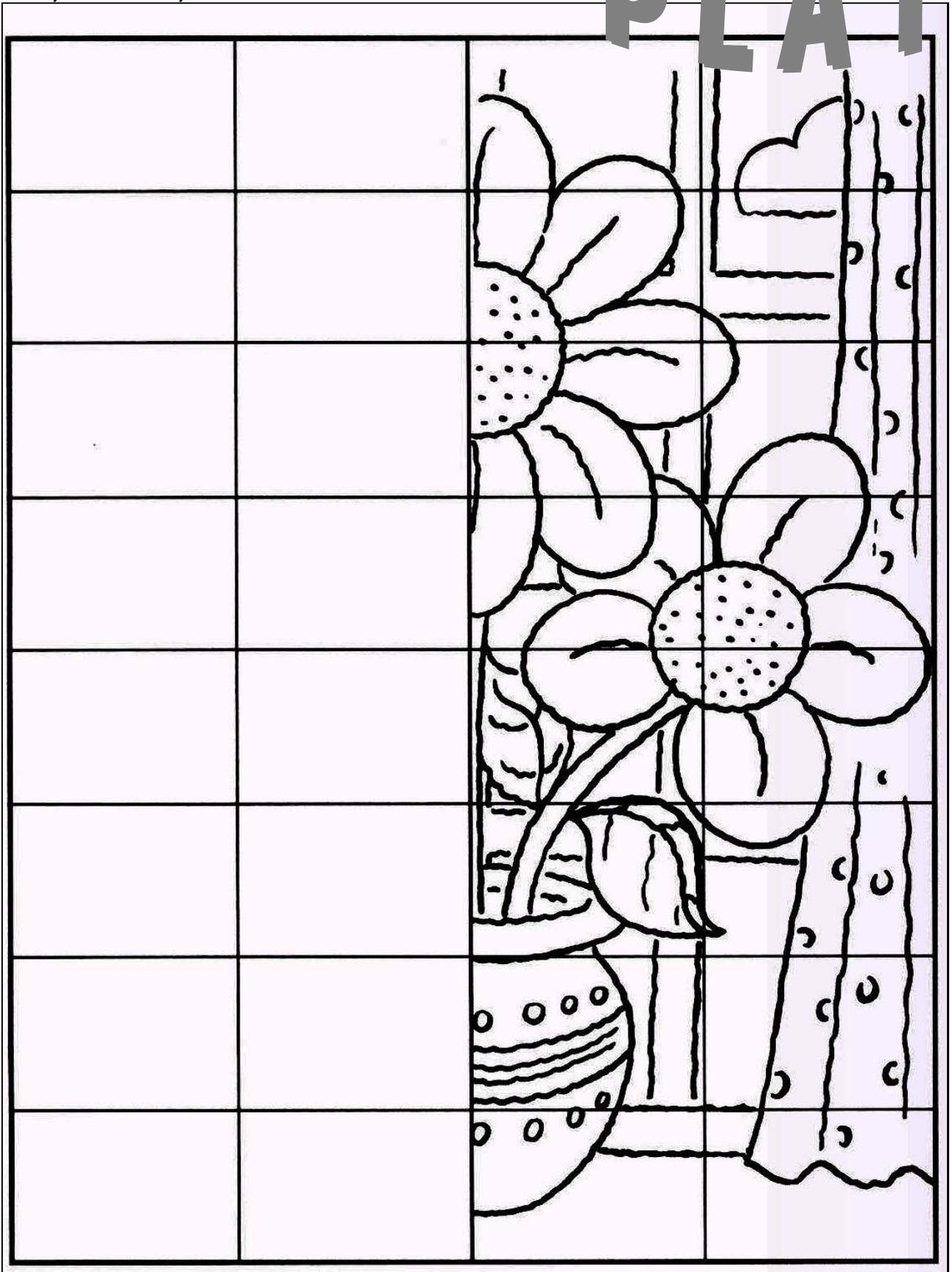
So, it has been a long journey because I didn't know I needed someone experienced in working with dissociation. When the dissociation became apparent, and acknowledged by counsellors, perhaps I have been unlucky in my experience of their working methods. One insisted in working in the 'here and now' all the time which meant we couldn't explore and release the feelings, beliefs and memories under the surface. Other intermittent counselling was with someone who turned out to be very damaged herself, who worked without proper boundaries in place or following the ethics of accrediting organisations, which resulted in traumatising dependence.

While the models of healing offered by John Bradshaw and others would be helpful later on, what I needed to begin with was to find a therapist who was experienced in working with the separate, dissociated parts in a safe environment, building up the trust needed so that the adult self could give way to previously buried parts, for them to interact with the therapist and bring memories, feelings and beliefs out into the open. The therapist could then introduce them to the adult/her-and-now self and family of parts and come alongside, enabling the healing and nurturing process that is ongoing, not just in the therapy sessions, as the adult/here-and-now self learns to nurture and protect inner parts.

I suppose what I am asking is, are there enough experienced therapists out there, who are truly safe and can talk to young (and adult) dissociated parts and encourage them in the healing process. The process requires much patience, seemingly going over the same ground – all the listening skills and more come into play, and an ability to go with and work with the client who has, somewhere inside, the knowledge of what needs to happen next. *(go to p10)*

Complete the picture and colour it in

PLAY



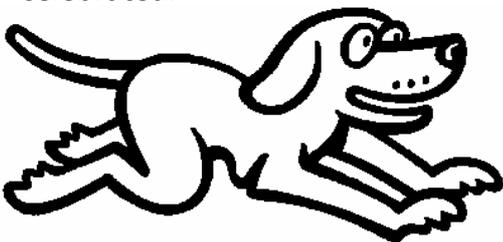
Middle of the Spectrum

(continued from page 7)

It seems to me that counsellors who just talk to the here-and-now self are not going to bring healing easily when feelings and beliefs are lodged in a different (dissociated) part of the mind. Even when there are no hidden memories, but there are feelings and beliefs that are trapped in time, then it may be helpful for the therapist to be able to work with that trapped part of the self, rather than the here-and-now self. If this is so, then any therapist/counsellor who works with a client's unprocessed material from the past, needs to be prepared to work with dissociation.

Perhaps there are enough skilled therapists out there – perhaps the problem is a lack of awareness, literature and training for those who do not work with dissociation, but need to recognise it and be prepared to refer on.

I would also like to make a point about the outcome of therapy. As I am still in therapy these thoughts are a work in progress, but it seems to me to be helpful to be working with the view of the whole self made up of connected parts who respect and come to trust each other and respond to the core/here-and-now self. I have experienced counselling where the end view has been the integration of the parts and assimilation and disappearance of parts into the here-and-now self. I think this view is likely to be counterproductive for most people. Each part brings an enrichment and sensitivity to the whole that is to be valued and celebrated.



Books I have found helpful (as a client) are:

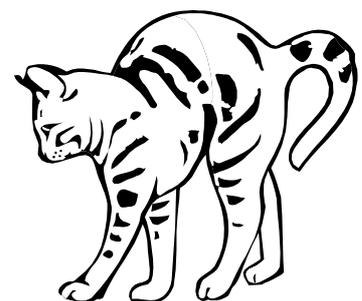
John Bradshaw, Home Coming; Piakus, 1990
John Bradshaw, Healing the Shame that Binds You; Health Communications, 1988
Nancy J Napier, Getting Through the Day; Norton, 1993.

In therapy we have also explored ideas from the Internal Family Systems model (The Mosaic Mind, Schwartz & Goulding), promoting the strong Self (being somewhat different from the here-and-now self) and how the hurting inner parts can come to trust the strong Self. We are also exploring the concept (reality?) of an internalised ideal Mother figure who is always there to give nurture and guidance. Listening to the tape by Jungian analyst Clarisaa Pinkola Estes – Warming the Stone Child has thrown more light on this.

The verdict is still out on these helps, but for me so far, I have been responding to the 'internal Mother figure' more than feeling confident that there is in me a 'strong Self'. My mind likes to work everything out, and although I could receive the concept of a strong Self better than an 'internal Mother', as far as results got and interaction from inner parts are concerned, then the 'internal Mother' is more real. Perhaps, as in the development of a safely nurtured baby the input from the mother comes first, and enables the strong Self to grow.

"The goal of IFS is not to fuse all the parts. Instead the IFS therapist seeks to restore leadership, balance and harmony in the internal system such that each part can take its preferred, valuable role" (The Mosaic Mind, p11).

That sounds good to me!



Celebrate – I've got funding for therapy
by Lili

At first we would have nothing to do with mental health services, through lack of trust and a fear of doctors of all sorts. So we paid for our own psychotherapy for once or twice a week for years.

Our GP is actually brilliant. We have MPD and that must have become very apparent to him when we finally went to him for help because we weren't sleeping. The insomnia had been going on for some time to the point where we were exhausted – an accident waiting to happen. And I was depressed.

The GP was worried about prescribing when we had a mental condition he knew little about and he wanted advice from a psychiatrist. While trying two sleeping tablets that did not work, and an anti-depressant that did, we agreed to him referring us to a psychiatrist. Only, no one wanted to see us! No-one would take us on because they knew nothing about MPD!

After about 9 months, a new psychiatrist was employed locally and she agreed to see us, although she admitted she knew nothing about MPD. However, she was helpful, liaising with my therapist to give me an official diagnosis of MPD and also diagnosing recurrent depressive disorder. She prescribed medication that helped with that, and resolved the insomnia..... well, the medication reduced symptoms, so we could access the therapy and work on the underlying problems – which is what medication should do.

And, she supported my request for funding for the therapy.

I recently heard it's going ahead!

I hope you will celebrate this success with me, as each time one person with dissociative distress gets funded for the therapy needed means there is more hope for all of us.

NOW *by anon*

NOW
 I am lost
 NOW
 I'm confused
 NOW,
 Although I'm free
 AND
 No longer abused.

NOW
 Who am I?
 NOW
 Where do I go?
 NOW
 I am set free
 MY FUTURE
 Seems so unclear.

NOW
 I'm unsure
 NOW WHO
 Am I supposed to be?
 NOW
 I have to relearn
 AND FIND
 My own identity.



Observations from a therapist

by Rosemary Bray

I am delighted to learn that Mind is to support FPP in publishing a booklet on dissociative distress. I would like to make a few observations, which may be useful for the Mind publication, from the point of view of therapists working particularly with dissociative clients.

1. *While it is not essential that a counsellor is experienced in working with dissociative disorders it is essential that they are well grounded, secure and supported in their personal lives.*
2. *Dissociative clients lack 'connection and continuity' in their selves and in their experience - any therapist working in this area must be able to offer this within the therapy - consistently and often over a period of several years.*
3. *Each 'part' of the client needs to be valued equally by the therapist.*
4. The creation and maintenance of 'safety' in the therapeutic space is vital.
5. The therapist needs to be able to understand and tolerate extreme levels of 'pain'. They also need to have their own appropriate place and space to process their personal response to this pain effectively.
6. I work from a baseline which says that 'every response makes sense at root level' - only by listening to my client can I come to understand the root - a baseline from which we can work on each issue.
7. Stay with the client - stay with the process - even when you don't understand it at that moment in time - tolerate uncertainty.
8. Always be honest.
9. The client's difficulties have come from a background of 'inhumanity' - the best antidote is 'humanity'.
10. Recognise and work with the person - the unique individual, not the diagnosis.
11. Ultimately, as with all clients, it is the relationship that heals.
12. Respect, indeed revere, the dissociation - it has protected the clients 'self' well often for many years and deserves thanks and respect
13. As a therapist working with dissociative clients it is essential that you have supervision from a therapist who is experienced in the areas of trauma and dissociation

PROGRESS*by Athena*

A lifetime ago what we gradually began to understand were repressed memories started to return. A major life experience had penetrated those layers of defences to allow our internal world to impinge on our external experiences. This manifested itself as several years of hardly sleeping, eating and living in a state of constant anxiety.

What really happened was we walked around looking like someone from Belsen, visibly shook most of the time, were unable to concentrate to the extent that my family lived on baked potatoes and little else for a period of time. We stayed up until 3 or 4 am and then slept a couple of hours. Our up time at night was spent reading Carl Rogers' "On Becoming A Person", which we read and reread. It was a total mystery to us although at one level it seemed to explain how the rest of the world lived. We listened to the record "I am a rock" and in-between times we experienced flashbacks that paralysed us with terror. Sometimes when

the terror had gone enough for us to move we would ring the Samaritans. During the day we went to work, cared for a large family and made sure we had the resources to get to the things relating to the family. The thought of suicide was with us constantly and was a never-ending battle. Small, self-harm acts prevented anything too serious happening for most of the time, although these tended to be confusing and debilitating in other ways. We were unaware of our dissociation throughout this period although in therapy. When a fragment of memory was surfacing the battle to suppress it was enormous and we would walk the lanes at night with a fight going on inside that was impossible to experience without keeping moving. Sometimes, near to the fragment forcing its way into consciousness we would end up shouting out loud to the sky / God for help.

This was all happening with very little understanding on my or the therapists' part. I think it has to be the very worst time of my life, probably because no one could help me

understand what indeed was happening. With hindsight if we hadn't been dissociative we would never have remained functional. At times when things were fractionally easier I would wonder on what was happening and never felt it fitted into what I was reading on repressed memories although that offered a little insight. It was years before I realised or could cope with the realisation that the terror times were flashbacks. I would read about them but never put that label on my own. It now amazes me how strong the process of keeping things from adding up was.

Then came the breakthrough of realising that we were many and thinking this will be so much easier now I/we begin to understand what is happening. Indeed it is easier when things are going smoothly, the protectors are feeling less threatened, the small ones are responding to being cared for, external life stresses are bearable, about one percent of the time if we are lucky. For most of the time over the next few years we have lived with the impossibility of not knowing, which leaves us so empty, the

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impossibility of knowing, which causes depression, pain and misery, the positive acceptance of something only to have it ridiculed or denied the next moment. The growing realisation of how we operate, the limits our need to keep safe has put on us all our life. The telling of the stories in tiny fragmented parts, while the body is able to experience the pain for the first time, the beginning to tell a story as one, whole story and not in tiny fragmented bits. This does have a satisfaction although the stress and pain experienced during the telling makes me very angry at times. Why do we have to spend so much of our life feeling exhausted, depressed and isolated, knowing that this has to be worked through to reach solid ground, something firm to build the rest of our life on. The need to be able to talk to friends about what happened as the stories unfold and begin to be more complete. This is the first time ever that a lot of our past has been available to the conscious so it sometimes feels like we would benefit from running it by a friends but don't think it fair on them. This is probably part of our problem but it is also a realistic concern. Friends who would best

understand are also the ones we would probably trigger so this is a route we can't take and our other group of friends while being very kind we don't feel could handle this information. I think this is becoming more problematic as we become less dissociative we need those close to us to accept our reality, partly to reflect back and help us to begin to feel more real. At the same time as the problems in the present are beginning to be identified we are still all dealing at a much deeper level with the past, working very hard to bring it into consciousness, keeping it there so we can know, mourn and understand what we think and do things. The frustration of every bit of knowledge slipping away as quickly as it is known is being replaced by knowing it and feeling it and then wondering however we are going to get through the day with that knowledge.

When I stand outside and view us as other people would see us real progress has been made. We are beginning to learn things and retain them; we have achieved promotion in the work place and are just about coping with this, although it has caused the whole of us

considerably more stress than we ever thought it would. Probably progress again as we worry about things as we remember them but somehow got to learn the size of worry as everything feels overwhelming. We have a diary with dates ahead which is progress as before we lived in the moment with no past or future. Sometimes we hear ourselves laugh because we have found something funny and we know it is funny. We now know we enjoy watching ballet, the first thing in our lives that we go to because we know we like it. Other things are more difficult. It is very hard to hide the fact with people we don't like because we know we don't like them. Before we didn't like or dislike anyone in particular, people were just people. Again this feeling is felt with great intensity as it is so new and can be quite a problem when dealing with the public. We often feel very grumpy which is new, everything was rather bland and we are very uncomfortable with feeling grumpy. Realising I don't have to do everything every day to be able to remember it, makes us much less obsessional in our daily living. The list is endless.

We are coping with different ages perspectives and views on various subjects and situation while trying to maintain I am a well-balanced grown up façade. Writing this makes me realise why I am continually tired.

I feel like I am entering the next stage of the process and am terrified of doing so, will it blow away all we have achieved so far. Deep down I don't think it will but it is a terrible risk. Up until now everything had a momentum of its own, it just happened or at least felt like that. We now, at times can remember between therapy sessions and

begin to think what we would like to work on. We may have several sessions on one particular situation rather than darting about all over the place, as information was quickly withdrawn. Progress. The down side is the very reason we are many to survive and as the many get to know why and the whole story comes into view will we survive as functional as we are now. The deep despair we used to feel for short spells can last for days and days will this become less or more as the reality becomes more complete? Is this something we have to go through? As we cannot visualise how it may be

to be more together the benefits remain a mystery as the potential losses feel hugs. It feels like we have to go down before coming back up, what if we don't come back up? Yet, we know we are unable to sustain what we have achieved without continuing the journey. Never have I felt the need to be able to trust my therapist as much as we do now. The running from knowing is very strong but we no longer have the energy or desire to do so, so we have to stop and let it catch up with us and trust that we do have the inner resources to live through it now.

New National Voice for Survivor Groups

"We believe that the rape and sexual violation of children and adults is endemic within our society. Together we are committed to empowering survivors and their supporters to work through and beyond the experience of abuse."

This is the mission statement of The Survivors Trust - a new national network of organisations working to empower and support survivors of sexual abuse across the UK and Ireland. First Person Plural has signed up for membership of this exciting initiative which aims to offer a national collective voice for survivor groups and to educate and inform acknowledgement of and response to sexual abuse on a local and national level.

First Person Plural attended a conference in March which brought together representatives from about 30 survivor groups. The conference approved a constitution for the Survivors Trust and elected an interim Chair and Executive Committee. Plans for future activities include further meetings around the country; a Trust newsletter, and a proposal for a Survivors Trust Festival in Brockwell Park, London on September 21st.

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Already, representatives from the Survivors Trust have had productive meetings with the Department of Health who have indicated their support with a small amount of funding to help with administration costs. The DoH are seeing the Trust as the User Forum that they can work in partnership with in the future on issues which affect survivors of sexual abuse e.g. how mental health services need to change to meet survivors' needs. The Survivors Trust advised the DoH that any partnership arrangement could not preclude the Trust and its member organisations from being critical of current services to survivors and this was accepted by the DoH's representatives.

First Person Plural hope to be active members of the Survivors Trust and will keep our members informed of developments.

POEMS AND RHYMES

Overprotected

Held back, tormented,
drained of hope and any self-belief,

hindered far beyond our not
inconsiderable difficulties:

Why did you make us into
psychological invalids?

Why did you never encourage, and rarely
praise,
but alternately criticise, pamper, and
interfere?

Why did you pour scorn upon long-
cherished ambitions?
Why is it that you won't even admit to
yourself

that you were not, in fact,
perfect parents? The blame, regardless
of what you claim, lies

partially
with you.

by Paula

Remind Myself

I try to put into verse all I wish to share,
Then I wonder if anyone could really care

About anything there is I have to say,
Or want to listen to my terrors day to day

Then I remind myself what really matters
My thoughts and views are not in tatters,

Nor that my world is reduced to sinking
If I tell you of things that I'm thinking.

What it is to feel, and what I can share
Is for the moment all that I dare.

As time passes I may tell you more
But for the moment I am not really sure.

By Wendy

