

REMEMBER to RENEW your MEMBERSHIP!



RAINBOW'S END

Issue 4 / 4

Mar/Apr 2003

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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BUMPER 20 page issue

Membership Renewals

Doesn't time fly? ☺ Yes, its that time of year again. If you wish to continue in membership of FPP and receive Rainbow's End after this issue please complete and return the **enclosed** form with payment. Please note that the membership fee for voluntary organisations and lay subscribing members is now £6.00. All other fees are unchanged.

**Deadline for all renewals is
30th June 2003**

**First Person Plural
hits its
FIFTH Anniversary**

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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 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 20th June, 2003

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

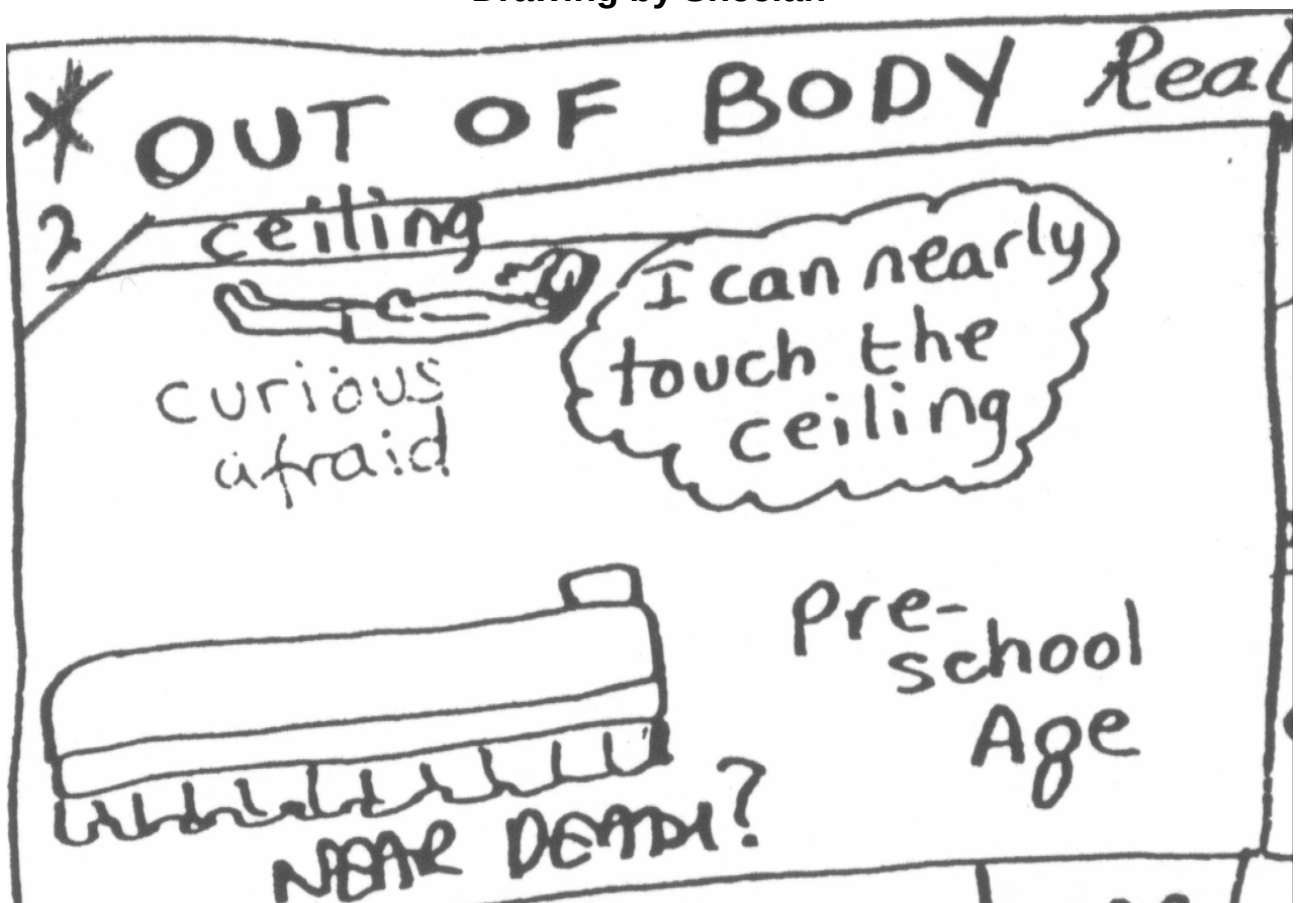
Originals will be returned if a suitable stamped addressed envelope is enclosed

IMPORTANT:- When sending material for publication please clearly mark "FOR PUBLICATION" and say what name or pseudonym you wish to use.

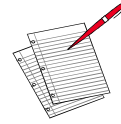
ATTENTION

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

Drawing by Sheelah



Dear Member....



First Person Plural needs YOU!

Yes, we really do mean **YOU**. We don't mean those other folks who are far more competent and able than **you**; or those plenty of other folks that are going to get involved so it doesn't matter if **you** don't; or those other folks who have far more time and energy than **you**; or those folks that are more talented or skilled than **you**; or those folks that are not as scared as **you** about getting involved; or those other folks who have got more worthwhile things to say than **you**; or those folks that aren't as stupid as **you**; or those folks that are stronger, better, braver than **you**; or those folks who have it easier than **you**; or those folks that.... well you get the idea

You see, those other folks generally don't exist, so **YOU** are all we have and fortunately **YOU** are all we need. Whatever you think or feel about yourself; whatever 'old tapes' are playing inside your head; however high or low your self esteem and confidence - we know that **YOU**, every single one of **YOU**, have something worthwhile to offer in support of First Person Plural. We really do need **YOU**.

We need **YOU** to commit to at least one of the following options. We know that many of you won't be able to do more than subscribe and if that is truly all you can do it is enough. But, if too few of you take up the other options for involvement, FPP may not survive and certainly cannot thrive and grow. Please think beyond the 'Other folks....' reasons when considering whether or not **YOU** can get more actively involved in First Person Plural.

We need **YOU** to

- o Remember to renew your membership / subscription.
- o Send in your writings, drawings, jokes, puzzles etc to be published in the newsletter.
- o Respond when we ask for your suggestions, ideas, views or comments (or even when we don't ask but you have something to say about what we are doing)
- o Volunteer for the steering group (Full members only) - see page 4
- o Attend events we organise - see page 6
- o Raise awareness in your area about dissociation and about First Person Plural and tell us about what you are doing
- o Donate money (only if you can afford to)

Volunteers Needed to join FPP Steering Group

- o Are you a FULL member of First Person Plural?
- o Are you interested in working alongside other people who live with dissociation to help make decisions about the current and future activities of First Person Plural?
- o Can you travel to meetings outside your area? (Expenses can be refunded – consideration will also be given to paying the travel expenses of a supporter if needed to travel with you)

If you answered Yes to all 3 questions why not volunteer to join the FPP Steering Group

The First Person Plural steering group is a small group of people who meet every 3 months to discuss the work and future activities of First Person Plural. Meetings are currently held in Wolverhampton and usually on a Saturday. Although the group needs to be small enough to make decisions it also needs to have enough members so that the absence of one or more does not place too big a burden on the others. There are currently only 4 members. This is too few. Ideally, we need at least 6 and preferably 8-10. Are you interested?

To find out more write or email to FPP Steering Group, PO Box 2537, Wolverhampton, WV4 4ZL, fpp@firstpersonplural.org.uk. We will be happy to tell you more about what is involved.

Below and on the following pages the current members write about what they enjoy about being on the Steering Group.

Why I enjoy being on the steering committee by Melanie

That has got me thinking. Every three months I do a round trip of over 400 miles to spend a few hours with others who live with and manage their dissociation. Over the five years I have been involved we have shared many aspects of our present lives and the complexity of day-to-day survival. We have talked and talked and talked with the recent end result being the booklet "Understanding Dissociative Disorders". Kathryn wrote it but I feel that this stage was reached by the important input of all those who have been and those who are at present on the steering group.

Each member of the group comes with their own personal issues that are potentially more difficult to manage in the group as we are all aware that we each live with DID. This gives a sense of safety immediately followed by a fear that seems to be so much a part of being dissociative. One of my own personal issues is to make everything all right for everybody, which doesn't make for good healthy input on a committee.

Gradually, I am learning that the end of the world doesn't automatically happen if we do not all agree. Disagreement doesn't mean there is a fall out between members. I am learning to tolerate being present while talking about issues surrounding dissociation, feel wobbly without disintegrating and to take issues away with me to sort out what was happening for me during various discussions.

Before I consciously knew about my dissociation I was a committeeaholic – school governor, PTA and several others. Then my world fell in and I came off everything. Suddenly, surviving was all I could manage. The First Person Plural steering group has given me the opportunity to 'reload' those skills I had previously taken for granted. It has also been a treasured experience to be with other like-minded people and to see their struggles and successes. I think we have probably learnt a little more about trusting and the need to no longer control absolutely. This is definitely another area I have had to address.

The way forward for FPP is very exciting. With the reforming of the United Kingdom Society for the Study of Dissociation (UKSSD) and a slow growth in the understanding of dissociation there are things beginning to happen. Hopefully FPP and UKSSD (and other relevant groups) can work together when appropriate and draw from each others strengths and experiences. At present the steering group is operating with only three members. If anyone would like to join us you would be made welcome. It is definitely far from being just about committee work.

My Personal Experience of the Steering Group by Sandra

Standing on the station platform, awaiting the train home, tears rolled down my face as I questioned whether I could let go of working in the steering group of FPP because I'm doing too much in my life.

For the past couple of years I've been travelling to Wolverhampton about four times a year to meet with four others that has become just two others over the last year or so. We meet in the home of one of our members and deal with whatever we need to relating to the continuation of FPP and the furtherance of our aims.

Over these years I have got to know the other two women I work with more deeply, trust has grown and experience has been shared. For me, as I live my busy life now, this is the one space where there is an acknowledgement and understanding of the painful reality of my childhood and how I survived it, an acknowledgement of how far I've come in healing my wounds, in letting go of defences that no longer serve me but restrict my life and my being. It's a place of empowerment, where my personal empowerment meets yours, shared empowerment, where inspiration and learning are found as we struggle and meet, miss each other and uphold the aims of why we meet together. It's a place of finding my voice and daring to heal further, daring to be seen and heard by others. It's a relief not to hide and to feel the support of being with others like myself who've survived through a complex and thorough system of dissociation. That support is crucial in my life and is something I'm not ready to let go of.

And finally.... by Kathryn

When I asked Melanie and Sandra to write about their experience of the Steering Group I wasn't sure what to expect. I mean they could have written all about the mechanics of the steering group – how we meet up, what gets discussed, how they feel about the decisions we make and the part they play. I am pleased they chose instead to write about the opportunities for personal growth that the Steering Group has given them. I know we work well together. I know I value their participation in the decisions needed to run FPP. I value too the friendships that have developed between the 3 of us.

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I know I have personally grown in ways I wouldn't have done if I'd never founded First Person Plural or if I'd tried to do it alone without getting others involved. I am proud of what First Person Plural has achieved, proud of my part in that. Yet, I know that without the other members of the Steering Group, past and present, FPP wouldn't have come as far and I wouldn't have grown as much.

Without a doubt I started First Person Plural as much for myself as for others but the future of First Person Plural mustn't depend on me alone or on those few currently on the Steering Group. New members on the Steering Group are essential to take First Person Plural into the exciting future Melanie mentions. The First Person Plural Steering Group is a 'business group'. It is not a therapy, support or self help group but clearly it does provide support and opportunities for personal growth. Wouldn't you like to be getting these while contributing to First Person Plural's future?

Members Meeting - Saturday, October 4th, 2003

Venue - London (exact location to be confirmed)

ALL (not only full) members welcome to attend

Put the date in your diary now

Further information in future newsletters or mailings

In the past we have restricted FPP members meetings to full members only (with accompanying supporters if needed). Numbers attending these meetings has always been quite low although undoubtedly those who have attended have valued the meetings. The last time we tried to arrange a meeting (in Stoke on Trent last Sept) bookings were so low we had to cancel the meeting. This was disappointing.

Much time and effort goes into organising open meetings although we recognise that perhaps one of the problems with the Stoke meeting was the relatively short notice we were able to give. Some feedback we had suggests that a venue in the South of England might be easier for more of our members to attend. So, that's what we are going to try. Also, we are giving you several months notice of this next meeting in October 2003. And finally, we are going to experiment with opening the meeting up to all FPP members/subscribers - not only full members. You should receive booking information in the summer but you can start planning now by putting the date in your diary/on your calendar - anywhere that will remind you.

Already we have a provisional programme for the day:-

11.00 Welcome & Introductions	1.30 The Freeze Response to Trauma
11.15 Video "Understanding Dissociation"	2.30 Tea/Coffee
12.00 Discussion about video	2.45 Starting a D.I.D support group
12.30 Lunch	3.15 FPP Update & discussion
	4.00 Close

More events for your diary:-

- | | |
|--|---|
| Saturday, 14th June 2003 | Survivor's Trust Picnic in the Park
Abbey Park, Leicester |
| Saturday, 27th Sept 2003 (tbc) | National Sexual Abuse Survivors Rally & March
London (contact Steve on 01793 878316 or
Vincent on 01784 210661) |
| Saturday, 4th Oct 2003` | FPP Members Meeting
London |
| May 2004 | Survivors Trust 2 Day Conference & AGM |
| Autumn 2004 | FPP / Wolverhampton Sexual Abuse Forum
Joint conference on dissociation |



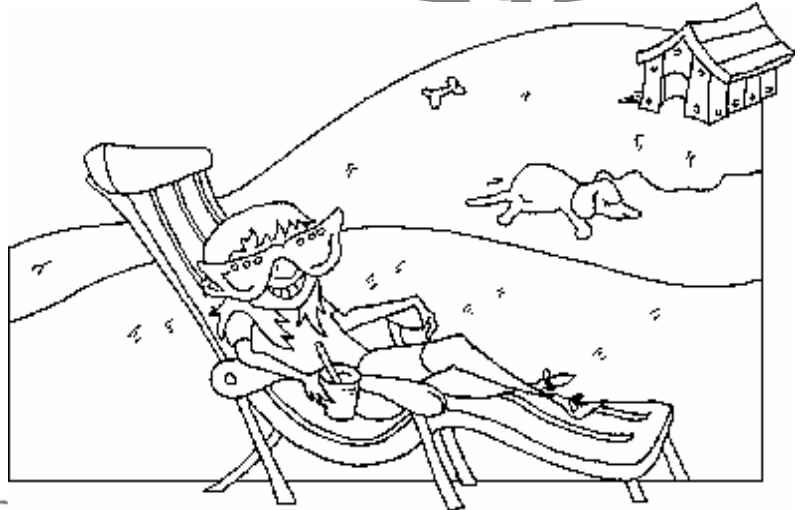
Choice : Live or Die? By Sheelah

Spring has sprung
Word Search

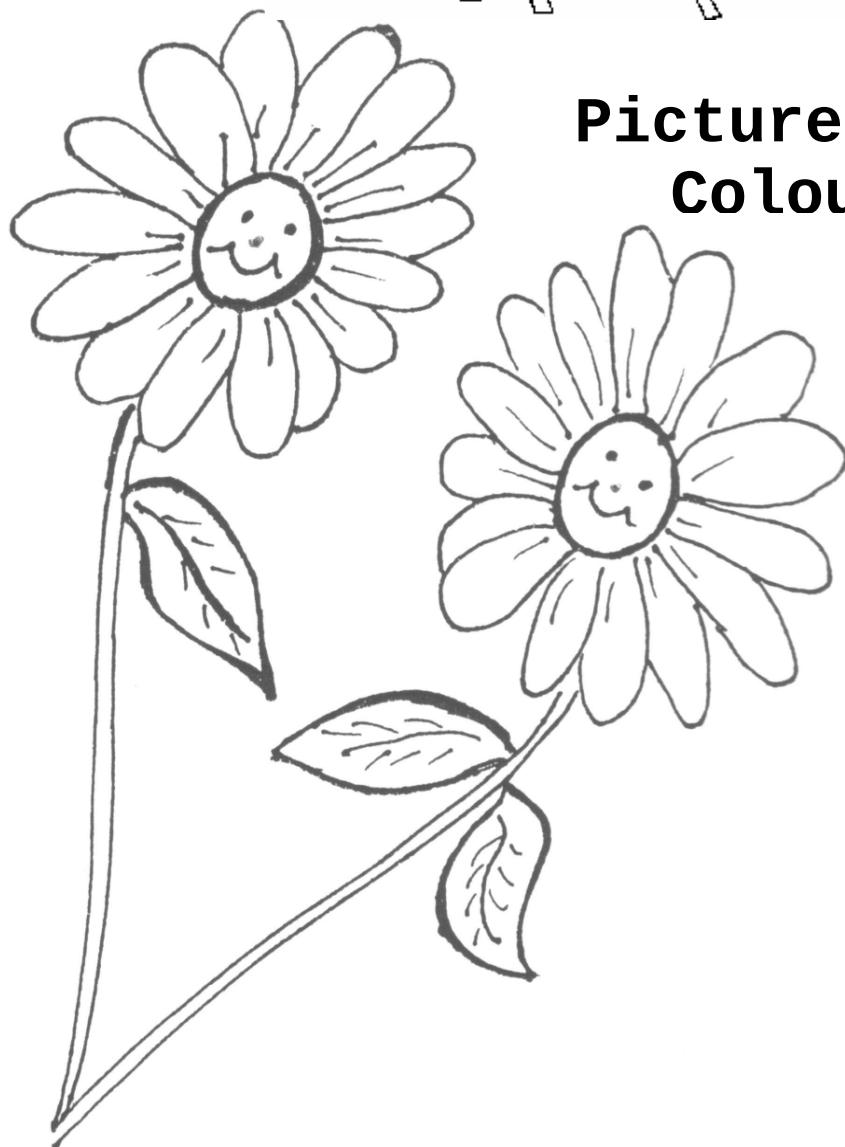


BLUEBELLS
DAFFODIL
DAISYCHAIN
EASTER
FLOWERS
GRASS
LAMBS
SEEDS
SHOWERS
SONGBIRD
SUNSHINE

PLAY



Pictures to Colour



CENTRE

JOKES

What do you get if you
cross a caterpillar
with a parrot?

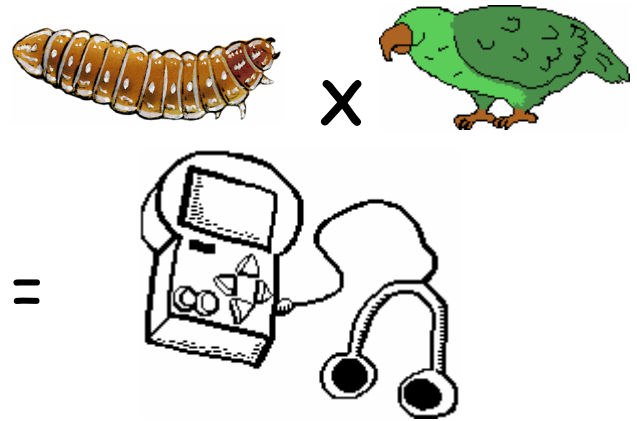
A Walkie - Talkie! 😊

*Why did the tap dancer
lose his job?*

Because he kept falling
in the sink 😊

There is a guy who lives in
a bungalow. Everything in
his house is pink. The lamp
is pink, the bed is pink, the
television is pink, the
computer is pink, the mirror
is pink, the kitchen is pink,
the windows are pink, even
the plants are pink. What
colour are the stairs?

There are no stairs. He lives
in a bungalow 😊



A Riddle

A man is trapped in a room
with now way out. There are
no doors, no windows and no
cracks. The only things
beside himself in the room is
a wooden table. How does he
get out?

He bangs his head against
the wall until it is sore. He
uses the saw (sore) to cut
the table in half. He puts
the two halves of the table
together to make a whole.
He shouts loudly until his
voice is hoarse. Then he
jumps on the horse (hoarse)
and rides out of the room
through the hole (whole).

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A Look From Inside by Anon

In pain and fire she was born; and moulded; hardened; cracked. A wizard child of magic. Light and Dark, she scattered the pieces as treasures, hidden. No X marks the spots; the treasures hide within. Layer upon layer of stone, brick and mortar seal the gifts of self from self.

This puzzle deepens if you care to look; for in the looking you will not see. Behind the mask, a mask, and beyond it, another still. Lost in a maze, amazing, how pieces fit, if the story will not tell.

I speak to you as one who knows, and shows the knowing, hidden well. A piece am I, thrown to the sky, and huddled in this dark sublime of twinkling stars and galaxies that go so far. Look into the night skies and find me if you will, an empty space 'tween here and there, looks out the world below. Can't find me? Look again. Not to the heavens where your stars live, but in the eyes of one who was born of pain and fire, and moulded; hardened; cracked.

I am but one, and treasure I don't feel, except that I am hidden. Hidden well, and deep, and dark, to far to see the centre, yet above and all around.

If you have figured out my truth, then pray tell me, that I may know too.

A History of First Person Plural – Celebrating Five Years

By Kathryn Livingston

Background

In **July 1997**, the editorial team of a newsletter called "Collective Consciousness" announced that its next issue would be the last if no-one came forward to take over the task of publishing it. "Collective Consciousness" was a newsletter for the exchange of information and ideas on Multiple Personality Disorder. I was a subscriber and very occasional contributor. In the two years since I had begun seeing a therapist who recognised, accepted and responded to my own multiplicity "Collective Consciousness" had become an infrequent but significant part of my support system. I was shaken by the announcement of the editorial team. What if no-one came forward? I couldn't take that risk. Fortunately I was in a position where I didn't have to. I had produced newsletters before. I worked within mental health and had a good understanding of the voluntary sector. The final issue of 'Collective Consciousness' consisted of just two sheets – the final editorial and quotes from readers expressing regret at the newsletter's demise and a page headed "Interested in a new newsletter?". I had put myself forward to take over the task. The first issue of First Person Plural's newsletter was a preview issue launched at the ISSD(UK) conference in **April 1998**.

The first years

I received sufficient response to that "Interested in a new newsletter?" article to encourage me. I established a small steering group and a new organisation was born. This organisation which became First Person Plural was (and is still) led by survivors with first hand experience of dissociative distress. My original aim had been to continue where Collective Consciousness had left off, i.e. produce a newsletter for multiples and their supporters.

However, with the support of a steering group the aims of First Person Plural quickly became more ambitious. For starters we extended our interest across the spectrum of dissociative distress, not only MPD/DID. The launch of the First Person Plural newsletter at the ISSD(UK) conference was opportunistic after we were approached by the organisers to put on a poster display of survivor's poetry and artwork. This was our first big project and its success, together with the positive reception received for the preview issue of our newsletter was encouraging.

However, First Person Plural's relationship with ISSD(UK) got off to a shaky start. We found in ISSD(UK) a professional body which was out of step with the wider mental health environment. In general, mental health was making small but significant advances in actively including clients/service users in the training of professionals and other areas of mental health service planning, development, delivery and evaluation. Our challenges about these issues together with our offers of support to the ISSD(UK) bore some fruit in arrangements made to accommodate to the needs of service users attending the 1999 ISSD/ISSD(UK) conference. First Person Plural also ran "People Like Us – An Inside Out Exploration of Dissociative Experience" at the **1999** conference. This was our first major workshop and was facilitated by two people with first hand experience of DID/DDNOS. They used their own and other's experiences to give participants a flavour of what living with a dissociative disorder was like for those who managed to present as functional to the outside world.

One year after the launch of the newsletter First Person Plural had 59 subscribers. The steering group of four had already begun discussing plans to produce plain English information booklets on dissociative disorders. These plans were a long, long time in gestation but finally came to fruition in **2002** with the publication by Mind of a booklet written by myself in consultation with members of FPP. More about this later.

During our second year, responding to a demand from some of our readers, we introduced membership (as opposed to simple subscription to the newsletter). Members, who had to have personal experience of dissociative distress, were offered optional additional benefits for a small membership fee paid in addition to their newsletter subscription.

One of these benefits was a Contact List. The List was an opt-in benefit but even so the decision to publish a Contact List was not taken lightly. Not unaware of the potential for misuse of the Contact List and very much aware of the great risks such misuse could bring to survivors who experience dissociative distress we gave very careful thought to balancing the benefits against risks and individual's responsibilities and rights to take risks against our collective responsibility. We produced guidelines which outlined the risks and ways of reducing these because we wanted people opting in to make an informed choice. We gave the option for entries in the List to be completely anonymous using pseudonyms and the FPP address as a mailing address. In the spirit of encouraging informed choice we published in the newsletter letters expressing concerns and again highlighting the potential risks of the Contact List and gave people a last minute chance to withdraw their details before the List was published. No-body did. Those opting in to the Contact List have been comparatively few but four years after it was introduced we still receive feedback about how much it is valued and the benefits people have had from contacting other people who experience dissociative distress. We have had no reports of misuse of the List. In the current edition only three entrants have chosen to use pseudonyms and/or use the FPP address as a mailing address.

Also during our second year (the length of an FPP year, by the way, is in keeping with a dissociative perception of time – it can be anything from 10 to 18 months) we had our first brush with the media. Unfortunately, this was not a positive experience for us and has left us wary of involving our members in media work although we continue to be approached from time to time. Researchers for the Horizon programme contacted us in late **1998**. Myself and a few other members spoke on the phone and in person about our experiences of living with DID. These individual conversations had been well managed and generally positive although one member had been left with the impression that she was not 'entertaining' enough. Naturally these interviews had not been easy for any of us. However, the programme makers opted not to use any material from British survivors and filmed entirely in the USA.

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The final programme broadcast in **November 1999** made it obvious that they'd never had any intention of dealing with the subject in a balanced way and the fallout for some of our readers – both those who had spoken with the researchers and those who had not – was devastating.

Throughout our first years the First Person Plural newsletter has been the constant and the primary focus of our energies and time. This remains true today. The newsletter, which was last year renamed “Rainbow’s End”, is at our core and is the only way that the majority of our members and subscribers are involved in our work. However, as has been seen our activities have not been restricted to publishing the newsletter.

Into the 21st Century

By **June 2000** our membership stood at 100 and has increased steadily since. In **September 2000** we held our first ever members-only meeting. It was in Birmingham and attendance was gratifying with those who did attend reporting a moving, enjoyable and valued time spent together. For some it was the first time they had met anyone else who shared their dissociative experiences. For First Person Plural it marked a new step in our development as for the first time we had ideas for activities being proposed and discussed by members other than the steering group.

Our second members meeting in **March 2001** was successful in bringing new members onto the steering group although at the time of writing this, in **March 2003**, the steering group has again dwindled to only three members and we desperately need to recruit more. Plans to hold a third members meeting in **Autumn 2002** had to be postponed due to a very low take up of places. But undeterred we are currently planning to hold an open meeting in London in **October 2003** to which all our members and subscribers (not only full members) will be invited.

In **November 2000 and 2001** First Person Plural submitted proposals to run workshops at the Mind annual conference. In both years we were unsuccessful but undeterred we applied successfully in both years to run networking workshops in the conference evening fringe programme. These workshops were very well attended and received positive feedback. It was at least partly due to pressure from participants in these workshops that Mind agreed to collaborate with First Person Plural on producing the Understanding Dissociative Disorders booklet.

Undoubtedly, the publication and widespread distribution of the “Understanding Dissociative Disorders” booklet has been our most exciting achievement to date. The booklet was published just before **Christmas 2002** and for First Person Plural it represents a dream come true. The sixteen page booklet was commissioned by Mind in a collaborative effort with First Person Plural. We provided the expertise to write the booklet, they provided publishing and dissemination resources far beyond any First Person Plural could have achieved on its own. And while the collaboration with Mind meant compromises had to be made in the presentation of the information there is no doubt that having the booklet published in Mind’s prestigious “Understanding.....” series is a coup. Accurate, accessible information about dissociation will now be available to people and in places that we, as a small, unfunded, relatively unknown organisation working in a controversial specialist field of mental health, would never have reached.

In **March 2002** First Person Plural took another step in our development when we participated in the inaugural meeting of the Survivors Trust – a new network providing a national voice for organisations and groups working for survivors of sexual abuse in the UK & Ireland. Involvement with the Survivors Trust has boosted our confidence and resources to engage in political and campaigning activity.

In **Summer 2002** we were one of several survivors groups who responded to the Government’s consultation paper on Suicide Prevention. In the consultation paper survivors of abuse received no mention. After our successful lobby the final National Strategy for the Prevention of Suicide not only gives a focus to abuse survivors as a high risk group but specifically mentions the Survivors Trust as a partner in helping the Dept of Health understand what action is needed. In **November 2002** First Person Plural represented by myself was elected onto the executive committee of the Survivors Trust in recognition of the expertise in dissociation that we bring to the Trust’s work. In **February 2003** I was elected as Secretary of the Survivors Trust.

In recent months we have registered as stakeholders for the National Institute for Clinical Excellence' (NICE) mental health guidelines. Registered stakeholders are consulted during the development of the various guidelines which when published will have significant influence on treatment in the NHS. Guidelines of importance currently being compiled are those on PTSD and on OCD. For both these First Person Plural was contacted by NICE to nominate representatives to sit on the Guidelines Development Group. Unfortunately, we could not find any full member with the time, confidence and skills to do this but we will continue to be involved in the NICE consultations.

We have established some useful contacts within the National Institute for Mental Health in England (NIMHE) – a significant body which is guiding the development of mental health services and the implementation of national mental health policy. Through these contacts, we have received invites to events which provide us with opportunities to promote First Person Plural and its work to statutory health and social services staff and managers.

In **December 2002**, we attended an event in Birmingham which was discussing the Government's women and mental health strategy. I presented my own traumatic experiences as a woman survivor of childhood abuse who experiences severe dissociation trapped in a mental health system which recognised neither my history of abuse nor my dissociative disorder. Many people approached me seeking further information about dissociation and one outcome has been an invite to present a workshop for staff at the National Deaf Mental Health Services Centre later this year. Also in **2002**, we ran a workshop at the very well attended Understanding Dissociation day conference run by the University of Central England (UCE). While there was much positive feedback about this conference some participants thought that some of the presentations had been pitched too high for an audience that consisted mainly of generalist mental health workers in the statutory sector with no previous knowledge or understanding of dissociation. First Person Plural are now in discussion with UCE and the Wolverhampton Sexual Abuse Forum to collaborate in putting on a conference in **2004** which will be targeted at a similar audience but provide more basic information about dissociation and practical ways of responding helpfully in generalist mental health settings. We would hope to engage with the UKSSD for input into this project.

Individually, all members of our steering group and many of our ordinary full, associate and professional members use every opportunity they have to gain recognition for dissociative disorders and promote the work of First Person Plural. With our organisational and individual efforts I feel we have come a long way in our aims to:-

- support and inform people who experience dissociative distress, their friends, family and professional allies;
- encourage increased recognition of dissociative distress by health and social care professionals and improve service provision; and
- enhance the general public's understanding and acceptance of people who experience dissociative distress.

We have long since been far more than a newsletter for dissociative survivors and supporters although that remains a key activity for us. Our membership includes survivors, friends, family, professionals and organisations. We have come so far and yet there is still a long road ahead of us. As we head towards our fifth anniversary First Person Plural hopes that we can work increasingly in partnership with the UKSSD and other organisations working in the field of dissociation towards our shared objective of improved services and responses for dissociative survivors of trauma and abuse

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DID/MPD or Multiplicity: Responding to Parts Inside-With a Focus on the Kids

by Kali Munro, Psychotherapist

Having parts inside can be challenging, but it can also be inspiring and wonderful! Getting to know your parts inside and fostering some kind of internal communication with them can help you feel better overall.

Why Do People Create Parts?

The human body and mind is unable to cope with overwhelming pain--emotional, mental, and physical--and so provides us with a number of avenues to escape pain. Numbing, splitting off, becoming unconscious, going into shock, and dissociating are all examples of the body's way of helping us survive unbearable pain.

When emotional pain and trauma get too intense, you must find other ways to cope. Creating parts allows survivors of trauma to survive events that they could not bear otherwise.

Why Should I Get To Know Parts Inside?

It is important to get to know parts inside because they are a part of you and they effect how you are, how you feel, and how you act. Getting to know parts inside can also enrich your life. You may find yourself seeing things from a different point of view , or gaining insights into reasons for your or parts' reactions. Parts inside hold your history, your experiences, and some of your emotions and thus they are a vital part of you and shouldn't be ignored -- to ignore them is to ignore yourself.

How Do I Get To Know Parts Inside Better?

Some people are visual and see parts inside. Some hear voices, or just know or sense that there are others inside

If you are visual, see if you can let yourself look around inside. Some people do this with their eyes closed, some like to keep them open. You could draw or write out what you see.

If you hear things, write down what you hear. Try putting different voices into different categories or lists that make sense to you.

If you sense parts inside, what do you sense or know about them? Try writing it out.

Sometimes there are parts inside who know all or most of everyone else inside. These parts are often willing to tell you about the others if you ask them. Take your time at this. If you begin to feel overwhelmed, you can stop and take a break. Going slowly and gently is very important. You've been pushed enough in your life; there's no need to do that now.

If you approach your internal world with a spirit of openness and curiosity, and take it as slowly as you need to, you may find that you enjoy learning about yourself. It can be very validating. You may find that you begin to understand why you've felt a certain way, or why you've had certain needs. You may discover your own inner playfulness and joy.

Learning More About Your Internal World

After you've met or been told about various parts inside, you may want to find out more about them -what they like, think, feel, want, and so on. Some parts are very unique and have very specific jobs or ways of being. Other parts are more like fragments and are less definable. Some function by themselves, others may be part of a group(s). Everyone is different, and there is no right or wrong way to be. You don't have to be like the multiples in movies or books. Just be yourself.

What Do You and Your Parts Need?

At some point it can help to find out what parts inside need, besides your respect and compassion. For instance, kids probably need a place to play and someone to hug them. Upset or worried parts may need reassurance, angry parts may want a place to be angry, and any part may want to wear certain clothes that feel more like them (though where and when they are worn should be negotiated). Parts inside may need to feel their feelings, and to hear from you that is a good thing to do. They may need to cry, scream, or stomp around. You'll feel better if you let parts do what they need to do (within reason, and always keeping yourself and others safe).

It may feel like a loss of control to let parts do what they want, especially for someone who has prided themselves in having control or who has kept a lid on parts. You may need time to get used to the idea, and to talk about

it with a therapist or supportive friends. Don't forget to start small. For instance, if you're uncomfortable with kids, you can always start by letting a kid play inside first, and then let a kid out only part way while you stay in control and see how you feel. Going slow is really okay; no one likes to be overwhelmed.

Why Do You Have Kids Inside?

Kid parts, just like other parts inside, are created, first and foremost, to keep you alive.

Kid parts inside made it possible for you to keep aspects of yourself that an abuser (or abusers) probably tried to destroy -- such as your ability to feel, dream, and hope -- and kids hold on to creativity, playfulness, curiosity, awe, and gentleness so that you could still have those things when you were safe.

What Happens When You Don't Listen To Kids Inside?

Kids can bring joy and happiness, as well as sadness, fear, and anger. Any of these feelings can be hard to deal with, especially if it hasn't been safe to feel them in the past. When it hasn't been safe to feel good or proud of yourself, to explore and question what you see and hear, to laugh and giggle out loud, to stomp about loudly when you're mad, or to cry without shame (all of which are healthy and natural) it can be hard to know what to do with those feelings when they come up. Some people feel ashamed or embarrassed, and try to hold those feelings in.

That isn't good for anyone to do, but when feelings are held by kids (as they frequently are) it means that the kids are stuffed down and silenced, and that hurts them. They'll start to feel bad about themselves, and rejected, hurt, sad, and mad. When this happens, older parts, adult parts, or main parts also feel those feelings, but they may not be aware that they are because they pushed the kids away. That is one reason why it's so important to create a space for everyone inside.

Letting Kid Parts Out.

This is where the challenge comes in. How do you create space for kids when you work, go to school, have a partner or a roommate, and are just plain scared?

Everyone needs to find their own way to let kid parts out -- but sometimes knowing what other people have done can help. However you go about it, it's a good idea to take it slow and gentle. No one likes to feel pressured -- so take little steps, one at a time. You may need to get used to what it's like having kids inside, before you let them come out in your body and play; that's okay. You'll probably also need support from someone, and to be able to talk about how it feels to you. Being small can feel scary, especially when it wasn't safe to be small when you were a child. You may need reminders from yourself or someone else that it is different now. You have your own living space, no one is hurting you anymore, no one can control you, and so it's okay now to let your kids out and be small and silly if that's what they want to do.

When You Feel Silly Doing Kids' Things.

Some people say they could never do kid things because they would feel silly, or their partner or roommate wouldn't understand. If you feel uncomfortable letting your kid parts out to play, see if you can remember times as a child that you did kid things or received what all kids need -- such as being held, reassured, read to and nurtured. Were you taken care of in a loving way as a child? Were you reassured and rocked when you were scared? Was an adult there for you in a safe and real way after you were abused? If you answer "no" to any of these questions, then you didn't get what you needed, and parts of you still need them.

Abused children need even more reassurance and love than children who weren't abused. So even if you got a little of what you needed it probably wasn't enough. Perhaps, you could think about it as giving yourself things you needed as a child but never received. Allowing your kid parts to play and receive comfort will help you to feel better about yourself, and eventually, happier.

Talking to Partners or Friends About Kids Inside.

When you feel more confident that taking care of your kids and letting them out to play is what you need to do, then you might find it easier to explain this to your partner or friend. Sometimes when things are explained with confidence or certainty, people accept it better. If not maybe s/he could read about the issue, including this article.

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Roommates don't have to know what you do, for that matter neither do partners. But, it's usually better if your partner or a friend supports you. Your partner or friend could even help with reassuring the kids, reading stories to them, and holding them.

If your partner or friends help with supporting the kids, they will need to be aware of their boundaries, and be able to ask for what they need from you. Relationships need to be mutually supportive to feel good. And contrary to what some people say, multiples are perfectly capable of giving support to people in their lives. Problems can arise when friends, support people, and partners give and give, but don't say when they need a break, or ask for what they need. Problems can also arise when one partner asks for a lot without thinking about the other person's needs. Finding ways to balance the needs of both people is really important to do.

How Can I Give to My Kids When I Need to be Taken Care Of?

Giving when you're feeling down or needy can be very hard. But remember, by taking care of your kids, even by reading them a story, you may find that you begin to feel better, too. This also applies to letting your kids out. If they get to come out and play, sing, or cry, you'll feel the benefits of that, too. Remember, you are all connected. What helps one part inside will help everyone else.

Kids Are Wonderful!

Kids can be so wonderful--full of life, awe, creativity, and joy. We'd all be better people, and live in a much better world if everyone let themselves be more kid-like. Multiples have that ability built-in, and deserve to explore that to the fullest. No one should feel ashamed of being child-like. Instead of being a put down--"you're acting like such a child"--it should be a sign of creativity and freedom. It is a good thing.

Nurturing, Caretaking, and Wise Parts.

Most multiples have parts inside who are nurturing, caretakers, protectors, or wise parts. Connecting with these parts can help you to feel more grounded, protected, and taken care of. There may be parts inside who will read to kids inside, or can hold them, give babies bottles, and put them to bed. Other parts may be able to nurture all of you by wrapping you in a blanket, reading a kids' story out loud, having hot chocolate or ice

cream, drawing a warm bath for you, helping you to relax or to be kind to yourself. You'll need to find the things that make you feel good and safe inside.

Inner wise parts also give terrific guidance -- they often know what to do and what you need, even when you don't. You've got all kinds of inner resources that you may not even be aware of. It can help to find out what everyone has to offer and often these parts will know. Everyone inside, even angry parts, has something to offer you.

Angry and Critical Parts.

Most people with parts inside have angry or critical parts -- parts that may be mad or put you down with insults. These parts may call you names or even growl at you. Angry parts need ways to express themselves safely. Safe ways to get frustration and anger out can include tearing up unneeded paper or phone book, scribbling hard and fast with black crayons, stomping, writing out mad stuff, or writing out angry feelings at a multiple web site in the anger section.

Remember, while the anger may be directed at you and may feel scary, usually the angry part is a child who is mad about being abused. You may need ground rules before they come out in the body, for example, no hurting your body, or breaking something important. You may both feel safer if they express their anger inside for a while before coming out in the body. You can create a safe place inside that they can release their anger without scaring other parts. Or maybe they can stay inside while they dictate what to write down. That gives you control while letting them express themselves.

Sometimes you may feel like you can't relate to or understand an angry or critical part. They are probably very angry, maybe even abusive. It's important to remember that such parts usually took on more of the abuse, or more of the particularly hard or sadistic abuse. They have good reason to be angry. They may have been told that the abuse was happening because of you. They might have had to identify with the abuser(s) in order to keep you safe, and now that the abuse is over they don't know how to stop. Or, they may not believe that the abuse is over and are preparing for the next attack by being tough and guarded.

Angry or critical parts may have been programmed through great torture to act this way and may believe that this is the only way to keep safe. Deep down they are trying to protect both themselves and you from abuse, and they definitely worked to protect you when you were being abused. They kept you alive, and they deserve your respect and understanding for that

However, it's easier to say this than to do it, especially if angry parts are being really abusive and this is causing you and others' inside great pain, panic, and fear. Finding ways to compartmentalize parts inside can be helpful in this instance. For example, maybe you could imagine tucking the kids away in a safe and soothing place, while you imagine a barrier between you, the kids, and the angry or critical parts. But if you do this, you might want to explain that you don't think they are bad; it's just their anger is upsetting or scary. Letting them know that you understand that they're angry, and that they have a right to be angry can help. Letting them have constructive ways inside to express their anger is also a good idea. And listening and responding to their requests, if you can, can help them feel heard and respected -- perhaps for the first time -- and lessen the anger directed at you.

What works for you really depends on your internal system, but it's important to approach the situation with calm respect. This can be hard to do if you're feeling abused, so you might need to find a way to ground or reassure yourself and to feel safe before you interact with these parts. It takes time, practice, and a little creativity to find what works. Again, while it's important not to talk down to anyone inside, it might help to remind yourself that this abusive part is most likely a child -- possibly a child imitating an adult, but still a child. How would you handle an angry or abusive child? You might isolate her/him from other kids, ask them what is going on for them, get them involved with another task, have them take time-out and then check in with them, give them one-to-one attention, give them options or explain they are not bad and that their behavior is hurtful.

Is There Enough Time for Everyone?

Many people think that they don't have the time to let all their parts out and still be able

to work and do other things -- but you may be surprised at what little time is needed. Sometimes letting just one part out can help other parts inside to feel better. For example, some people can have different kids come out to play at the same time. For others, switching happens a lot and quickly, so a number of kids are able to be out in fifteen minutes. Or other people may need to let kids take turns being out at different times and on different days. One thing you might want to try to do is ask kids inside to all listen at a particular time -- and then read to them or have them be read to at that time, thus letting many kids experience some comfort.

If your parts know that they can count on you to let them out at some point, they can usually wait until their turn. This may require some coordination and remembering whose turn it is, but usually there are parts inside who are willing to keep track of this and keep you informed. If something comes up and you can't let them out when planned, tell them. Explain your reasons, briefly, using age-appropriate language, and let them know when they can come out next. Parts inside, especially kids, are often very understanding and reasonable if they are included in the conversation. They know that you work and don't want to disrupt that; they just want to know when they can come out and play.

Won't Other Parts Try to Take Over My Life?

Parts inside don't want to take over your life; they just want to express themselves, be able to do what makes them feel good, and sometimes be taken care of. Angry parts usually want to protect you, and if they think you aren't doing a good job at that, they'll usually tell you and may try to intervene. But for the most part, they, too, are content to have you handle all that outside stuff. Parts inside usually just want time out where their needs or concerns can be addressed. By listening to parts inside, responding to their needs, and considering their advice, you might find that you want to know more often what they think

Taking the time to let parts out actually gives you more control, even though it may, at first, feel as though you are losing control. When parts inside know that they have times they can come out, they will be less likely to come out at times when you need to be adult or in a

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specific role. The more you attend to their needs, the better you will feel and the less demanding they will be in the long run. When they first get time out, like the neglected kids they are, they may want more and more, and you may feel overwhelmed. But eventually, by being consistent (like a good parent is), they'll come to trust that you are there for them and that they'll get their turn out, and this will help them to feel less anxious or demanding.

Some Last Thoughts

Listening to parts inside and giving everyone a turn out can help you to feel better over all, and can decrease inner struggles about who has time out, when. And in getting to know parts of yourself, you may discover wonderful things you never knew you had -- wisdom, strength, the ability to protect yourself, the ability to play and to trust, and more. So, be yourself in all your multiplicity and know that you are doing something brave and healing for yourself.

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This article was greatly improved by
Cheryl Rainfield's feedback and editing.

Book Review by Diane

"Someone I know has multiple personalities" by Sandra J Hocking

This book is subtitled "A book for significant others, family, friends and caring professionals" and is written by the author of "Living with Yourself : A survival manual for people with multiple personalities".

The style is readable, down-to-earth and clear. The content is well-informed. Suggestions for further reading are given. This little book answers a lot of questions; offers practical advice and can resolve unspoken anxieties. It is very reassuring.

I found it useful to put stickies in certain pages so I could get my partner to read things I could not bear to say myself. We both wished we'd found this book a long time ago!

We recommend it highly!

Poems and Rhymes

Sands shifting over a windswept beach
Thoughts running, just out of reach.
Waves rising, then crashing down;
Watch then take your thoughts to drown.
Now nothing left but foam and sand
Look and see life's desolate land.
You try to run, but just stumble and fall
The thoughts that were, you no longer recall.
The land you see now is isolation and death
And a heart now cries from a soul bereft.
Now I'm lost in the desert of time and space
No longer a part of the human race.

by Julia



I could have loved you by Alison

I could have loved you
If I hadn't loved before
For I would not have known
That love was more
Than holding hands
And closing eyes to kisses.

I could have loved you
If I hadn't loved before
For I would not have known
That love was more than
Dreaming on a star above
And waking on a beach together
Clinging close.

I could have loved you
If I hadn't loved before
For I would not have known
That love could also mean
Crying all alone
And seeing yesterday through weeping
eyes.

Living in Hope by Paula Puddephatt

*Out in the cold again
Could I be so bold as to
Ask why?
What was my crime?
Can you deny that your
Treatment of me has been
Rather harsh, going on
Bloody unfair?
No, I don't expect you care.
But I still live in hope of hearing –
An outside chance of clearing
My name
Once and for all
I do live in hope; am I wrong?*

Dedicated to the Prats by Rhiannone

*Do you hear my voice, trembling with fear
because you scare me also, but it never
seems clear?*

*You are that power person who, like my
dad, I fear, you have that control, that
power over my life, do you understand
'my dear'.*

*You do not see my pain "that's the past,
let it go", but if it was so bloody easy, I
wouldn't go through the pain, and I
wouldn't let 'you' know.*

*You've treated me like shit, you never
understand, but saying to me 'breathe
Rhiannone', makes me believe that my
pain is too hard for you, for you to
understand.*

*Do you feel my pain? I guess you don't
at all, but I wouldn't wish my pain on you,
because 'you' wouldn't cope at all.*

MY FEET by Heidi

My feet are the only things that belong to me
They are the only things that are abuse free.
They enable me to run when I am frightened and
scared,
And they have achieved many things but no-one
cared.

My feet have completed the Great North Run
To help raise money for people who have
suffered and had no fun
I was so determined to complete the race,
To show my abusers that I am not a waste.

It does not matter what I do.
I still get punished, end up black and blue.
But helping other people means the world to me
And one day when my fight is over my abusers
will finally see

I have survived just like you,
And I know how hard each day is no matter what
you do,
I feel so weak but must have been so strong to
survive
And one day I hope to find my body and be
properly alive

REMEMBER to RENEW your MEMBERSHIP!

Inside of Me by Heidi

There are many things hidden inside of me
But most are too frightened to come out so we can see,
The baby, the toddler and the young child don't understand
So the teenager and me try to comfort them and hold their hands.

I try so hard to protect these parts and keep them safe inside of me
But one day I hope they can escape from within me and become free.
We have all suffered so much pain and hurt.
But I am the bad one who is covered in dirt.

The young parts of me can only cry and scream to show their pain,
The teenager in me is very strong and determined to beat these men in
their game.

We keep our pain locked deep inside, to protect each other from
further hurt.

Because if we cry or speak a word we will suffer further pain
and this is what we've learnt.

The threats we receive keep us from being free,
Because to stay alive we need to obey our abuser's rules if you see.
But we hope one day to understand why our bodies are used and set
them free.

But I realise this is all down to me.

A Child Within by Rhiannone

**A feeling burns so deep inside
The secret of a child that had to hide;
No-one to trust and no-one to tell;
Her life she lived was a living hell.**

**Her deep green eyes shining like stars
As her longing for happiness seemed so far;
She could not describe this thing that occurred
Her vocabulary was limited with not enough words.**

**Later in life her tears still remain
Trapped within an adult who's concealing the pain.
The family around her need not the truth
Of this lonely old soul who craves for her youth.**

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