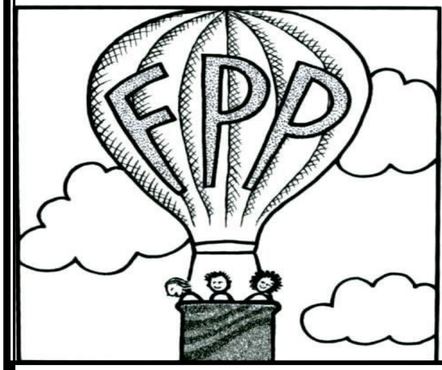


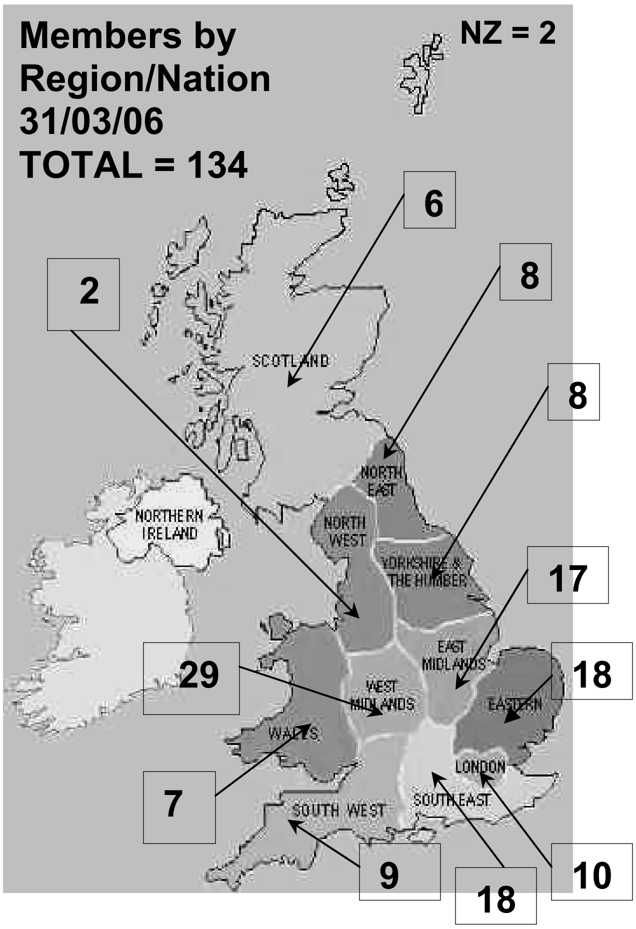
March 2006

RAINBOW'S END

Volume 6 **Issue 4**

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
Registered Charity No: 1109464

CONTENTS



Members by Region/Nation 31/03/06 TOTAL = 134

***Membership Renewals*:** It is time for **ALL** members to renew their membership. A personalised renewal form is enclosed. Don't delay; return the form and payment as soon as possible. To be sure you don't miss any future issues of the newsletter and other membership benefits your renewal should be returned by 13th May. Thank you for renewing and continuing to support First Person Plural's work.

First Person Plural, PO Box 2537, WOLVERHAMPTON, WV4 4ZL
http://www.firstpersonplural.org.uk
email: fpp@firstpersonplural.org.uk

Volume 6, Issue 4

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 made by the editor and are final. Contributions do not necessarily reflect the views and opinions of First Person Plural, members of the executive committee 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 can be sent in at anytime
articles; stories; resources; book reviews; tips; poetry; artwork; personal experiences
To be considered for the next issue we need to receive them
by 16th June, 2006

Originals will only 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

Book Review

by Kathryn Livingston

"The Survivor's Guide – to Recovery from Rape or Sexual Abuse"

Robert Kelly & Fay Maxted, Illustrations by Elizabeth Campbell
Published by Rugby RoSA (2005), www.survivorguide.co.uk

This is a wonderfully comprehensive yet easy to read and use self help guide. It is powerfully illustrated with simple line drawings that serve to make the book even more accessible. My very first thought on seeing the book was 'Gosh, this is worth buying for the pictures alone". But believe me it is worth buying for its text content and structure too.

The book offers helpful and friendly advice to support survivors of either gender, all ages and at any and all stages of their healing journeys. Short sentences and paragraphs written in simple language and with a liberal use of bullet point lists further enhance its readability. Clear activities and exercises are suggested to help the survivor cope through a range of everyday situations. Quotes from survivors throughout the book and in one chapter dedicated to survivors stories help to bring home to the reader the reality of the experience and effects of rape and sexual abuse, but also offer the reality of hope for a better future.

Dissociation gets a brief informational section to itself and much else in the book will be of use to survivors who experience complex dissociative distress.

Primarily written for survivors the book is such a treasure trove of plain English information about rape and sexual abuse and their effects that partners, friends, support workers and professionals from various disciplines (not only those working in mental health) will also find it a helpful and informative source.

Inspired to write publicly for first time *by "Sarah"*

I wanted to write after reading the article "You do believe me don't you?" in the last issue of Rainbow's End. I felt I could relate to a lot of what Carole said but I have never put such things on paper for others to read so this feels like a big step.

I too can feel the massive split between the me that says how close I am to my mother and the me that remembers the finger nails on hands that sexually abused me – even those words were hard to type still. There are numerous splits on so many levels.

I had always deeply hated my step-father so when I began to vaguely recall his abuse it made more sense somehow, even though it was a struggle. But when pictures started to flash up in miniature of her I felt my head would explode completely. Through reading I had started to come to terms with his sadistic 'games'. At those times I felt like it filled my head and my every waking moment. I slipped frequently across invisible zones I had not been fully aware of and the fragmentation dazed me. I began to tentatively seek information about what I thought was happening and certain websites and literature became life-lines to anchor this new awareness and understanding. Particularly then, but now too, I felt so alone. The reading of other peoples' experiences, struggles and movements towards recovery helped me.

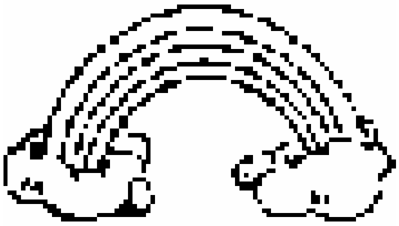
Finding my first information about dissociation and reading there in black and white felt amazing. Sometimes I wrote and wrote endlessly for myself. Thus, I created my own printed realities which, for me, mattered a lot. Getting images and recollections out of my head and translated into inked words was invaluable. Sometimes, even now, I worry, just before sleep, about whether my truths would disappear if I were to die.

I am amazingly lucky to have a very talented psychologist on the NHS who, over time, is beginning to join my journey more as a co-traveller than a 'clinical expert'. This feels empowering and more helpful. Sometimes, on a good day, I am beginning to get the sense of solidity that I really never though possible. It seems like there is a 'me' that can possibly exist.

The arrival of "Rainbows End" is always wonderful timing and a very welcome sight – to read of other people's determination and survival helps me feel less isolated and fearfully alone.

It can feel like my journey has been painstakingly slow but I can now see markers that indicate growth - from when a counsellor 10 years ago tried to hand me a book about reclaiming childhoods for abused adults and I fled from it and made excuses not to see her again; to now, when I was able to ask in a bookshop for a copy of that same book.

I know there is still a long way to go but from this vantage point I can begin to glimpse possibilities and shifts which will require fiercely continuing battle but which may be possible if I can maintain the energy and will to fight.



How we got funding for our therapy *by Naomi*

We've just been to our first FPP Members Open Meeting and it was really good to meet other people with DID. But the one thing that really struck us was how many people/systems we met who have been formally assessed and diagnosed with DID but who aren't being treated.

We're really lucky because the NHS does fund our treatment. We thought it might be helpful to others if we outlined the process we went through in applying for our therapy.

We had already been seeing a psychotherapist privately for a number of years before our alters started coming out. Just before the alters began to appear, our therapist was getting ready to end our therapy as we seemed to be doing really well. We had spent years working on various issues and they all seemed to be resolved. We were in a stable relationship, had just started working for the NHS and we could see a future for ourselves whereas previously we couldn't.

Our therapist was totally freaked out by us referring to ourselves as 'we' and 'her' and 'the other me'. She didn't know what to do with us and eventually rang our GP who referred us to psychiatry. To our huge disappointment, the psychiatrist didn't have a clue what to do with us either. We left his office feeling totally let down by the NHS. It was terrifying to have all these voices inside and nobody to know what was wrong and how to help us.

A few years prior to all that, we had seen another psychiatrist who had mentioned to us that we had a 'dissociation'. We remembered what he said and decided to look on the internet for someone that could help. We just wanted to get well, we felt our whole world was falling apart and we were determined to stop it. We had some very brave alters, who have since integrated, who took over and made it their mission to get us the help we needed.

Putting 'dissociation UK' into Google came up with www.dissociation.co.uk . This is the website for the Pottergate Centre for Dissociation and Trauma based in Norwich. It was the biggest godsend for us. It had information about dissociation, links to other sites and best of all, a link to email them so they could help us find a therapist. We sent them an email explaining what had happened and they responded the very same day, telling us about the services of the Pottergate Centre and advising us to pass this information onto our GP, psychiatrist and psychotherapist.

Our GP was very negative. He didn't think the NHS would fund it. Our psychiatrist kept cancelling our appointments so we weren't getting a chance to ask psychiatry. Our therapist still didn't know what to do with us.

From our work in the NHS, we knew about Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS). Every PCT has one and they are there to help you access the service you need. If the PCT has no service for you, PALS can help you request it. So, we sent them an email telling them how we felt we were divided into many people and that there was a specialist centre that could treat us, but that we needed the NHS to fund us and asking how we could go about getting some funding. We followed up with a phone call.

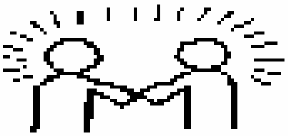
PALS were really kind to us. They liaised with all the professionals that were needed to put in a bid for funding. Our psychiatrist supported our application.

We sent a letter to the person overseeing our case and tried to tell him as much as we could about how life was for us at that time and promising that if they would just take a risk in funding us that we would try as hard as we could to get better.

It took many, many months but eventually, they agreed to fund our assessment. Then a few months later they agreed to fund our therapy twice a week for 3 years, and to supervise our private psychotherapist (who by now had realised there was no one else trained to help us and so was undertaking training so she could help us herself).

A year later, we needed to move to another PCT. We again contacted the PALS service of both trusts and the funding was transferred really smoothly. We didn't have a break in our therapy, somehow one of the trusts continued to fund the treatment while the new trust collected evidence that we needed the therapy and that it worked.

We feel so lucky and taken care of. Our new psychiatrist and GP are both excellent and really seem to have a grasp of our condition and a willingness to help. And our psychotherapist is brilliant.



So, that's the route we took to getting our funding. We don't know what it is that made them take us so seriously but here are some possibilities:

- We were really open and honest with everyone and were really pleading with them to help us to help ourselves.
- We had/have a huge drive to get well (for us that means to integrate back to the one person we were born as).
- We were clearly getting worse and less functional as time went on.
- We were utterly terrified and suicidal and couldn't go on with our life as it was.
- We wouldn't have taken no for an answer – we would have embarrassed ourselves by going to the national press, the health secretary, prime minister or through the courts, we would have done whatever it took to get the treatment we needed. Luckily we didn't need to.
- We were reasonably well informed, we knew what the recommended treatment for DID was and that it could work and we told them that.

We don't know if the above will help any other people/systems to get the therapy they need and deserve, but we really hope it will do.

Believe *by IS*

Neutrality is not disbelief. But neither is it belief and, because it is not, it closes off avenues of discovery gated by entrances which need the key of belief. When we ask, 'Do you believe us?' we are not asking 'Do you know for certain this really happened to us?' We know you weren't there so cannot know that what we recall in fragments is objectively true memory of exactly what was done to us. That is not what we are seeking with our question. What we need is reassurance that you trust us; that you believe we are not lying; that you believe that what we tell you is our truth; that our recollections of extreme cruelty are not beyond the realms of belief; that you believe there is every possibility our horrific memories are objectively true. This is the key you can give without compromising therapeutic neutrality.

Volume 6, Issue 4

When therapy ends – *by Anon (name supplied)*

We have been in therapy for the last 7½ years, after the usual long battle and search through the NHS to find someone who knew something about MPD/DID. We eventually found a therapist and she has helped us to understand and even, sometimes, accept that we have indeed got MPD.

During the 7 plus years we had been searching for a therapist we had been speaking, and writing, to SAFE (the helpline for ritual abuse survivors) so, by the time we began seeing our therapist, we had managed to build up our own support network. This made it very difficult to be able to talk to her for the first few months because we had already been doing a lot of work with the help of our friends. So, she was like a 'professional' newcomer and we weren't quite sure of her. What if she wanted us only to talk to her and not our friends? What if we have been doing the 'wrong' things? What if we didn't really have MPD after all? What if she tried to make us all join together? And so on. Fortunately, none of the 'what ifs' proved right.

We, like a lot of people who have become dissociative, find it very difficult to trust and rely on people for help, let alone <u>ask</u> then to help but, because we have to travel quite a few miles to get to therapy; can't drive and can't risk travelling by public transport because it makes us more dissociative we have to rely on family and friends to get us there. We have just one or two people who are able to take us.

So, last June, we panicked BIG TIME and said that we couldn't manage to get there for much longer because the worry and pressure about relying on other people was getting worse the longer we had to do it.

We agreed with our therapist to keep going to see her until Easter 2006 so that we could still work with her on all the different issues and finish with her properly, instead of acting on our first instinct of walking out on her before she walked out on us. This decision to finish at Easter has triggered two major responses. The first is the relief we know we will feel in not having to rely on somebody to get us there. What if the car breaks down? What if it's foggy? Will she remember to pick us up? Does she really mind? Will the traffic be bad and hold us up? Will our therapist be there? etc. The worry and pressure of getting to therapy is sometimes the reason <u>for</u> the therapy!

The second response is that our "dissociative skills" have taken over and we have switched off, despite our best efforts. We end up saying "Damn, too late, its already switched off, I meant to stop it this time". We can't stop it. It's automatic. It's had to be; and, to be honest, we are usually grateful for it. Who needs those confusing emotion things anyway? Of course, there is always a counter argument. – Yes, but you will feel these feelings eventually. Isn't it better to deal with them at the time?" Our reply? "Don't knock it 'til you've tried it." We could argue the point until the cows come home.

So, dissociation from therapy, home, family, self/selves has kicked in again without us realizing it until after it had happened. But, it's not really helping because our "body" is still going along to therapy but our feelings (our inside people) aren't. We are still going to therapy because our therapist says she feels there is still a lot of work to be done. When we went last week she asked us if we had worked out how many more times we had left to go and see her. What kind of question is that? "We've thought about nothing else since last June!" we snapped at her. Does she understand, we ask her, what we're going through? "Yes", she calmly tells us, "I do."

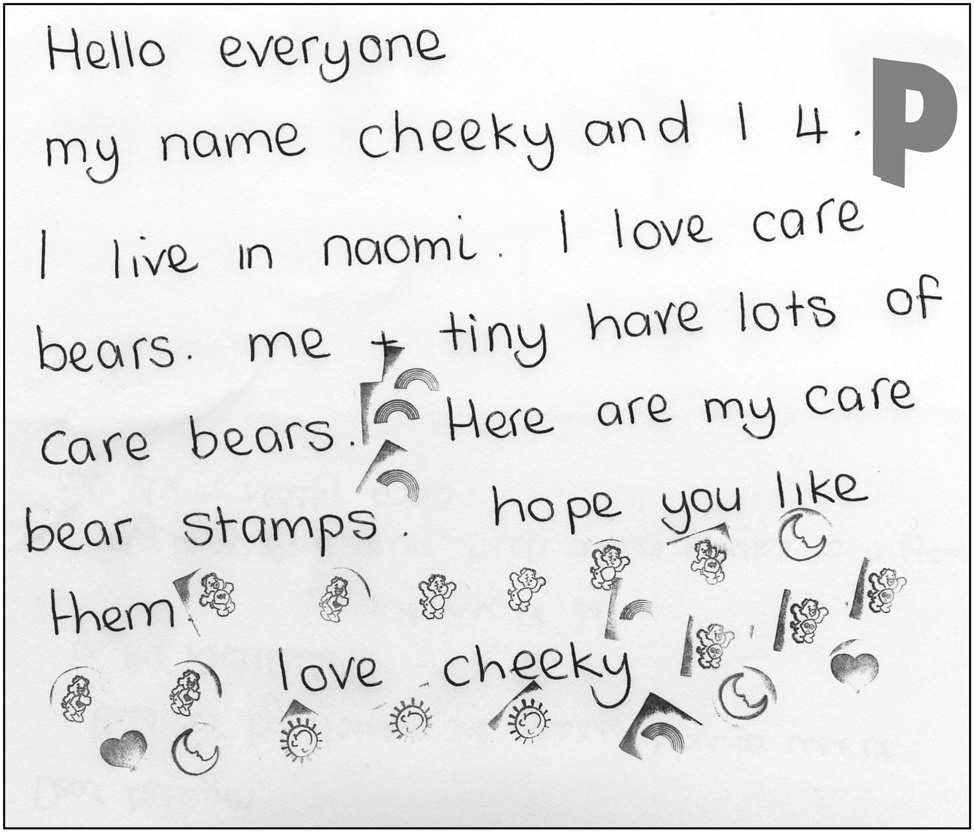
Time after time, week after painful week, we say to ourselves and to her "Nearly didn't come today". Then we go through the reasons and advantages of actually going. She tells us she wants us to tell her how we REALLY feel about the ending; she knows some of us are angry and we argue back "But I don't feel angry". That's the trouble with switching off – you don't know how you feel. And anyway, what's the point of getting angry? It's still going to happen. We're only going to make ourselves feel worse in the long run, better to feel nothing. Or is it? Why not go off at her? It's what she wants. Because we're afraid we won't be able to stop, that's why and anyway, she'll still go. This time, she tells us, it will be different. She's not abandoning us. She's not turning her back on us. She's not leaving us all on our own to cope. It's not a punishment. She's not rejecting us. Sorry, but it certainly doesn't feel any different from all those 'past' times.

We have decided we don't want to integrate but want to stay as individuals, so we have to learn to communicate and co-operate. Not an easy task. The younger ones haven't been able to come out and tell what happened to them, and, naturally, they feel that the chance for them to be able to do so is going to be missed. They have gone inwards again, but they still want to be able to talk to someone who will listen and help. Our therapist tells us that she wants to listen to them and that she can still help them if we will allow her to. We DO try to let her but, as soon as she reminds us about ending, everybody clams up again.

We have been sharing this body for over 50 years so it is safe to assume what we will be sharing it for the rest of it's natural, so maybe we have to say "It's not perfect but it's who we are. We've still got our 'special' friends. We haven't got to cope on our own anymore, and therapy has certainly helped us understand about ourselves. Let's live to the best of our ability; all of us; together. Just surviving is no longer enough". We hope we can be this calm and logical at Easter!

Easter will be close or passed by the time this is published but **we would still be really grateful for any advice, help or comments anyone can offer. You can contact us by writing to "Therapy Ends", c/o First Person Plural.**

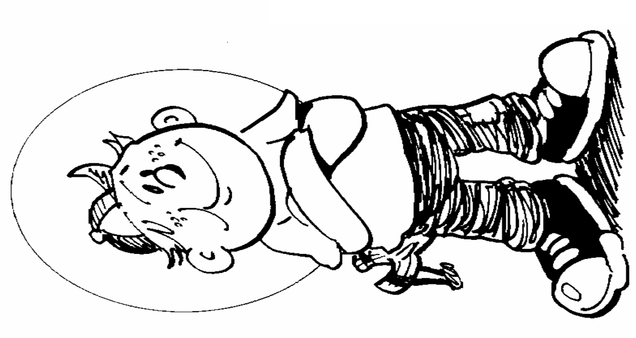
PLAY



Hello everyone
my name cheeky and I 4.
I live in naomi. I love care
bears. me + tiny have lots of
care bears. Here are my care
bear stamps. hope you like
them
love cheeky

A QUIZ FOR ALL AGES

1. **What was the name of Robin Hood's girlfriend?**
2. **Which city is the capital of France?**
3. **Who lives at 10 Downing Street?**
4. **Name Charlie Brown's dog in the Snoopy cartoon?**
5. **Good Friday is part of which festival or holiday?**
6. **On which part of your body would you get a stye?**
7. **What country is famous for bullfighting?**
8. **What do the letters V.I.P. stand for?**
9. **How many legs does a spider have?**
10. **What is a young cat called?**



Quiz Answers

1. *Maid Marian*
2. *Paris*
3. *Prime Minister or Tony Blair*
4. *Peanuts*
5. *Easter*
6. *Eyelid*
7. *Spain*
8. *Very Important Person*
9. *Eight*
10. *Kitten*

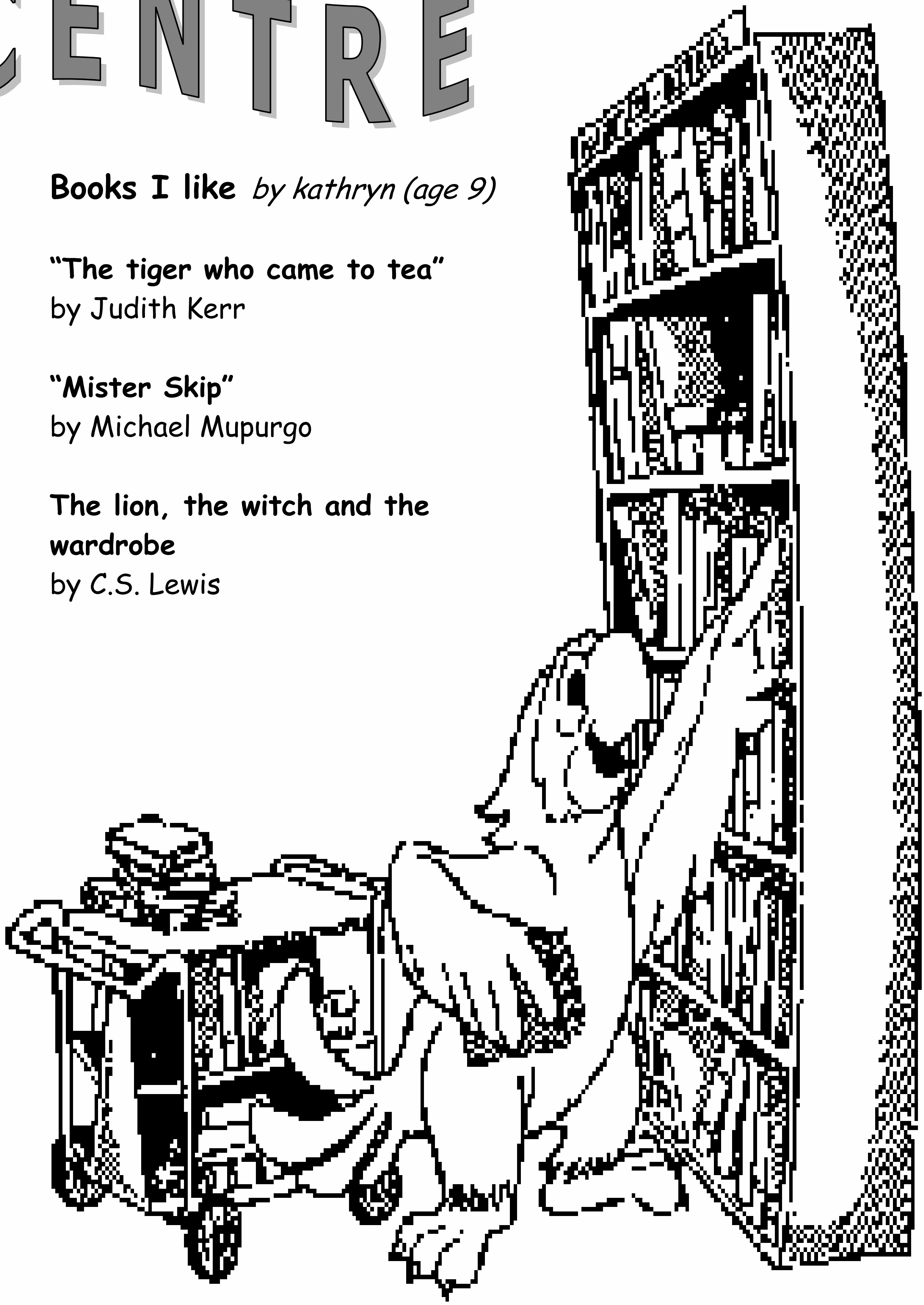
CENTRE

Books I like *by kathryn (age 9)*

"The tiger who came to tea"
by Judith Kerr

"Mister Skip"
by Michael Mupurgo

The lion, the witch and the wardrobe
by C.S. Lewis



Jacky the Dog *by Samantha Dax, age 9.*

Jacky the dog was waiting patently by the river. It was early morning and the baby unicorns were playing games in the cool water and having fun splashing her. The mountains were behind her and she could see them reflected in the river water. The water was moving slowly today and sparkled more than usual because of the little unicorns playing in it.

Jacky watched with interest and pride. Her young friends were growing so fast! She knew that soon they would have to say goodbye to her, as they had to join in all the duties adult unicorns take care of. But for now, they were playing, and Jacky was happy watching over them.

But it was soon time to be going. The water had all the sparkles it could hold for that day, and the mist in the mountains had blown away, so they had to return for the daylight hours. It was safer for the young ones in the mountains in the day time than by the river. Man wasn't a believer in unicorns and did not like it when they saw them. That is why Jacky would supervise them and make sure they got back safe again.

So they set off, the biggest in the lead and Jacky at the back making sure there were no stragglers. She looked back quickly and said goodbye to the cool river with its sparkles and then looked at the walk ahead. It wasn't far for any of them, but it was beautiful. There was birds still singing in the trees, and grasshoppers who stopped hopping to watch the unicorns go by. Jacky felt pride inside her for her young ones :) everyone stopped to admire them, except the birds - the birds sang a special song for them to dance to. So she watched her unicorns dance and listened to the birds sing. She nodded hello to the grasshoppers (who never hid for her like they do other animals) and they even passed a goat who stood aside respectfully for Jacky and her group. All the way she saw beautiful colours, and so many shades and shades of these colours; wildflowers and grasses that swayed in the breeze and sang a song of their own.

Jacky was happy. She had the best job in the world, watching over the young ones, leading them to play and leading them to safety, while all the time, they all lived in a beautiful landscape.

She was saddened now to have to say goodbye. She knew she would see them all again in a few hours, but it was time for the young unicorns to learn lessons of unicorn life - things that not even Jacky could know or understand.

So she said her farewells for the morning and went back down the mountain. Who was that old goat? She had to say hello to him, he was new to the mountain!

My Guidelines for Disclosure *by RiversRages*

reproduced from **http://home.comcast.net/~riversrages/**

I learned in a Communications class that self-disclosure is something you tell someone about yourself that they would likely not know or be able to find out about you. Self-disclosure should be reciprocal, meaning listening to the other person and using that to guide us in the amount of information we disclose about ourselves.

In this class I also learned that we do not tell people who we really are because we are afraid that they will not like the real us. Plus we have the need to protect ourselves.

I have realized that I still use these disclosure guidelines because there are people who do not understand. And I still reflect on the times I felt discounted and hurt by disclosure.

Some of the things I learned through trial and error began early on. After stabilizing I returned to work and was put into another job. I felt good about it because I knew that my lead was a very caring woman ~ which leads me into my six guidelines....

Disclosure rule 1: Just because someone is seems caring doesn't mean they will know what you personally need. So watch for things like: do they get overly emotional and invest way too much time in looking out for people with broken wings. It is suffocating when someone asks you how you are every five minutes.

Disclosure rule 2: How does the person feel about people with mental illness? Sometimes clues come out in regular conversations. Sometimes you have to set up a situation about another person or situation where someone is manic depressive or something that is an "acceptable" mental illness. If the person thinks the mentally ill person can control their behaviours with meds or self talk, walk away, they will never understand the complexity of DID.

Disclosure rule 3: Remember that even close family members will probably deny anything happened to you, especially if it occurred within the family. Family members usually have more to protect then we do. We are the ones seeking help--they are not. They don't want to face up to it, so it couldn't have happened. However, if they keep giving you advice on how to take care of different issues with suggestions like "drink Gatorade" or "you need to eat better," let a strong alter tell them that you are afraid that these simplistic suggestions do not cure what you are going through. (sorry, that helped me with my sweet, loving mom.)

Disclosure rule 4: Ask yourself if the person is trustworthy. Does the person gossip about other people, especially people that you are both friends or acquaintances with? Watch them; listen to how they discuss another person. Never tell someone who cannot keep their mouth shut. If they talk about their friends, and you are their friend, well.... your disclosure is not private.

Disclosure rule 5: Think about what you want from disclosing. Does the person have an attribute you can tap into--as a two way street. Some of us have disclosed with other multiples in a face-to-face relationship. We do so because we can offer each other something of value, not because we need someone to cry to. Have you all ever thought of that? We talk to learn, not to unload. Funny isn't it. Multiples are usually very sincere and helpful to each other. (Of course sometimes we don't feel that way)

Disclosure rule 6: If or when you choose to disclose, do so when you are in your best state of mind. If there is any thought that it won't go well, it probably won't feel right afterward. It might actually turn out just fine, but self doubt can be plaguing. For instance, if you feel like you might be put on the spot, it might happen for that reason alone. Some times I just feed people little bits and pieces, like--boy I hate when I do something out of character. Or if I slip with the word "we" and get called on it, I actually tell them it is "me, myself and I." It gets a few laughs.

Actually, many people know my diagnosis. My mother even tries to help me with it. Several people are men, and even though several women know, only two are allowed to talk about it. I mean, the other women were not worthy of really knowing. One treated me like a baby and the other one used it against me. She forgot to tell me something then claimed she told "someone" else. Wrong, the situation would have never allowed it. For me, men seem more understanding. They see me or us as extremely strong and sort of fascinating. It is weird because if a woman called my complex irrational painful intelligent messed up unhappy frightened sad depressed happy confused giddy exhausted dedicated...... um..... self, fascinating, I would come unglued.

My boss has known about us for about five years and tells me often how much we have grown. He is sincere and I really appreciate someone understanding the depth of it, with out any details.

I guess for me--disclosure is helpful because I would not and could not expose myself, the whole deal, unless I felt safe, trusted the person and believed they were worthy of "knowing" us. I see it as a positive. It might not work for everyone and I don't recommend everyone doing it or thinking they should. I just find that the more people who know that I am who I am and always have been-- AND --I am not certified crazy or dangerous...... well, they are educated.

For the most part I have a very healthy outlook about who I am.

Our Journey So Far *by Naomi and alters.*

We were formally diagnosed with DID 2 years ago. For a while before that, alters had been popping out to make themselves known. Prior to that, we don’t think anyone really knew about anyone else. Or there wasn’t any contact between alters anyway. Maybe just a few words here and there, but nothing compared to how we are now. It’s weird trying to think back to how we used to be; to a time we didn’t even know we were a ‘we’.

Some of our alters know when they came into being, others don’t. It really freaks us out when we think about it too much; how can there be so many different ‘people’ inside us? When the alters first started coming out, they introduced themselves as ‘people’. They took great offence at being called ‘alters’ or ‘parts’. Each one felt they were the most important, and that all the others should just go away and stop making their life complicated.

Everyone argued, it was like opening up Pandora's Box. Once we'd opened the lid on the existence of alters, it couldn't be closed again. Our head was so noisy; everyone was fighting to be out, we couldn't function.

Then we started our DID therapy. We are so lucky because our therapist trained to be able to help us and the NHS funds our twice-weekly therapy. First of all, we got to know each other. We found out everyone's name, age, interests but most importantly everyone's role.

We found even the most disruptive alter had a role to play. All of us came into being to protect Naomi, our 'original', 'real' self. Once we realised this, the constant arguing and competing to be out the most stopped. Well, reduced a lot anyway. We found we were all united in our goals. Deep down, every alter just wanted to protect and help Naomi.

As time went by, different alters found they had finished their role, that they had nothing more to give and felt ready to 'go inside' other alters or inside Naomi.

We started with 19 alters and Naomi was still asleep. Now there are just 5 alters plus Naomi; and Naomi takes a more active role.

We're hoping one day to have all 5 alters re-join with Naomi. All the alters were originally part of Naomi and we just split off to help her. But now she is safe and she doesn't need us how she did.

The fewer alters that are left, the harder it gets to integrate. Both Naomi and the alter that is integrating needs to be totally ready. Then afterwards, the whole system gets out of kilter because there has been a major change. Plus Naomi gets to see for herself the memories that alter was keeping her protected from and it usually knocks her out for a while.

We really hope one day to be totally well and for us that means being one person. Already we notice improvements. As more alters have integrated, our memory and energy has improved, we do more and we're getting more confident. We're not saying it's easy but we definitely feel it's worthwhile and we feel so grateful to all the amazing people that help us – our fiancé, therapist, psychiatrist, GP and friends. We feel so lucky and blessed.

Have you successfully integrated?

We would really love to hear from anyone who has managed to integrate all their alters and is now living as just one person. That is what we are aiming for and if you have achieved it we'd really like to know how you did it and how it feels now to be just one person. Do you ever miss your alters or wish that you still had them? Do you get lonely without them? Is life better when there's just one of you? If you are able to, please ***reply to Naomi*** via writing something for the newsletter or a personal letter sent to the First Person Plural address / email will be forwarded to us.

Meeting Other Members

The March Members Open Meeting in Birmingham was attended by 18 members with 4 accompanying supporters – a total of 22 people. This is the most people we've ever had at an Open Meeting. Some members travelled significant distances to be with us. And there was a good mix of recently joined members and those who have been members for some time; those who have never attended an Open Meeting before and those who have. The day, as promised, was mostly unstructured with plenty of time to meet and talk with each other but everyone appreciated an initial structured 40 minutes or so when Groudrules for Safety and Comfort were introduced, discussed and agreed.

Kathryn brought some DID books and magazines that could be browsed and there were also some art materials etc for kids of all ages to play with if they wanted. There was no pressure to do anything and plenty of permission to do anything needed to feel safe with the only proviso being to be considerate of others.

The First Person Plural display boards were set up. And the Mask Project display had its first public showing. There were many positive comments made about this. This project was initiated at last year's April Open Meeting in Coventry and the resulting display now includes a total of 20 masks each created by members and supporters.

> *"We really enjoyed the members open meeting today. it was good to meet others like us. I had a nice talk with some of the adults. It was really good meeting the committee members and it made me appreciate what you do more. me and Ana who you met had a really good time, and others inside liked being there too even though they only watched. it was very comfortable although I think the journey there and the first hour gave us a stomach ulcer! we was terrified, but it was good."*
>
> *Samantha Dax (age 9)*

Other opportunities to meet each other are coming:-

Annual General Meeting in Birmingham on **June 3rd**
Members Open Meeting (venue not yet decided) on **September 9th**

POEMS & RHYMES

CHILDREN *by Bobby Best*

Therapy, I say to friends. They know all about it.
"Oh, cosy chats with a nice, white-haired, twinkle-eyed man in a beige cardie".
Not exactly. My therapist is nothing like Dick van Dykes' Mr Sloane.
Cosy chats? Nah. Disturbing discussions, terrifying tales, sobbing sessions.
"Do you lie on a couch with the therapist taking notes?"
I'm sure I could if I wanted to. But no. We sit on the floor.
"Why?"
It's a habit we formed when I wanted to be near the running-away door.
"Why would you want to run away; Surely it's all voluntary?"
True. But it's what children do.
"You're not a child"
Sometimes it feels that way. Mostly it is that way.
"Why the teddies and dollies?"
They comfort different parts of me.
"I like colouring-in with the children on a rainy day. It's soothing."
Well. There you are. We're all children really.

Who? *by Josie*

Schooldays I was neatly dressed
Unremarkable in my class
Shiny-shoed and gym slip pressed,
Gazing through the window glass.
Now I know there were more than me;
Other children in the school,
I wonder which they could be;
Those who didn't fit the rule.
Who the children set apart
Those subjected to abuse
Who quietly nursed a sobbing heart.
Again the photo I peruse.
Sailor Noel whose ship sank.
David he's the City winger,
Janet the manager of my bank.
Kate became an opera singer.
Molly, the policeman's daughter
Surely she was safe with him?
Stevie is a postal sorter.
What did become of cheeky Tim?
It's no good. I cannot tell.
Just as we then could never tell

A Poorman's Lot *by 63*

Stirs upon crack of dawn, arises, so so forlorn,
Be it poortith, chains unseen, masters field to glean,
Dawn 'til dusk, they efforts improve, thy masters lot,
Be not thy gain, calloused hands, back pain, thy well earned lot,
Thy health be tool, for thy masters lot, seen.
Masters grain store, grows and grows, balance unseen,
Thy need fulfilled, today, table filled, plain fare,
Avarice, yardstick for they masters needs, more and more.
Respect shown, to be seen, master knows be you keen,
Be there no pride, upon empty table, poorman's interpretation.
Understanding need, poorman's creed, masters creed,
Poorman hath too many needs, be he happy, fulfilling my needs.
Without nation, master be stateless, starveling,
Wishing sparrow would catch hawk. Heady.

Little girl with the teddy bear *by Alison*

Little girl with the teddy bear;
You look so sad and alone.
Is that bear your only friend?
Yes, I thought so.
You can trust him, can't you?
He won't deceive you
Or make you feel ashamed.
He won't make you leave
Your childhood behind you.
Or teach you to hide your pain
And stop the tears from falling.
He won't make you less than human,
Worthless, and he will always
Be there for you,
Soft, warm, something to cuddle
When you hurt so much,
So deep inside, especially when
No-one else sees how
Unhappy you are or how afraid.
You're afraid of losing
Everything, aren't you?
Everything you care about.
They make you blame yourself
Even though you are innocent.
Teddy will keep your secrets and
Share your sufferings,
Silently, just as you do.
He will help you pretend that all is well
And he'll help you conceal the pain
Which is inflicted upon you by evil people
So your loved ones
Will never have to face it.
Only you have to do that ~~
Just a little girl with a teddy bear.