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## How to Talk With A Multiple

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*LisaBri, a Survivor*

*Have you, as a man, ever have the experience of living in a woman's body?  
Have you ever lived in such a body that, frequently you have no control over?  
Have you ever lived in such a body with more than one mind functioning simultaneously for periods of time?  
Have you ever lived in such a body where your main function is simply to keep the body alive?  
Finally, have you ever lived in such a body, with the knowledge that in all likelihood, this quality of existence will be a lifelong commitment?  
I have been in this state of being through a 40 year old woman, known as Lisa, since my creation in May of 1989?(Brian alter in Lisa's body)*

The purpose of this article is to assist friends and supporters of people with Dissociative Identity Disorder (DID, formerly known as Multiple Personality Disorder or MPD) in understanding the people they know with multiple identities.

We tend to assume other people are like ourselves, unless they are in some way visibly different. For example, when someone has a different skin colour along with a strong foreign accent, we are aware that they may be different. But when they look and sound the same as us, it is difficult for us to understand that they may be different in their background and way of thinking.

One of the kinds of people we often have difficulty understanding is the person with a dissociated identity, an identity split into many selves rather than a single one. This condition used to be called "multiple personalities." In this article, I am using the term "multiple," because some of my clients with this condition prefer it to the more general term "Dissociative," which can have many meanings. Everyone dissociates to some extent – for example, many people dissociate certain emotions and never consciously feel them. Everyone also has different parts of the self, but 99% of the population are not multiple.

People who have been through severe childhood abuse or other trauma have often learned to handle life through several different "selves" rather than a single unified self.

*There exist in our inner world of Lisa, fully formed personality selves, separate from each other yet, all sharing the same body."*

Their experience of life is very different from our own. When we ourselves have always been a single personality, it is difficult for us to understand how a person who is multiple thinks. *Often* relatives and friends of a multiple, as well as support people and even therapists and other professionals are unclear as to how to talk to such a person. Here are a few thoughts, which may help you understand the people you know who have multiple rather *than* single identities.

### **Talking with a multiple is like talking with someone from another culture:**

Although a multiple is not visibly different from anyone else, the way he or she thinks is incredibly different, at least as different as the way someone thinks who comes from a completely different culture. We don't (or at least, we shouldn't) blame people from other cultural backgrounds for being different from us and for not completely understanding our culture. It is important to treat a multiple person with dignity and respect, just as you would someone from a foreign culture whose values and customs you do not yet understand.

First of all, don't assume that a multiple is really like you.

*We encompass a wide range of emotions and traits, all under the disguise of a 40-year-old body, which makes each of us unique from the other. These are the kids you see running after their dog, laughing a three-year-olds laugh or a six-year-old playing dress-up. It is an adult in a shopping mall purchasing children's clothes that will never fit a forty-year-old frame.*

You have had the experience of knowing persons who appeared just like you physically, but when they talked their accent revealed a background of a totally different language and culture. It's the same with multiples. They look the same, but they are different. The dominant culture is one of non-multiples, so multiples have learned to hide their multiplicity and imitate those of us who are singletons. But it is only an imitation.

*We [Alter personalities] present a single façade to the outside world, all the while voices of men, women, and children ring in our ears. We are the sum parts, 75+ that comprise the body of Lisa where we all reside.*

A person who has a single personality (I'll call this person a "singleton") cannot become a multiple at will.

*We are vast and complicated, yet brilliant enough to survive years of horrendous abuse and neglect in order to make our brain put up the barriers in childhood, which make our experience that of having numerous identities.*

Similarly, a multiple cannot become a singleton until and unless the barriers between the parts of the self ("alter personalities") are removed. Those barriers were put up for a purpose, so that the child could survive the abuse. People who are multiple cannot think like us, and we cannot think like them, but we can learn to understand each other with respect for our differences

Once you recognize the multiple is different from you, it's important to ask him or her to be your teacher about being multiple. You can't just guess about it; you have to ask. Those multiples who are aware of their condition are usually glad to be asked. They get very lonely because they aren't understood by other people. Child personalities in adult bodies, for example, sometimes feel nobody else understands them or recognizes their existence. They often like to be known, recognized, and talked to as the age they feel they are rather than the age the body is. Though you must be careful with this - child alters are all-different: some are shy and some are outgoing; some like attention and others hate it.

*Of our personality states, there are some, like six-year-old Susan, who ran and hid in the cornfields from her abusers, yet never succeeded in being safe or unharmed. Susan, who took the brunt of the children's abuse, will still open her heart to you. A Smile. A gentle kind voice. Deep caring eyes. Susan's uncanny instinct tells her who is safe and who is not. Then there are some on the other extreme, like five-year-old Julie, who when you meet for the first time, reminds you of terrified deer caught in headlights of a car.*

When you ask what it's like to be multiple, be careful not to treat the person as if she or he is a curiosity. I remember how embarrassed I felt on my first night as a student in India, when I got changed for bed in a university residence, and a crowd gathered to stare at me and see whether I was the same colour all over! Just because a person is different does not mean they are less than human. I didn't like having to "perform" (for example, sing English hit parade songs) for other students in India, while they all giggled at me and talked about how cute I was. Similarly, multiples don't like having to "perform" (for example, let child alters come out) for the entertainment of singletons. They are people too, and their human dignity is important.

For a multiple, being multiple is his or her normal state of mind. It is difficult for him or her to understand how singletons think, and he or she may think it is you who are strange.

That is, if s/he even knows that you aren't like him or her. I have met several multiples who just assume that everyone else "loses" periods of time (when another alter personality is in charge of the body), finds themselves in places without knowing how they got there, and/or hears voices inside their head.

*For the longest time, we could not imagine how a singleton went thru a day without other people (inside) to do their jobs. Thru therapy, we have learned that there can be a bridge between multiples and singletons, no matter how tiny that bridge is. In the end, we have a body that functions much like the rest of society, yet different. We collectively try to strive in what we are assured is a 'normal' way of life.*

Just because ours is the dominant culture (of singletons), doesn't mean that our way of being is superior to that of a multiple. We are well adapted for living in safety, being conscious of everything that happens to us. A multiple is well-adapted for living with ongoing trauma. I once heard a prison psychologist say he wouldn't treat multiples in prison, because to survive well in prison you needed to be multiple, as prison is so traumatic! Even in normal life there are sometimes advantages to being multiple. I know a multiple who had an alter called "Brain" who memorized all her textbooks and was able to remember everything on exams word for word. I know another who has alters with all kinds of special "idiot savant" abilities. When an alter is able to focus on only one thing, without the distractions of emotions, everyday life, and other thoughts, sometimes they can do amazing things!

*When safety began, after many years of therapy we found a writer amid our system. Another emerged with a head for numbers; yet another ran a successful business for twelve years. These abilities did not transpire from a single entity but rather a series of alters, each with their own special contribution to make up the system of Lisa.*

Also, just as you should not assume that someone from another culture should want to join your culture and give up his or her own, do not assume that a multiple wants to become a singleton. Some do, some don't. Many well-adapted multiples, whose alter personalities cooperate well, prefer to stay as a community of coordinated selves rather than become a single self.

### **Talking with a multiple is like talking with people who change places undetectably :**

Imagine there are a number of identical brothers or sisters who impersonate one another. They are able to change places so fast that you can't detect it, so fast that you may talk to many within one conversation. However, if you know them as individuals, you learn to recognize them not by their physical appearance but by their characteristic moods, tones of voice, facial expressions, and other body language. It's the same with alter

personalities of multiples. They look the same, but they act differently. You may also see physical evidence of them changing places, in eye movements, body tremors, losing track of conversation, and other subtle signs. Most multiples, however, do not show dramatic physical symptoms of "switching". Many (but not all) multiples have a "front" or "shell" alter who is out all the time along with other alters who change. The shell alter bridges the transitions smoothly so the individual does not appear multiple at all. The larger the number of alters, the less detectable will be the switches. And the more inner communication is established between the alters (usually through therapy), the easier will be the transitions between alters being "out" (in control of the body), since some may listen in on others' conversations in the world. Often the only sign of a switch may be the body language of another alter whom you recognize.

One confusing thing about multiples is that at one time they may completely know and believe that they are multiple, and at another time they may deny it completely. Most multiples have at least one "host" personality, whose purpose is to deal with the normal outside world and handle everyday normal life. When a child is being abused on an ongoing basis, s/he needs to be able to function even though the abuse is occurring. So s/he develops a "host" personality who is unaware of the abuse and also of the multiplicity.

*It is through our host Lisa that we are able to exist in your world as a singleton on the surface. It has taken many years of therapy for Lisa to accept our multiplicity and begin to understand and respect what "we" have been thorough Keeping the host ignorant of vast pieces of the inner knowledge, has to this day kept the body alive.. Lisa's greatest fear is losing control over certain alters who work on the outside as well- collectively performing those tasks which individually could not be accomplished.*

Sometimes there are several "host" personalities, each of whom assumes s/he is the real one and is amnesic for the existence of the others. Some host personalities have a great deal of difficulty accepting that they are multiple. The word "personalities" or "alters" may frighten them. Whether the person acknowledges that he or she is multiple, then, depends on who is "out" in conscious control of the body and on how much contact the host personality has with the "inside world."

Some multiples (technically known as "Dissociative Disorder Not Otherwise Specified" or DDNOS) rather than "Dissociative Identity Disorder" (DID) always have the host personality present, even when another part is in control of the behaviour and feelings. These people do not "lose time" in the same way that DIDs do. Some people used to be DID when they were young, but with maturity and a stable, safe life, have become DDNOS. Many things are easier for a DDNOS than for a DID multiple, because she does not lose time or find her money has been spent on toys! However, it is easier for her than for a DID to assume that negative feelings she is having are caused by present situations when they actually come from old traumas which have been triggered by something in the present. Alter personalities with these feelings are often lurking just behind the host. One such multiple described herself as having someone like a plastic lens in the front, with four chairs just behind it, and different people occupying those chairs at different times.

Multiples who have accepted their multiplicity often call their alters "people"; this is who they are to them. They are just as real to them as people on the outside. Other multiples, who are less aware of those on the inside, find "parts", or "inner children" more acceptable terms. Do not assume that the host personality is the "real" person and the other personalities are less real. "Is this Jane, or one of the alters?" is very irritating to multiples, especially if it happens not to be Jane who is "out." The host personality is just an alter, often one with little power in the system, little memory of what happened,

and limited energy or emotions. I have clients in whom the original host personality has integrated, and the whole multiplex system goes by the host's name. They try to explain to helpers that there is no alter by that name. The only multiples in whom there is one strong host are those who were abused or traumatized for only a brief period of time, usually outside the home. Their long period of safety allowed them to build a strong "outside world" personality, but they still have hidden split-off parts, who either only come out occasionally or never come out but influence their behavior and feelings from time to time. Don't assume that the host is able to control the behavior of the alters if s/he only "takes responsibility". If a host tells you that someone inside wants to kill her, for example, she is telling you that she does not have control over it, and telling her to take control will not help.

Since alters change places a lot, you should not assume that the person you are talking to remembers what the body has seen, heard, done, or said, even five minutes ago. Amnesia is a major distinguishing characteristic of multiples if they are DID rather than DDNOS. If the alter who was "out" when something happened has "gone inside", the person will not remember what happened. Multiples learn to cover up for loss of time. When a multiple doesn't yet know s/he is multiple, and doesn't realize s/he loses time, s/he will deny doing things s/he has been seen doing, leading to a reputation as a liar. When s/he realizes that another alter may have done it, s/he will often pretend to remember the incident to hide the time loss.

*As children, we were constantly called a liar. We learned quickly how to cover up another alter's activities by instinct and reading our abuser's body language. For example, when our abuser accused us of stealing candy, judging by the rage in their eyes we would relinquish knowing it was too dangerous. On the other side, when asked about being a liar, we could feel safety and go along with it. Either-we learnt many years later- didn't make a difference. Either way we were punished.*

When meeting new alters, do not assume they are oriented in time and place. They often believe they are still living in the situation where the abuse occurred, or some other past time. Often they don't know that the body has grown up. I find it helpful to have a newspaper or magazine with a recent date to show them the year, and to have a mirror so they can see what their body looks like now, though sometimes this is too great a shock for them if many years have gone by.

*In countless therapy sessions, newly emerged alters deny what our therapist is telling them in regards to the here and now. Only when presented with dated material of the current year, do they allow the reality of this to sink in. Even so, there exists the die-hards, who refuse to accept the fact that 25 years has transpired-they think it's magic tricks- since the last of the abuse and that physically they are safe. We can only hope, with more therapy and time that this too shall come to an end.*

### **Kinds of Alter Personalities**

Many, usually a majority, of the alters feel themselves to be children, so you should not assume you are talking to an adult at all times. There may be some who are too young to talk or to understand language. Although it is controversial among therapists who treat people with dissociated identities, I believe that child parts of a multiple split off during childhood, not later, and are still developmentally children. They are not "normal" children, however. The "happy" ones tend to deny negative reality and get themselves into abusive situations. The "unhappy" ones hold strong emotions such as fear and anger. Child alters are often concrete and literal in their thought processes and awkward with their bodies, and may hold superstitious childish beliefs, communicated to them by abusers during the person's actual childhood. I have had the experience of an adult

woman sitting on the floor and putting out her feet for me to tie her shoes, assuming she was in preschool. I have been with an adult man when he stood on his head on his couch, because the child that he "was" at that moment preferred that position. I have been with adults whose "out" personalities knew no English, but spoke languages the host had learned in early childhood and then forgotten. I have had a woman fall down my office stairs because a baby alter who didn't know how to walk came "out" at the top of the stairs.

*As alters slowly began to merge in Lisa's world, Lisa would brush it away like a persistent fly. Be clear about this- we were persistent. The time had come for Lisa to not only accept us but to understand why we came to be. After leaving an AA meeting one night, the 6 year old, Julie, attempted to come out and drive the car. A six year old can not see over a dashboard never mind mastering the mechanics of driving. Lisa screaming "OK OK I believe you" left her heard for the first time. This began Lisa's acceptance of what would become a life long journey full of leaps and bounds, and dark corners and most importantly, never going back. We had arrived.*

Some therapists who work with dissociative disorders believe that child alters are actually adults' conceptions of what children are like, rather than actual children. I don't believe this myself, but I do believe that a part who says he or she is older than the body is not really older, but is a child's, or a young adult's, conception of an older person. And an opposite-sex alter (a male in a female body, for instance) is more like a young girl's idea of what a boy is like than like a real boy. Boys in women's bodies usually represent the part of the person who have traits which are traditionally considered masculine, such as bravery or anger; girls in men's bodies often have supposedly "feminine" traits such as fear. It's not worth arguing with alters about whether or not they really are what they believe they are. It's more important to treat the whole person with respect, in whatever aspect s/he presents herself. The person had very important reasons for making alters the way they are. For example, an alter may be a boy because boys don't have vaginas so he can't be vaginally raped.

Some alters experience themselves as blind or deaf or mute, often as a result of a literal response to their abusers ("Don't talk about this" or "Don't look.") Some are "copy" alters who believe they are someone else entirely, e.g. a relative or an abuser. Do not deny the experience of any alter. They genuinely believe they are the person's mother, or a person of the opposite sex, or a dog, even though they are mistaken. There are reasons in every case why an alter may believe him/herself to be something or someone else.

Some multiples have alters who think they are supernatural beings such as demons. If they say this, they are mistaken. Often a child who has been shamed, verbally abused, and told they are evil, or made to do evil things by an abuser, can believe itself to be a demon. Some perpetrator groups actually tell child alters they are demons or devils or ghosts. Trying to exorcise "demon" parts of a person will only hinder their progress! They need to be cared for like any child, and the responsibility for their abuse given back to the abusers rather than to any part of the child.

It is important to realize that alters have separate memories, feelings, and approaches to life, and don't necessarily know what the other alters do or think, even though they are actually all parts of one person. Each alter, including the host, is very limited. Although s/he has a sense of separate identity and agency, s/he is unable to feel some emotions or engage in some behaviors. Many alters feel hollow, depersonalized, or uncertain of their identity, precisely because they are just part of a whole. Nevertheless, they and others in

the system experience them as separate (wounded) people.

### **Multiples and Responsibility**

Alter personalities hold memories only of the parts of the person's life which they as alters have actually lived. One alter cannot be held responsible for events they actually don't remember or had no control over. I once treated a ten-year-old girl who had just one alter personality in addition to the host, a three-year-old with the same name as her. When she got bored in school, the ten-year-old would "go inside" her head, and the three-year-old would come "out" into the body and behave like a three-year-old, which was inappropriate for the classroom. The ten-year-old would then find herself in the school office in trouble with the principal, without any idea of what had happened. While the whole person could be said to be responsible for the behavior, the ten-year-old was not, and the three-year-old was too young to realize what was wrong with her behavior. Sometimes, when an inappropriate behavior happens, the host personality just doesn't know about it, and is only aware of "lost time." At other times the host may be conscious of what is happening but unable to control it.

Be especially careful about assigning responsibility and blame - the alter you are talking to may not be responsible for a behavior or even know about it. Multiples have been abused emotionally as well as (usually) physically and sexually, and are very sensitive to blame. The whole story of alters' lives in the "outside" world is of being held responsible for things they don't remember doing. They get accused of lying and of manipulating. They may at times lie and manipulate, especially when parts are out who are very young or who don't have access to certain parts of the brain, e.g. can't feel pain or can't feel guilt. But much of the time they just don't know what happened, or know but had no control over it.

If you want to deal with issues of responsibility, find and talk with the alter who is actually responsible. This may be either the alter who did the behavior, or another alter who made him or her do it. Remember to be gentle even with the alter who is responsible. People who lie and manipulate, whether or not they are multiple, have learned to do this because of living with severe punishment. It takes experience in a safe world to learn more direct strategies of getting needs met.

### **Talking with a multiple is like talking on the phone with a group of housemates :**

Although only one alter at a time can control the multiple's voice and actually talk with you, many can hear you and can send messages to you. Talking to a multiple is like being on the phone to someone in a large house. Only one person at a time is able to speak to you. But the house has a speaker phone which broadcasts your words to others in the vicinity, so that they can hear you and can speak to the one on the phone and send messages to you. The person who was on the phone a minute ago may be nearby listening or may be completely out of the room. Those outside the range of the speaker can't hear you, but someone can be sent to get them.

Do assume that some others inside can hear you even when one alter is on the outside. This applies even when the presenting alter is deaf, catatonic, or a baby. You can talk through the presenting alter to others in the system. Not everyone can hear you, but many, especially the important ones, can. Especially with a ritually abused multiple, the important alter personalities are always listening in order to guard the person's safety in the outside world.

When a multiple first begins in therapy, s/he often doesn't have very good internal communication. It is important to assist him or her in improving this communication. I frequently ask other alters to speak to the one on the "phone" to me, letting this one know the answer to some question I asked. For example, when an alter was grieving because she didn't remember what her dead mother looked like, I asked the others listening to give her a picture of her mother, and she not only saw a picture, she heard her mother's voice. I encourage the one on the "phone" (talking with me) to "ask inside" to the others and get to know them. I respect the ones who come out spontaneously to talk with me, but I also ask to speak to others, and if they will not (or are not permitted to) speak to me directly, then I ask that messages be relayed back and forth to them.

*When we first began therapy, back in '89, we figured a month and we would be cured, or 2 months if we dealt with the alcoholism. It is now 2004 and there have been many '2 months' from that fateful day. From it sprang AA, detox, and an eight-week treatment centre program. It wasn't until '97 when we started to work with a new therapist that the healing started. Until that time, most doctors and therapists recommended us to one specialist to another. We finally met a doctor who diagnosed us DID and started us on an extensive drug program. The medicine dulled everything but it was the inside turmoil that really needed to be addressed. Along with the medication came yet another avenue of suicide. We've had hypnosis, emdr, and anything that would keep the active alters quiet and in control. In other words, it was a different type of programming. There was no communication, internally or externally, and we needed desperately to voice ourselves but we were told that hearing voices is a symptom of mental illness. We have been labeled schizophrenia, PTSD and Borderline Personality. At one point when we were hospitalized and one of the kids could not use the bathroom and hence held her bladder in, we were told we had a bladder infection and once we fixed this then we would be okay. The longer the communication, the ease of alters moving in and out doing self-harm to the body occurred which meant more hospitals and the cycle of what to do with us was started again. With this new psychologist, she wanted to work with the alters who were labeled 'dangerous' and it has been through that communication which has started us on the road to healing. We've even set up a 'council' comprising of some of the higher level alters representing sections whose primary job is to let our therapist as was us know there is trouble. Through the council, there is now communication inside and at times, at the encouragement of our doctor, we are able to handle small emergencies without having to call her, allowing us some independence.*

### **Talking with a multiple is talking with someone who has been badly abused :**

Although DID stands for "Dissociative Identity Disorder," I regard it as mental injury rather than mental illness. The way a person becomes multiple is through severe and prolonged early trauma, usually child abuse. Many of the alter personalities have known nothing but abuse. So they will expect you to abuse them, since they assume this is the normal state of affairs. I remember informing one seductive child alter that I was not going to have sex with her. She responded indignantly "Why not? That's what kids are for." Other alters have cowered, waiting for me to hit them, or been afraid to look up lest I look scary, or waited suspiciously for my next move.

Many multiples have lived with people who were themselves multiple, and changed unexpectedly from warm and loving to cruel and abusive. They will expect you to change in this way, and only time will prove to them that you don't. Don't take a multiple's negative expectations personally. Be consistently warm and respectful, and keep your promises, so that alters can learn to trust you. It is also important to take responsibility and apologize for your mistakes, so that the multiple's true experience of your mistakes is validated, and s/he learns the difference between mistakes and deliberate

cruelty. Most multiples have been severely punished for making mistakes, and the example of someone who can acknowledge their own mistakes without dwelling on them is a healthy one for them.

*Upon learning of this disorder and after the initial shock wore off, something familiar seemed to whirl around our head, something offbeat that we couldn't quite put our finger on. It would flirt in and out until one day we were allowed to see the one thing, which would start of the domino effect. The more I worked the dynamics of multiplicity, the more I realized how I had grown up in these exact conditions as a child at home. It made me stop and think and I came to the understanding that my mother was multiple. All the craziness, the unexplained blank looks, and the mood changes were the same as her. I was my mother and my mother was me. We are now only beginning to learn what this means to us and how it will affect us now and in the future.*

Don't ever tell a multiple to "grow up" or "forget the past". The past did unbelievably serious damage to the person, so much damage that parts of him or her are still stuck in childhood and are unable to grow up without help. Non-multiples often assume that the host personality is able to control the behavior and feelings of the alters, and is "living in the past" by "allowing" them to exist. This just isn't true. The dissociation which split off the alters happened as a physiological process in early childhood, and cannot be dropped at will. The host personality is often one of the least powerful alters in the system.

### **Talking with a multiple is like talking with a family who usually don't get along :**

Do not expect the client to be consistent or to have internal harmony. At the start of therapy, most multiples have internal battles for control. The host personality often has little or no control over switching. The alters may fight to be "out", or may push others "out" in order to stay inside. Decision-making is difficult, and decisions made by one alter will be reversed by another, until internal communication and problem-solving has been learned. Simple things like shopping can become incredibly difficult.

Democratic decision-making is not usually learned in the childhood of a multiple. Their families are typically arbitrary dictatorships, in which adults demand that they constantly obey out of fear of punishment, even when the rules are inconsistent. It is not therefore surprising that, until the person has been in therapy some time, alters often can't agree on decisions. That's the nature of multiplicity. "Eww, Jane got us dressed this morning," or "I don't like her having sex with my body" are typical comments of alters about one another. They will often express anger and even hatred for one another. It is hard for them to realize that they all represent legitimate parts of one person, and to respect how each part helped the person survive the extreme situation in which they grew up.

### **Helping a Multiple**

The very things which helped the person as a child survive extreme trauma now get in the way of their effective living as an adult. If a child has to live with caretakers who hurt her, and can't escape it, it is better for her not to know it some of the time. But when she is an adult, it doesn't work very well for her not to remember some of what happens in her everyday life. It doesn't work very well for her to have different inside "people" make opposite decisions for her life, and reverse one another's decisions, spend her money on things that different parts of her would never buy, take her places that other parts of her would never go, and so on.

Those of us who were more fortunate in our early experiences can help the alters of the multiples we know to learn about love, trust, and cooperation. We can do this by being loving, trustworthy, and cooperative.

A first step in teaching cooperation is to be careful not to show favoritism among alters. Every alter is there for a purpose, and is an important part of the system. Most hostile alters are using anger to protect vulnerable parts inside, usually young children. Don't be afraid of hostile alters. "Every persecutor is a misguided protector." Acknowledge that they are protectors, and offer to work with them to improve their, and your, ability to protect the client and the hurt alters. Especially in ritually abused clients, hostile alters (including demons) often turn out to be young children. If they seem dangerous, talk with them at first through another alter. But don't act scared, or it will be a self-fulfilling prophecy. If you like all alters, they will learn to like and accept one another.

Help them "talk inside." Although talking internally may seem to make the person "more" multiple, in that they will hear voices and become aware of more parts, it will actually make improve communication between the host and the other alters, and the long-term result will be that they will become better organized and work more like an integrated person. The goal is "co-consciousness," with whichever alter is "out" in the body being aware of the needs and viewpoints of all the other alters, so that effective decisions can be made by the whole person rather than by just one part at a time.

Don't talk too much about integration or fusion between alters, especially at the start. Alters are afraid that if this happens they will die. It works better to talk about walls between "inside people" no longer being needed than about the "people" disappearing. Respect their choice not to fuse until and unless they are ready. My experience is that as alters share experiences and memories, the walls between them dissolve, either gradually (when they are co-conscious a lot) or suddenly (during a major abreaction), and the integration naturally happens when they are ready. Integration is not a big deal if you don't make it one.

In conclusion, it's an exciting adventure to get to know someone who is multiple. They have a lot to teach us about the way the human mind can work, and about the way the human race works. I sometimes think the human race is like one gigantic multiple personality. I am only one part of it. There are other parts who are very different from me, whom I don't understand. Some of them scare me, and some of them arouse my anger. But only as I learn to understand and cooperate with the other parts of the "body" of humanity, can humankind learn to stop all the dangerous and damaging things we do to one another. It's a privilege to know human beings (multiples) who are learning to live as communities rather than as isolated individuals. The lessons learned from them can benefit all of us.

*My drive to prove beyond any doubt that I am not crazy and fabricating all my selves, all the memories, and all the emotions, has been the most challenging and compelling aspect of my journey to health so far. It is thru the strength of others- both internal and external, that I will one day feel free from my own painful history.*

*Lisa of lisaetc...*

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