

♀ ON OUR WAY

Newsletter of the Women's Center
46 Pleasant Street, Cambridge, Massachusetts 02139

august '91

(617) 354-8807
TTY and VOICE



MULTIPLES

The phenomenon of multiple personality is pushing its way onto the front burners of 12-step groups, self-help groups, psychotherapeutic and (slowly) community consciousness. Ten years ago the word "incest" conjured up sensationalized images. Today we sadly know better. And within a few years, we will almost certainly be acknowledging the existence-- and manifestations-- of multiplicity in our acquaintances, co-workers, relatives-- and in ourselves.

A natural concomitant, or outgrowth, of the past decade's massive incest "coming out" all over the Western world, multiplicity is just now emerging in the consciousness of some of those incest survivors who were most cruelly raped and brutalized. Every multiple was viciously tortured as a very young child-- sexually, physically, emotionally, and spiritually-- probably under the age of three. Usually at least one close family member was a perpetrator and often there was more than one family member and/or others. Frequently, these acts were committed as part of some form of bizarre and dehumanizing ritual which involved some private individual ritual of derangement, a full-fledged Satanic or other "religious" cult, or an organized secular group.

Multiple personality is an ingenious solution to an insoluble problem! Essentially it means if you can't take the heat, send someone else. But that someone else resides, thinks, feels, and grows inside of you-- and the "heat" is often the unimaginable torture of the damned.

The notion of multiplicity as a widespread phenomenon is currently being resisted by the psychiatric and mental health establishment, and ignorance about what it is-- and isn't-- abounds both in these professions (who profess to KNOW all about these things) and in the general

public. But for those who have already been identified as multiple-- and we are as often self-identified as professionally diagnosed-- there is need for education, treatment and healing NOW.

While even aware, alert and caring professionals are still groping for answers about "how to go" with multiplicity, we who are in the "vanguard" of this phenomenon are (fortunately or unfortunately) in the position of having to lead the way for our therapists, each other, and those who come after us in their recognition of themselves as multiples.

Since April 1990, the Women's Center has sponsored a support group for women with multiple personalities. Over the first six months the four or five women who started the group struggled with unstable membership and with the terror and uncertainty of sailing such shark-infested and uncharted waters. After that, other women who came began to stay, as they desperately and courageously sought validation, answers, information, support, or appropriate therapy. The group grew and solidified.

These women began coming up with answers about mutual help and gained knowledge from within themselves and from each other-- knowledge about multiplicity that just wasn't available anywhere else. For in the group there is probably as much knowledge and understanding-- and certainly as much support-- about multiplicity as there is "out there" in most of the professional arena.

The group has grown to where it now has a firm, committed membership of more than a dozen. There is almost never an absence from a meeting. Over the past few months we have expanded our activities to establish a bi-weekly topic discussion group as well, and a committee has just been formed to explore other needed modes

of healing and activities that we can provide for ourselves and each other.

To other women who are currently experiencing themselves as multiples and are seeking validation and support we must say: there is good news and bad news. The bad news is that our group has been so successful that it is now overflowing and we have had to close it to new membership-- at least for now.

The good news is that we are beginning to develop the confidence that "we know how to do it" and we are therefore encouraging others who are looking for support to call the Women's Center. You will be put in touch with one of the current group members, who will talk to you and, if appropriate, add you to our growing list. We are planning to help form and facilitate a new multiples' support group, to start in the very near future, probably in the fall.

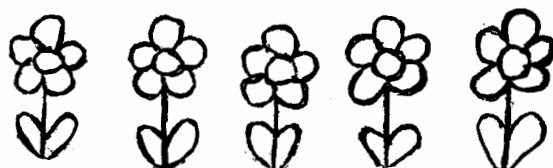
Thanks to the Women's Center we have been able to form a unique and extraordinary group of women, demonstrating once more-- as so often happens at the Women's Center-- the incalculable strengths, ingenuity, spirit, and mutual caring that women in pain and need can offer each other.

Our current motto is: MULTIPLES UNITE!

COMING OUT GROUP

The coming out group welcomes women of all ages and backgrounds: women who have newly discovered their feelings of attraction for other women; who are looking for support for their lifestyles; who are looking for the community; all lesbian women. The coming out group usually meets the first Saturday of every month from 11:am to 1:pm, as it has for over two years.

The groups are usually very well attended with returning friends and always some new ones. Often there are two facilitators of the group. Topics are flexible and wide ranging; coming out to ourselves, friends, family, dealing with lifestyle issues and problems at home and at work, discussing what is and where is the lesbian community. Women are encouraged to question, share their experiences and feelings and find solutions best suited for themselves.



NEW! EATING AWARENESS & BODY IMAGE GROUP

On June 4, the Eating Awareness & Body Image Group held its first meeting at the Women's Center. At this writing the group has quite a few steady members and is always open to welcoming more. The group meets weekly on Tuesdays from 7-9 pm and has a semi-structured process.

In the first hour our focus is eating awareness. There are two types of hunger: physical and emotional. Physical hunger is understood to be eating in response to physiological cues such as hunger pangs, light-headedness, or an empty feeling in the stomach, whereas emotional hunger is understood to be eating in response to anything else. Emotional hunger can be cued from boredom, anger, loneliness, or needs, wants, desires, feelings and issues that are not being met in better ways. In the group we try to look at how we are using food in our lives, what our relationships with food are, and how we want to change or improve this place.

In the second hour discussion is focused on body image themes, topics, or exercises presented by rotating weekly facilitators, as well as related body image/awareness conversation. We speak caringly and supportively of our bodies to foster peace with and acceptance of them. The last week of the month the second hour is an open discussion to provide time for feedback on the group, to generate future topics, and for anything else that is relevant or in need of attention.

This is not a dieting group. However, it does not go unacknowledged that we all want to be a weight and body size that we are comfortable with for ourselves. The philosophy is that when people eat most often from physical hunger and satisfy emotional hungers more appropriately their body will maintain its own set point weight and shape. This approach towards food is discussed in depth in the books Overcoming Overeating by Hirshmann & Munter, Fat is a Feminist Issue by Susie Orbach, and Feeding the Hungry Heart by Geneen Roth. These books and this group promote moving from external sources of controls and expectations of food and body image towards internal sources of listening to our bodies, feelings, and HUNGERS!!

ANNOUNCEMENT:

Congratulations to Libby Bouvier, who has been involved with the Women's Center in many capacities for years and years, and Andrea Devine, our bookkeeper, on the birth of their daughter Lillian Alexandra Bouvier, on June 20, 1991.

FAREWELL TO ALICE!!

We are sorry to report that Alice Roberge, the Center's fundraiser since Nov. 1987, has left the center to take a new job at Cambridge Community Services. Alice was a vital part of the Center, as a member of the All-Center meeting and as a member of just about every decision making committee at the Center (finance, fundraising, hiring, etc.). Among other things, she took the lead in writing the grant proposals that brought in the money that keeps the Center going, processed donations, and helped to keep the mailing list up to date. She also made major contributions to the services provided by the Center for incest survivors, as a founding member of Incest Survivors Network, by providing telephone and in-person counseling to women in crisis, and by compiling a resource notebook on ritual abuse. In addition she also played a major role in planning and running our recent 20th anniversary celebration. For these and other things to numerous to mention, we are glad to have had Alice as a Center employee. We wish her all the best in her new position and hope she will come back to the Center often, since, in her own words, she is "just up the street" (CCS is at 99 Bishop Allen Drive in Central Square).

WELCOME ABOARD

We are excited to welcome Florencia LaChance and Georgianna Saba, who will join the Women's Center staff.

COUPLES GROUP

A support, discussion and socializing group for lesbian couples has recently been formed and is looking for more couples. The group has members of all ages, and welcomes couples who are new to a relationship or are long time partners.

Once a month, usually the last Saturday from 11 - 1pm, the couples meet to get acquainted and to share thoughts and feelings about being lesbian couples in a heterosexual world. Often the subjects are flexible and open ended including topics dealing with isolation, frustration, love, devotion, families, happiness... Information on useful resources is also shared.

Activities outside of the meetings are encouraged. The group is always looking for couples willing to plan and run activities that could involve sports, particular hobbies, day trips, etc.

If interested, please call Cheryl at (617)569-4236 or Marcia at (508)532-3749.

NEW: INCEST SURVIVORS THINKTANK

A Discussion Group on Feminist and Cultural Theories and Political Strategies. This new monthly group will give survivors of incest and child sexual abuse an opportunity to reflect about the cultural context of incest, to debate feminist theories on child sexual abuse and to develop strategies for political change. The group itself will not initiate or endorse specific political actions; however, there will be time for such announcements to promote networking and to provide support for individual endeavors. This will not be a therapy group. Survivors will function as facilitators.

The group will meet one Wednesday each month, from 7:15 to 9:15pm. Please be on time. See calendar for schedule.

WOMEN WITH DISABILITIES

This group is for women newly identifying themselves as disabled, including women with epilepsy and HIV positive women, as well as those with disabilities related to mobility, hearing or vision. The monthly group will be facilitated by Toni Schiff and Alice Fisher.

Toni Schiff, who has been blind for 9 years, describes her first 2 years of visual impairment as a time she did not consider herself as disabled nor a part of the disability community. As her consciousness has grown, she feels she has become freer to be herself.

Alice Fisher is a life-long disabled person, who passed or had the illusion she was passing as not disabled. Her recent activism in the disability community has taught that being 'Super-Crip' is not in her best interest after all.

Suggested topics for discussion include: 'Fear of being labeled'; 'Is there a hierarchy of disability?'; 'The difficulties of hidden disabilities'; 'Asking for and learning to receive help'; and other topics of interest suggested by the group. The drop-in group will meet on the third Monday of the month from 7:30pm to 9:00pm. The first meeting will be on Monday, October 21st and meetings will continue through April 1992. The meeting room is wheelchair accessible. If you require an ASL interpreter please call at least 2 weeks ahead of time so that arrangements may be made. Women who are interested can just come to the group, call Toni at 924-5380 or call The Project on Women and Disability at 277-5617.

**ONGOING GROUPS
AT THE WOMEN'S CENTER**

SUNDAY

- Women for Sobriety.....2-3:30pm
- Birthmothers (Women who have
surrendered children to adoption)
first Sunday each month.....1:30pm

MONDAY

- Support for Battered Women.....7:30-9pm
- Women's NA 12 step.....7:30-9pm
- Lesbian Rap.....7:30-9pm
- Boston Bisexual Women's Network
(1st Mon, even #d months)...7:30-9:45pm
- All Center Meeting (biweekly).....6-8pm
- Reproductive Rights National
Network R2N2 (2nd, 4th Mons.)...7-9:45pm
- Lesbian Partners & Ex-Partners of Incest
Survivors (1st & 3rd Mon.).....7-8:30pm

TUESDAY

- Bisexual Women's Rap.....7:30-10pm
- 30+ Lesbian Rap.....7-8:30pm
- Eating Awareness and body image.....7-9pm

WEDNESDAY

- Lesbian Al-Anon (childcare).....6:30-8pm
- Battered Women's Support Group (Weekly
except 3rd Wed. of month).....7-8:30pm
- Incest Survivors' Thinktank...7:15-9:15pm
(Usually first Wed. of the month)

THURSDAY

- Incest Survivors Open Discussion
Group(weekly).....7:30-9:30pm
- Facilitated Open Discussion for Incest
Survivors (3rd Thursday).....7:30-9:15pm
- Women's Community Cancer Project
(1st Thursday).....7-9pm
- Cancer Support Group (no mtgs. in August)
(2nd & 4th Thursday).....7-9pm
- Lesbians Choosing Children Network
(2nd Thurs, monthly).....7:30-10pm

FRIDAY

- Incest Survivors Anonymous.....6:30-8pm

SATURDAY

- Women's Writing Group
(biweekly).....noon-2pm
- Open discussion on Coming Out for Women
of All Ages(monthly, 1st Sat)...11am-1pm
- Lesbian Couples (once a month)...11am-1pm
- Survival in the Workplace (every other
Sat).....11am-noon

WOMEN'S CENTER HOURS

Monday - Thursday 10am - 10pm
Friday 10am - 8pm
Saturday 11am - 2pm

GROUPS WITH TOPICS

Lesbian Rap Mon, 7:30-9pm

- Aug 12 Dating Women
- Aug 19 Talking About Sex
- Aug 26 Share Your Talent
(bring poems, songs, etc)

Bisexual Rap Tue, 7:30-9:30pm

- Aug 13 Sex
- Aug 20 Transexualism
- Aug 27 Sexual Abuse

30+ Lesbian Rap Tu 7-8:30pm

- Aug 13 What Are We Learning From
Our Relationships?
- Aug 20 Lesbian Single Mothers
- Aug 27 Codependency

Lesbian Couples Group

Saturday, Aug 24, 11am-1pm: 'Here Come the
... Brides? (Telling the World About
Our Commitments)

Saturday, Sept. 28, 11am-1pm: 'Sharing
ideas on keeping our relationships
alive and well and so romantic.'

INCEST SUPPORT GROUPS

Facilitated Open Discussion Group

3rd Thursday, each month, 7:30-9:15pm
August 15: 'Work Issues.'

September 19: 'Trying to cope with the
demands of work when our inner
demands are so strong.'

October 17: 'Feeling so bad when things
are going well.'

November 21: 'I wish I had said...'

NEW: INCEST SURVIVORS THINKTANK

Fall/Winter Program

Wed, Sept 4: Is the Mental Health
Community Meeting Our Needs?

Wed, Oct 2: Incest, Sexual Orientation
and Sexuality

Wed, Nov 6: Incest in the Media

Wed, Dec 4: Anti-Racism and Incest
Survivor Work

Wed, Jan 8, 1992: Public Accountability
of Perpetrators

* The group will begin promptly at 7:15pm
and will end at 9:15pm. Please be on time!

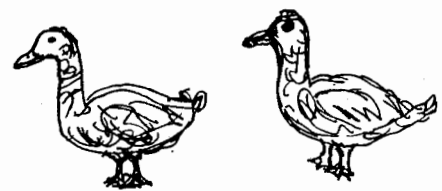
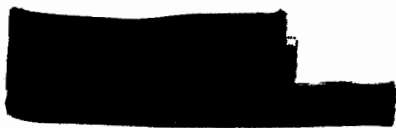
FANTASTIC BOOK SALE!!

Coming in early autumn a gigantic,
fabulous, wonderful Women's Center Library
3rd Annual Book Sale. A great selection
of fiction, non-fiction at low prices.
Bring donations to Center. Call 354-8807
for date of Sale or to offer to help.

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CAMBRIDGE COMMUNITY TELEVISION

provides programming of local interest to Cambridge residents on cable channels 19, 54, 55, and 66. Every Wednesday night at 9 pm on Channel 19, watch for CAMBRIDGE WOMEN IN CABLE, a series produced exclusively by women, for women. Call 225-2500 for a free program guide.

WCRC

The Women's Counseling and Resource Center, a volunteer collective of feminist therapists, is seeking new members. We are looking for therapists who are licensed and have at least two years of post graduate experience. They must be willing to commit 2-4 hours a week to provide mental health services to low and no-income women. We use space at the Women's Center. For more information call the WCRC at 492-8568

WOMEN'S SCHOOL

You can Dance in our Revolution! The Women's School is developing a fall course schedule now. We can help you learn to teach. Call the Center for details.

MOVE TO THE BACKYARD

On these warm summer evenings, it is very pleasant to hang out on the front steps and walkways of the center, and perhaps smoke a cigarette, when your group pauses for a break, or before and after a meeting. Unfortunately, this sometimes makes it difficult for women who are entering the center to come in without stepping over (or on) someone. It can also be a problem for women who are allergic to cigarette smoke. The smoke often drifts back into the house through the open windows and door.

We have come up with a solution to these problems that will (hopefully) be acceptable to everyone concerned: We would like to make the backyard the place for congregating and smoking. The backyard has the advantages of more space, a picnic table and benches to sit on. We will provide buckets of sand and a trash can for butts and litter so that the area can be kept neat, clean and safe. Of course this space is also open to all women who want to use it throughout the day and evening when the Center is open.

Thanks for your cooperation.



WE DEPEND ON YOUR SUPPORT!! EVERY DOLLAR COUNTS!! MANY THANKS!!

Yes - I want to help the Center. Here is my tax-deductible contribution.

\$5 \$10 \$25 \$50 \$100 other

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY/STATE/ZIP: _____