



Stories enjoyed by and/or which have been therapeutic for complex trauma survivors who have D.I.D.

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as an article compiled by Sue Richardson with contributions from UK members of ESTD.
This extended version includes contributions from members of First Person Plural*

1. Introduction

Many survivors and their therapists find therapeutic stories useful for dissociative child parts of the personality as well in work with actual children. An expert by experience says:

"Age appropriate stories help with understanding all those mysteries of families protecting and being role models as well as learning to show emotions that are helped to be contained safely."

Reading to young parts in therapy sessions can serve several purposes – engaging, calming, soothing, grounding, providing hope for growth and helping develop a belief in a more benign world. In particular, they can provide a model of secure attachment and help with learning effective care-seeking and care-giving skills. The story can then be read or, if recorded, listened to by the client at home to recall the therapist's presence, to self-soothe and self-nurture and to build internal attachment. An expert by experience comments:

"Books have been something that has helped us to learn how to be together safely sharing and enjoying. It has also helped to kick start some parts knowing what they want, and this can be a way of doing this slightly objectively without it feeling too overwhelming."

Survivors can also benefit from reading stories out loud to their therapist and/or as self-help when not with their therapist. An older part can read out loud or silently while younger parts listen, which helps foster communication and co-operation between parts. Parts of any age who are able to read may want to read stories to themselves, whether or not others are known to be listening. This can be self-soothing, grounding or simply a positive experience they have learned to enjoy. Survivors reading stories in any of these ways can serve many of the purposes listed in the paragraph above.

Many stories are directed at very young, even pre-verbal parts. As parts become co-conscious there are books that can appeal to a wide age range. It is important for the therapist to read any books beforehand and select according to the needs of the individual e.g. is the aim to throw light on a painful or difficult issue for the part concerned or help the adult self to build up their relationship with younger parts inside? It can also be useful to have a selection of books to hand to use in an impromptu way to change the atmosphere in a session – listening to the therapist reading can be soothing in itself & focussing on a picture book can be grounding.

2. Annotated bibliography in random order

Following are some suggestions, compiled and annotated *with contributions from members of ESTD-UK and First Person Plural*

Arthur and the Church Mice (series), Graham Oakley. Very small children enjoy them at one level right through to quite complex humour for older ones and adult parts

Sea Otter, Suzi Eszterhas. This is a wonderful picture book of an otter with her very young baby & illustrates all the loving responses of a very secure attachment relationship.

The Little Lost Puppy, Ronnie Randall, Ladybird. His best friend is a rabbit who moves away and he gives him instructions to get there. There is a storm and the tree is uprooted and he gets lost. The Bunny had told him in rhyme that if he got lost just to go back to where he started which he did and found the right path. So, there are lots of relevant bits there and a nice happy ending for puppy and bunny for once.

Alex & the Scary Things, Mellissa Moses, Jessica Kingsley. Tells how 6 year old Alex the alligator creates different parts to cope with different feeling states & puts forward some other coping strategies.

Where the Wild Things Are, Maurice Sendak, Bodley Head. One person has specifically recommended the 2009 film version by Spike Jonze, adapted from the book but watch it yourself first. Wikipedia reviews the literary significance of the book which was first banned in libraries in the US despite its popularity with children. It provides a grounding story of anger. The character, Max, has a tantrum and his wild side emerges but he is pulled back by his knowledge of parental love and comfort. Other books by Maurice Sendak, **The Night Kitchen** and **Outside Over** also focus on themes of coping with and surviving strong feelings.

The Gruffalo and The Gruffalo's Child, both by Julia Donaldson, Macmillan. Makes it safe to look at fear via a mouse overcoming fear & empowering itself in a fun way.

The Cave Baby, Julia Donaldson, Macmillan. Looks at play and exploration within a safe world.

Dogger, Shirley Hughes. Contains all the ingredients so often missing in an abusive home, love, care and negotiation. An FPP member writes..... It is about normality, it takes you on a journey and it has a very happy ending. The illustrations alone tell the story. Hughes captures joy, sadness, defiance and in the picture of the fathers race the expressions on the faces have given us lots of fun. She captures the horror on discovering Dogger is missing and cannot be found. The excitement levels when he is found but is now another child's possession and the all so often big sister role of finding a way of making it alright at whatever cost to herself; all told in a way that our inside three year old loved and we still all enjoy re-visiting.

Alfie series, Shirley Hughes. A lovely series of illustrated children's books each telling the story of a particular event or situation that a little boy and his family enjoy. Inside young parts may enjoy the adventures within normality that Alfie encounters and, like Dogger, the books have many of the ingredients missing in an abusive home

Harry Potter series (only books 1-4), J K Rowling. 9 year old Lizzie, a young part with an FPP member writes "I had never been able to read magical books when the body was young but now I could, and we were not frightened at all. I loved the magic because it felt like real but not scary and magic all at the same time, so I could feel excitement and really look forward to reading more. Because it was introducing the Harry Potter concept it was not full of nasty dark things, more about fun and learning new things. I liked Ron Weasley because he had a caring family and I felt sorry for Harry because he did not. None of us like the later books, too frightening."

Guess How Much I Love You, Sam McBratney, Walker Books. A small board book for young parts about attachment to a caregiver – in the book between Little Nutbrown Hare & Big Nutbrown Hare. Can help to build internal attachment between parts. N.B. In using this book it is important for internal attachment to be the focus rather than attachment to the therapist.

No Matter What, Debi Gliori. A small emotionally dysregulated fox displays testing behaviour and finds the reassurance and security he needs from his caregiver. It is about unconditional love and is a great book for letting young personalities know that all feelings are OK. N.B. Again, it is recommended to use this book to build internal attachment rather than promote attachment to the therapist

How are You Feeling Today?, Molly Potter, Featherstone/Bloomsbury . A dip into book aimed at developing emotional literacy and self-regulation skills.

Something Else, Kathryn Cave, Puffin. A socially isolated creature who can't experience or participate in the world of his peers finally finds a friend! Rather moving. Won a UNESCO prize.

Together, Jane Simmons. Mousse (a bear) and Nut (a dog) are friends but fall out before reconciling. A tale of rupture and repair in relationships!

Dear Little Ones trilogy, Jade Miller. Written by an SRA survivor to help her own young parts it uses child appropriate language and talented illustrations to explain DID in **Book 1 : About Dissociative Identity Disorder** - it can help younger personalities understand that they are part of a group and that they have choices and are valued and that now things are different to how things were. **Book 2 : About Parenting** is about healing from hurtful parenting. **Book 3 : About Being Whole** is about what recovery from DID might look like. Note: some survivors find the illustrations difficult

A Terrible Thing Happened, Margaret Holmes, Magination Press. An animal called Sherman develops symptoms after trying to forget seeing something terrible. He is helped by talking to someone who understands. Written for ages 4- 8 so good for young parts.

How to Heal a Broken Wing, Bob Graham, Walker Books. A boy sees a fallen bird & takes it home to heal. Lovely pictures, hardly any words. Illustrates role of care & nurture & inspires hope for healing. Endorsed by Amnesty.

For Every Child. UNICEF. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in words & pictures. Indispensable for all parts who have been taught they have no rights.

We are All Born Free. Amnesty. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights in words & pictures. Indispensable as above.

Speechmark Books series, Margot Sutherland, Speechmark. A wonderful series aimed at helping with difficult feelings.

- **Teenie Weenie in a Too Big World.** The benefits of 'together' in surviving a fearful world
- **The Day the Sea Went Out & Never Came Back.** How traumatic loss can be assuaged via grieving with the support of a caregiver
- **The Frog who Longed for the Moon to Smile.** Addresses unresolved loss and preoccupied attachment
- **A Wibble Called Biple (and a few Honks).** Healing internalised anger, violence & perpetration

- **A Niffleloo Called Nevermind.** breaking through a dismissive attachment style
- **How Hattie Hated Kindness.** From angry, dismissive attachment to relationship
- **Ruby and the Rubbish Bin.** The restoration of damaged self-esteem
- **Willy and the Wobbly House.** Deals with anxiety and OCD.
- **A Pea Called Mildred.** Escaping a negative destiny.

The Invisible Child & The Fir Tree - two Moomin stories, Tove Janssen. With themes of tolerance, inclusiveness and respect for others, these two short stories have messages for adults and children alike. Reading these have helped older young parts begin to understand that it's good to try to get along with other parts of our inside family. In *The Invisible Child* an isolated Ninny is helped to regain her voice and take her rightful place in the world when she is welcomed into the Moomin family and treated with equality and respect. *The Fir Tree* is about sharing and unselfishness at Christmas, something that many of our inside parts had missed out on when the body was young.

Best Loved Poems, Neil Philip (ed). This is just one example of a poetry anthology we, as a person with DID, dip into from time to time - both with our therapist and at home reading aloud or silently. This particular anthology is beautifully illustrated. It covers many themes - childhood, love, life, love & comfort, war & peace, for reading aloud, for reading quietly, animals & nature, magic & mystery, - all usefully set out in titled sections. This helps because we have to choose which poems to read with great care because at different times any one poem may be triggering or not. We have found reading poetry a useful grounding tool and has helped some of our parts in their understanding of relationships and feelings. Poetry sometimes makes us laugh, sometimes feel sad, and sometimes even angry etc. It helps some parts connect with other parts feelings and thoughts in ways that prose doesn't. And it has encouraged co-consciousness as isolated parts realise they enjoy hearing poetry.

A Different Kind of Superhero, Tracy Werner. A book designed to help children who have a parent with DID understand the condition. The narrative is delivered from a young child's perspective, detailing his experience learning about his mother's disorder and how it affects her personality, behaviour, and the child's family life. Rose, Ro and Ruby - parts within an FPP member write "I read *this* and decided *it* would not be helpful for my daughter but might be helpful to others".

The Family Inside, Doris Bryant, Judy Kessler & Lynda Shirar. Sub-titled "Working with the Multiple" it uses Judy Kessler's (and parts) own story and describes how her therapists worked with her. Melanie of FPP writes "In the early 1990s when the internet was a novelty and before survivors' writing was easily accessible, I, and I use that word intentionally, needed to understand what was happening to me. Until this time my amnesic barriers had been very efficient. Now I was swamped with the very young ones desperate need for attachment, but I had no words for this. I felt shame and embarrassment that secretly I/we wanted to be with my therapist all the time. Finding 'The Family Inside' where issues such as this were in print, real and very importantly, 'accepted' I could begin to face my own reality. The whole book spoke to me and I found the chart of the 'multiple's coping cycle and the stages of child development particularly useful. I could look at them and remind myself it is OK."

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