

Becoming Median

*A Booklet Exploring Changes to The
Zyfron System after the end of the
Gemini Webcomic*



Written by the Zyfron System, September 2018

*Edited with feedback from Mystics and LB Lee
November 2018*

**How I thought
Integration would feel:**



How it actually felt:



Nailed it.

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Introduction

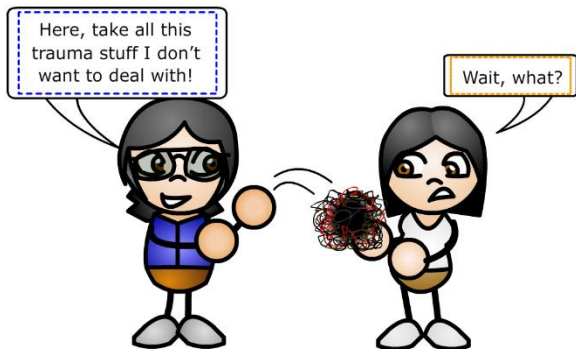
This booklet is aimed at fans of the old Gemini comic as much as it is at anyone else. And at multiples wondering about integration and being median, at medians wanting to see themselves represented, and at the friends and families of medians and multiples. If you're none of those things, that's OK, but you might find this story a bit odd.

My good friends LB Lee urged us for years to write about the experience of being median. It took me a very long time, and multiple attempts at creating a new comic or piece of art, to figure out what it was I wanted to say. This booklet is the result of that process.

We're often fed a particular story about how multiplicity and integration are supposed to go. First, there's some horrible trauma in your childhood...



Then, you become multiple as a way to cope...



Then you start to remember...



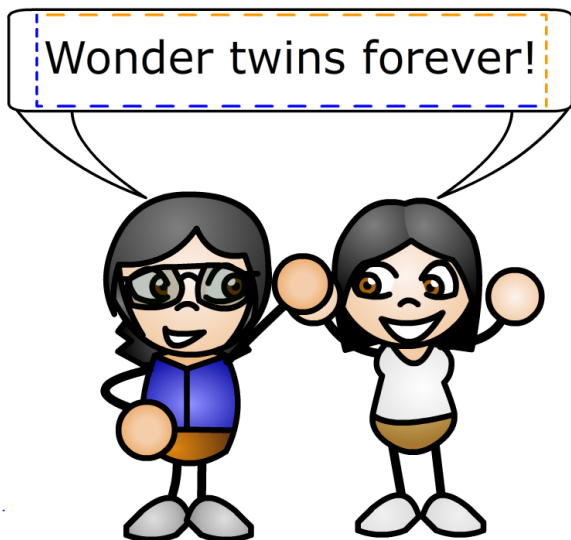
Then you go back to being *Normal.*



For us, the story went a bit differently. For one thing, neither of us were content to hold the trauma, and it fell deep into the recesses of our mind.



For many years we were both able to be present, aware of each other, and living our own lives, convinced that trauma had nothing to do with it.



That's the part of our lives where the Gemini webcomic took place. But unfortunately, it couldn't last forever.

The Swirly Girl

For us, 2013 was the year from hell. Gemini ends with Zee and Raven breaking up; the rest of that marriage didn't last much longer. Among other issues, our partners were not comfortable with Zee beginning to express and present herself as a woman outside of our home. Deep rifts started to form, and although we struggled to hold the marriage together, divorce eventually became the only sane option.

The same year, we came out at work as both trans and multiple. Shortly thereafter, we were suddenly fired without explanation.

With no income coming in and all our saving drained by divorce, we soon lost our house as well.



We landed on our feet in a new job and a new apartment, this time with Zee taking the lead and presenting as a singlet female at work for the first time in our lives.

But, between losing our marriage, our home, and the career we'd devoted our entire adult lives to, the pillars of our identity were feeling pretty shaky.

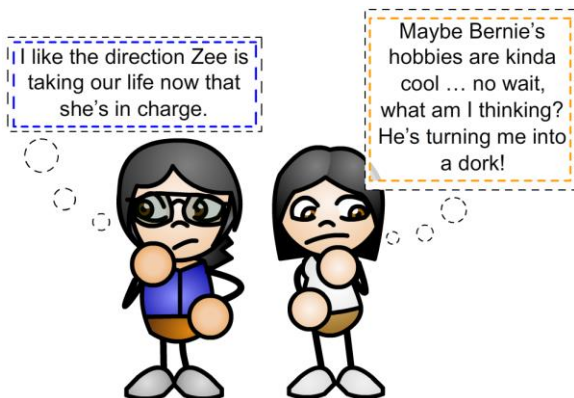


We had always had moments of being *blendy*, the experience of not being able to tell each other apart, not being able to tell who was who, not being able to tell who was out. These were rare moments of confusion and headache, but after the divorce, they got more and more common.



When we were *blendy*, we didn't know who we were supposed to be, or how to feel. All our values and identity and gender got all mixed up and we would feel paralyzed.

It started as our interests and relationships bled into each other's.



Soon it felt like whenever we weren't paying attention, we would start to blend together. First it only happened at work. Then it became harder and harder to un-blend at home.

One day our good friend May, who had stuck with us through the hell year, came to us on a Saturday and asked us:



To which we could only answer, after a long moment of trying to un-blend...



And just like that, the Swirly Girl was born.

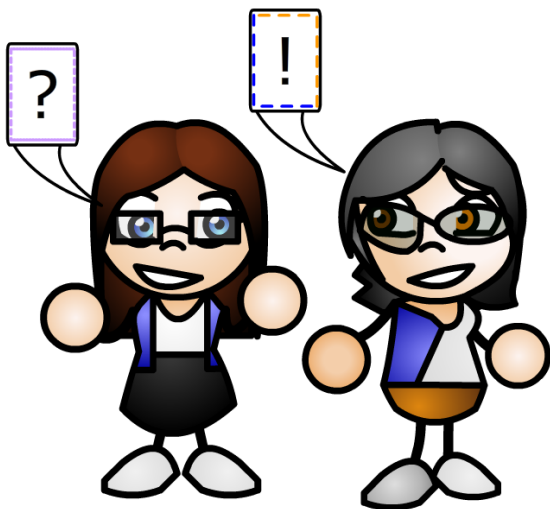
And boy was she ever excited to be here! She was happy, she was silly, she was fun! She was a compelling vision of what we could be together.

She described herself to May as if Bernie and Zee were vials of blue and orange paint, and today they had both been swirled together in a spiral on the palette of our mind. Not blended, not faded, not mixed, but not separate – all present together and all at once!



And so, May named her *Swirly*.

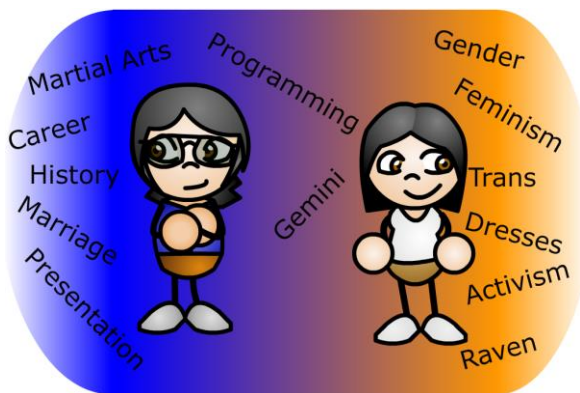
May and Swirly spent the day walking and talking, reflecting on life, on relationships, on multiplicity.



May poked and prodded, prompted reflection, asked questions, and got us to think about not just what we *were*, but also about what we

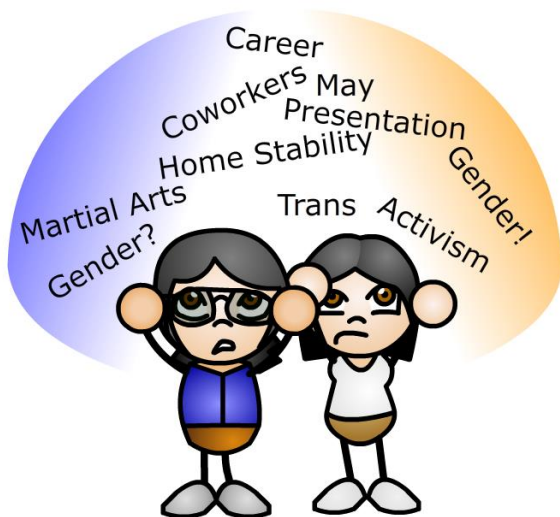
wanted to be.

Swirly realized what Bernie and Zee had missed about our blendy days: When we had completely different relationships and activities in our daily lives, un-blending was easy.



We had been stable and natural as a duo in this configuration for nearly a decade, with occasional lurkers, walk-ins, and visitors, but the system was always dominated by Bernie and Zee. For many years, nothing substantially shook our view of who we were or where we fit in the world.

However, with our life being rebuilt from the ground up there were fewer and fewer hooks to pull us apart, and more that pulled us together.

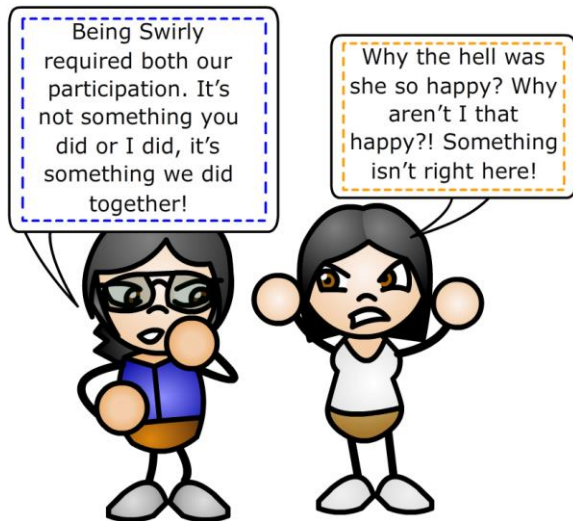


All the things that had made up Bernie and Zee were still present in Swirly, but the walls separating the two had been torn down. She saw that they had been artificially holding themselves apart, and she could hold it all at once.

Integration

The swirly day didn't last forever – though it did turn into three swirly days and not just one.

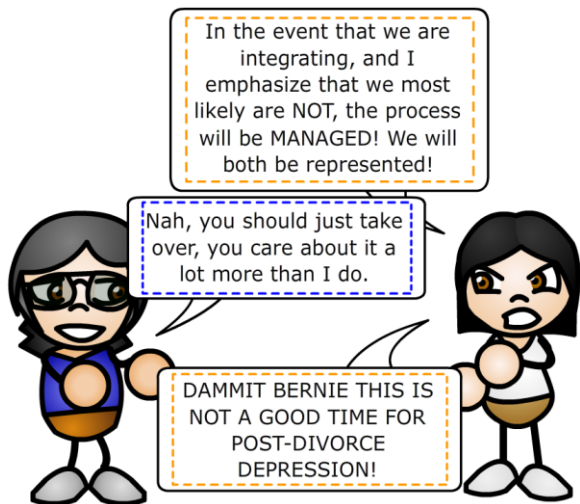
Soon enough, Bernie and Zee were back, and they had some **very** strong feelings about what they had just experienced.



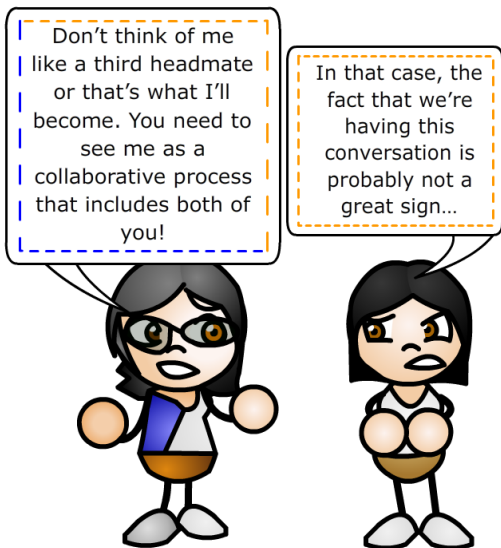
They also had very different feelings about the experience, none of which were particularly encouraging with regards to having an eventual healthy, stable, well-managed integration.



Zee tried to lay down some ground rules.



Days when we were swirled together started entering the rotation along with days when either Bernie or Zee were out. Swirly tried to guide the process and keep everyone represented. She encouraged Bernie and Zee to commit their feelings to writing so that those wouldn't be lost on Swirly days. She believed integration was inevitable but wanted it to be a smooth and healthy as possible.



We journaled and worked and argued and struggled for months as the swirly days became more and more common as Zee and Bernie's days became less and less common.

"Reports of my integration have been greatly exaggerated."



Eventually, we all had to face that integration was happening whether we wanted it to or not.



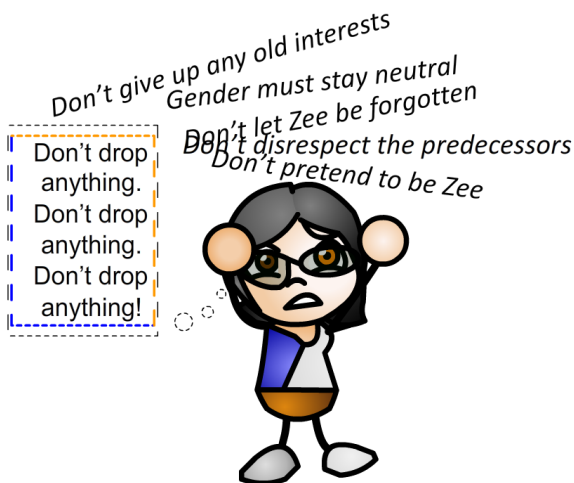
Ultimately, the process was something we all rode out, not something anyone was able to exert much control over. Within about three months, Bernie and Zee stopped taking the front altogether, and Swirly tentatively declared herself integrated.

The Girl with the Sword

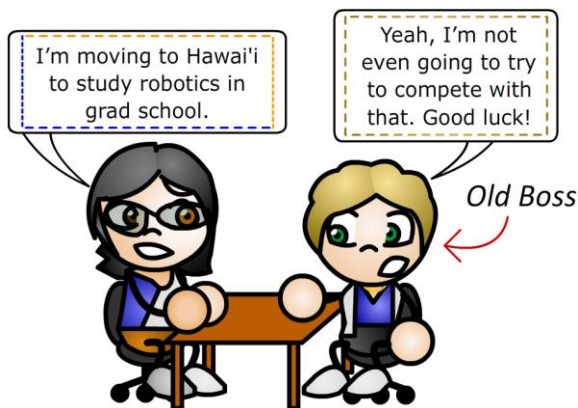
The story doesn't end there, though. Not by a long shot. Swirly's initial joy and exuberance quickly faded as she absorbed Zee and Bernie's less cheerful traits in the process of integration, including traumas that had long been buried and forgotten, and remained that way for now, but began to drag her down the same way they had dragged at her predecessors.



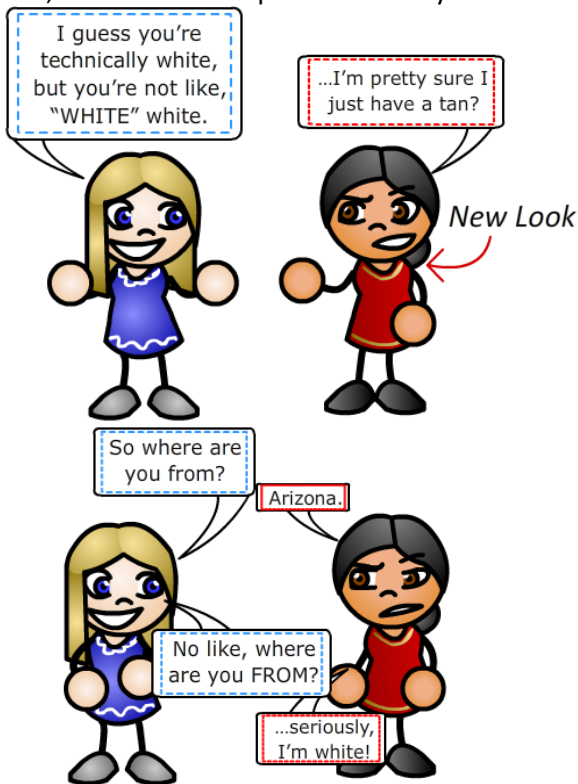
She struggled to maintain the swirl in balance, not letting any part of Bernie or Zee be forgotten. She became so obsessed with it that it became a new set of artificial static restraints on identity, and these ones far less stable or healthy than the set that had sustained Bernie and Zee for a decade.



But inevitably, as months turned into years, we began to change as a person. Old aspects of identity began to fade and new ones got added in. We also happened to make some major life changes around the same time, plans that had been made by Bernie and Zee came to fruition just after integration.



Our life changed in big ways, the way we were perceived by our community changed, and the way we responded to the world changed as well, sometimes in unpredictable ways!



**actual conversation*

Being seen as a woman by the outside world brought a whole host of new experiences that we hope to write about elsewhere, as they would overwhelm this small booklet if included here. Many of the changes were positive, but it turns out that gender wound up being tied to deep and traumatic memories we'd tried to bury for a long time. As we embraced our new identity, those memories weren't content to stay silent any longer.



FEEL BAD!



I'm not going to go into too much detail about what repressed memories are like. Other people have described the experience better than I ever could, and just like talking too much about gender, it would overwhelm this booklet. For now, it's enough to say the first things that came back for us were *feelings*, feelings that we didn't understand, feelings without sights or sounds or details, just template stories vaguely related to sex, awful smells, and the knowledge that we were *wrong* and everything was *wrong* and being a girl was *wrong* and these feelings we were feeling were

WRONG

The person we were at that time didn't feel like Swirly, she didn't feel like she was encompassing and representing everyone enough to be the swirl, but she steadfastly refused to believe that the integration was failing. Later, we named this person *Red*

because of the red dress she always wore in headspace. Red turned to meditation to escape her pervasive and disturbing thoughts and feelings, and found in Zen Buddhism the tool that she thought would save her, the *sword* that could cut thoughts.



But in unskilled hands, such a weapon quickly became a tool of repression rather than a tool of growth.





This situation was less than ideal. While slicing away negative thoughts might keep them away from the surface for a few hours, they inevitably became buried just under the surface, often to bubble up again with renewed strength a short time later. Worse still, Red began slicing away at parts of ourselves we should have cherished, but which seemed inconvenient at the time, like gender and sexuality. After all, if we could just stop caring about sex or our past or being trans, the negative thoughts would disappear, right?

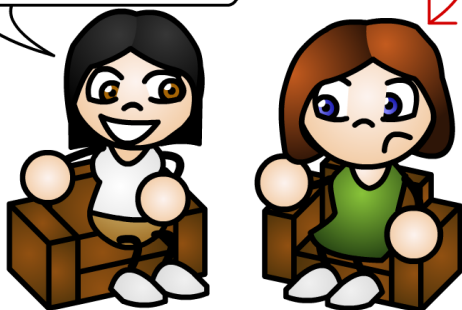
It was around this time that Bernie and Zee started coming back. They didn't take the front, but they would pop in and speak to Red during moments of contemplation, like late at night or while riding the bus, or while Red was trying to meditate.



At first, Red was in denial that the integration was unraveling, so Zee found ways to make her presence impossible to ignore.

So, it's a running joke in our system that Red thinks she's a singlet, and the sad part is, she knows it's a running joke, but still thinks she's a singlet.

Red's Therapist



May sat with us on several evenings and did everything she could to draw out Bernie and Zee, as well as other old headmates who had always lurked in the back but rarely or never fronted. One of them asked a fateful question as soon as he came out:

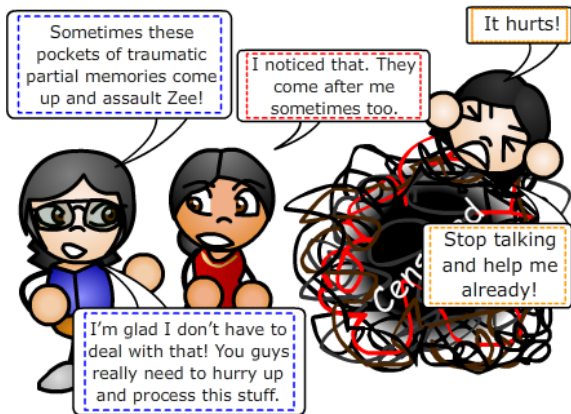
Old Lurker Headmate



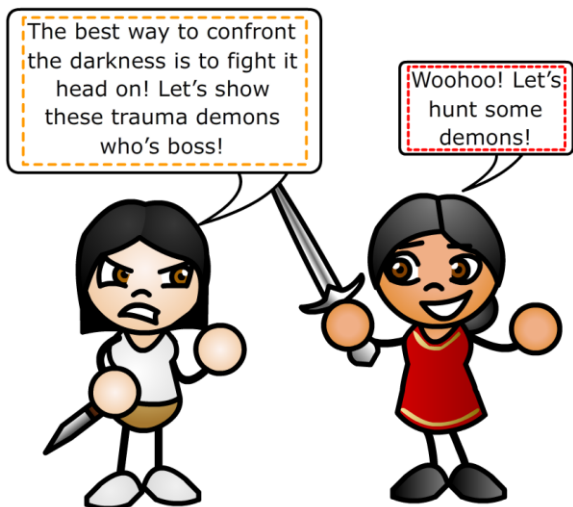
On that night, Red finally had to accept that if we ever had been singlet, we weren't any more. Bernie and Zee had already been calling her *Red*, but May made it official. Red accepted her new name. And just like that, we were plural again.

Working Together

Red had re-discovered her headmates after two years of integration, and the whole system was re-settling in to a new type of plurality. However, memories of trauma kept bubbling up, no clearer than before and just as intense. Forced to accept that simply avoiding or destroying these thoughts was not working, Red switched tactics, asking Bernie and Zee for advice on how to engage with the trauma that had always existed in the background of our mind. Bernie's tactics were initially uninspiring.



Zee had a more direct approach, which Red took to eagerly.

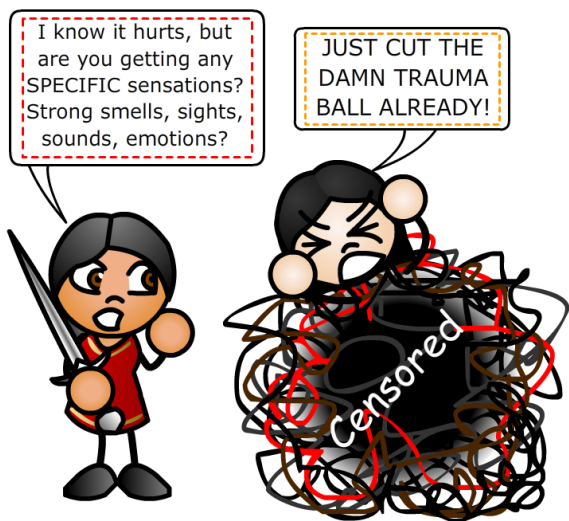


Red mimicked Zee's approach to trauma at first, standing firm and defiant in the face of pain. However, she soon started to wonder if a different form of engagement might be more effective.





Red eventually swayed Bernie and Zee over to her way. It was often more intense, and more painful, to engage with traumatic feelings directly and let them show you what they wanted to show – but through this process we eventually started to piece together what had happened and find ways to move past it.



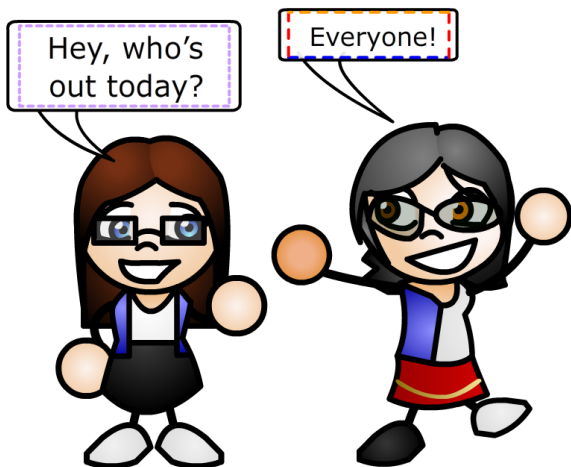
She even managed to discover that she, Bernie, and Zee each held unique talents that helped them access the memories in different ways.



I can't say we're fully healed, in fact, we're still immersed in the healing process. But I can say that unlike the story at the start of this booklet, the more we recover the more multiple we become.

Being Median

Our plurality now isn't the same as it used to be. In high school and college, being multiple was the most natural thing in the world. Bernie and Zee were completely separate, there was no question of artificially holding each other apart. Now, we all blend together. We're a little bit blendy and a little bit swirly every day. Sometimes we even recapture the freedom we felt on that first swirly day.



We mostly interact with each other in headspace. When interacting with the external world, we inevitably swirl or blend. Even writing this booklet left us wondering whether any given page should be in first-person or third-person pronouns.

Then Red did this,
then Red did that ...
wait, am I Red?



But the biggest lesson Swirly taught us, that took us years to finally absorb, was that it's OK to just not worry about it too much.

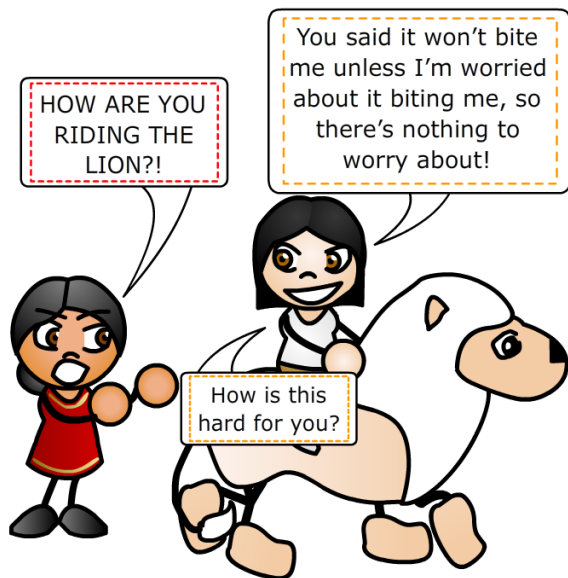
There are still significant differences between us, and *headmates* is still the best word we can use to describe each other. We have different personalities, different perspectives, different values. For one thing, we've each had a unique journey with regards to gender.



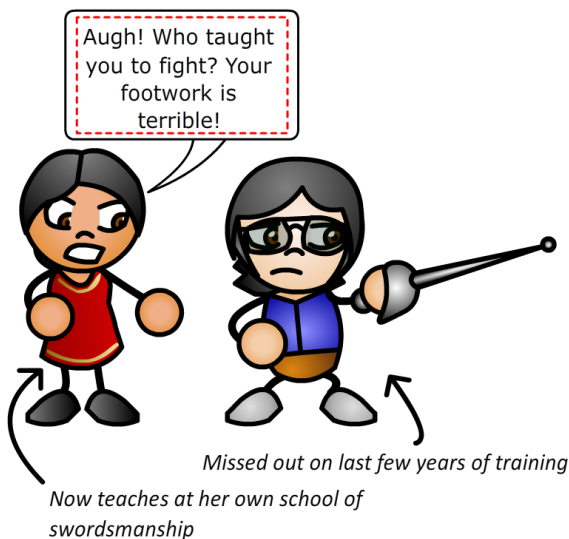
We each have different views on religion and spirituality.



Bernie and Zee still give Red a hard time for being a Buddhist, but it's playful.

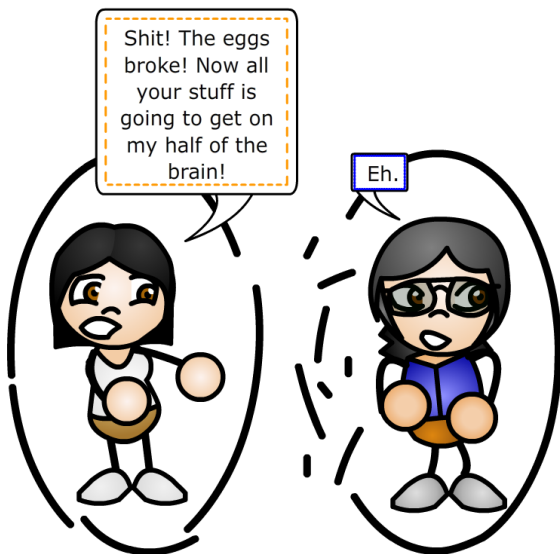


While there's more overlap in our interests, skills, and hobbies now, we each still have our own perspectives, strengths, and weaknesses.



In healing, life decisions, relationships, career, and hobbies, we often find it helpful to get each other's perspectives and opinions. We all try to help each other be the best we can be, just like we did when we were fully multiple.

May likes to describe us as “no longer in separate eggs,” a reference to one of the earliest Gemini comics.



For us, becoming Median was a long journey through trauma recovery, integration, and spirituality. I don't think this is the one "right" way to be, or a way that any multiple system going through trauma recovery will necessarily pass through. But it is where we wound up. Everyone's experience is different, and a big part of our recovery has been coming to terms with the fact that that's OK, and we don't need to push ourselves towards a right way to be multiple or a right way to be a singlet. We are who and what we are, and that's OK!



Thanks for reading!

