



*Healing the Heart Through the Creative Arts, Education & Advocacy*

Hope, Healing & Help for Trauma, Abuse & Mental Health

*Out of suffering have emerged the strongest souls; the most massive characters are seared with scars. - Kahlil Gibran*

The Surviving Spirit Newsletter April 2012

Greeting folks,

Well, it would appear that *"Spring has sprung"*....a clichéd and corny phrase, but still a nice one, especially with today's weather; in the mid sixties here in New Hampshire. And with the flowers popping up all over my yard, well, it helps to bring me a sense of peace in letting me know that winter is over, new life has appeared again, and there are new endeavors to pursue.

April is a special time for me personally in so many ways – for it is also the month I was born. Many years ago I did not look upon that so favorably; my parents let me know from the very beginning that I was a mistake, the cause of all their problems and not wanted in their lives. But times change and with healing comes awareness and growth...so now I look forward to the month of April.

*"There can be no keener revelation of a society's soul than the way in which it treats its children." – Nelson Mandela*

April is also an Awareness Month for many issues of importance, including Child Abuse, Sexual Assault, Parkinson's Disease, Autism and several other health concerns. The Surviving Spirit would like to focus on Child Abuse and Sexual Assault Awareness. We are mindful and acknowledge that the other health issues are also important and those struggling with these concerns are also *Surviving Spirits* in their healing journey.

*"It shouldn't hurt to be a child."* Oh how true is that statement...and yet, as I write this, I know only too well how many children right now are being hurt and how many of those who receive this newsletter have known their own pain and suffering in a time that was supposed to be a time of joy, fun, wonder, excitement, of being bold, adventurous, carefree and so much more. Instead, for so many of us, just learning to survive was one of the hardest parts of our day. All of that lost potential as human beings....yes we survived, and we have learned or are learning to thrive in life...but child abuse in all of its forms did indeed rob us of so much. We at the *Surviving Spirit* acknowledge that, but we also believe that we can still pursue our Hopes and our Dreams, whatever they may be.

The long term effects of childhood abuse whether it is sexual, physical, emotional, spiritual, neglect, and/or abandonment, are carried with us throughout our lives. How

many times have we struggled with feelings that it was all our fault, that we deserved it, provoked it, that we could have/should have stopped it, that we are unworthy, unlovable and so much more. We are indeed the opposite of all of that negative 'brainwashing' we received as children – We are light and we are love.

*"It is the children the world almost breaks that grow up to save it." - Frank Warren*

Our healing endeavors, our journey to find meaning to life and what we suffered through has brought us to an awareness of how childhood trauma 'rewires' our brain and it impacts our nervous system and how we process and handle emotions. The abuse we endured changed our physiology and affected our spirituality, our souls, and who we are as people – no, we are not crazy or "mentally ill"...horrible and crazy things were done to us and we reacted in ways to help keep us alive. And yet, we are still blamed by so many for what was done to us.....how sad and how wrong that it is, and oh-so-hurtful.

Now we have begun the process of learning new skills and ways to help keep us grounded in the here and now – the techniques and coping skills of the past can now be a detriment to our daily lives. This is indeed hard work, but the rewards are huge and besides, we all deserve it!!!

*"Silence is the abuser's friend."* We don't believe in silence, only by speaking out about child abuse will we end it. We understand that we are *"preaching to the choir"*, but, there are many of us who may also avoid working on the issues that have brought us so much pain and suffering. We are bombarded with the messages to stay silent by so many parts of society...but we do need to change that paradigm on every level.

*Brush away the tears from your eyes my child, The world don't want to see you cry  
Brush away the tears from your eyes my child, The world don't want to hear you cry*

*And though it's not right you've got to carry on with your life – please try  
The world don't understand, sticks its head in the sand - and hides  
I wish I could take your hand, try to help you understand my child  
You've got to carry on, your story must be told – sometime*

We need to tell our story and not be silenced...for only in speaking out will we end the shame that so many of us carry with us – we don't deserve that shame, we didn't cause it. In speaking out and ending the silence of child abuse and sexual violence, we help not only ourselves to heal, but we also foster the means and the ways for others to heal and grow.

*Someday the world will understand, And then they'll hold out their hand  
Till then you must be strong, And find the way to carry on  
Brush away your tears, Brush away your tears*

I thought to share some of the lyrics to the song I wrote to tie in with this - "Brush Away Your Tears" – you can hear a live studio version with fellow musicians via this link -

[Live Recording – You Tube](#) or this version from a TV interview – ["Brush Away Your Tears" – YouTube](#) – just me & my guitar.

In honor of April and what it represents, I will gladly send you an MP3 of the song in its entirety – the recorded studio version that was used on the “Waitin’ for a Train” cd. It is also available on I-Tunes, etc. You can hear a two minute clip of this at my website in the Music Section - <http://www.mskinnermusic.com/mskinner.html>

As mentioned we do indeed recognize that child abuse in any way, shape, or form and the issues of sexual assault have a negative impact upon so much of our lives – but we still see the glass as half-full and thus the reason we like to share the links and resources of other like minded individuals and organizations who are helping the world in their own unique way to be a better place.

*“Children are the world's most valuable resource and its best hope for the future” – John F. Kennedy*

Here are a few more that we would like to share with you....and think about.

1] [Child Abuse and Neglect Cost Nation over \\$100 Billion per Year](#) –

The Pew Charitable Trusts is driven by the power of knowledge to solve today's most challenging problems. Pew applies a rigorous, analytical approach to improve public policy, inform the public and stimulate civic life.

2] [Tallying the Costs of Child Abuse... Beyond Dollars](#) – Huffington Post

Anne Goddard President and CEO, ChildFund International

3] “A few weeks ago, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [issued a dire but largely dispassionate report](#) on the economic impact that child maltreatment has on the United States. A team of researchers examined domestic child maltreatment cases for the year 2008 and calculated all of the factors you might expect from economists -- health care costs, productivity losses, child welfare costs, criminal justice costs, and so on. All of that computation helped them find the "total lifetime economic burden" of child maltreatment in this country: a colossal \$124 billion.”

*"They do not want to hear what their children suffer. They've made the telling of the suffering itself taboo." From Possessing the Secret of Joy, by Alice Walker*

4] [In Dollars Alone, Cost of U.S. Child Abuse High](#) – Web MD Parenting News

5] The Yale Childhood Violent Trauma Center and Safe Horizon have released the results of a four-year pilot program to treat children who have experienced severe sexual or physical abuse. The program – the Child and Family Traumatic Stress Intervention (CFTSI) – has been implemented in four Safe Horizon Child Advocacy Centers (CACs)

since 2008 and has now been shown to significantly reduce the likelihood of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

[New Treatment for Child Abuse Reduces PTSD](#) - New York Nonprofit Press

[Click here to download a copy of the White Paper](#) [PDF]

6] [Adverse Childhood Experiences \(ACE\) Study](#)

The Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study is one of the largest investigations ever conducted to assess associations between childhood maltreatment and later-life health and well-being. The study is a collaboration between the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and Kaiser Permanente's Health Appraisal Clinic in San Diego.

[http://www.aceresponse.org/documents/ace\\_score\\_questionnaire.pdf](http://www.aceresponse.org/documents/ace_score_questionnaire.pdf)

This study has done a lot of good in raising awareness on the long term effects of child abuse and trauma...we at the *Surviving Spirit* hope they will consider changing question # 7 in the future to be gender neutral. And in regards to question # 10 – many of us grew up in homes where a family member should have gone to prison for the crimes they were committing, but they were never caught...some things to think about.

*"Although the world is full of suffering, it also full of overcoming it" - Helen Keller*

7] From our good friend Jeanne McElvaney and fellow *Surviving Spirit*

[A “Quick History” of childhood sexual abuse](#)

“In the history of childhood sexual abuse, survivors have only recently been supported with research and active social change. Those facing the challenge of acknowledging their own abuse and those standing by survivors who are healing are pioneers of the best kind.”

8] [A review of Darrell Hammond’s book of Saturday Night Live](#) from our valued board member Lynn Tolson

*“God, If You're Not Up There, I'm F——: Tales of Stand-Up, 'Saturday Night Live' and Other Mind-Altering Mayhem”* [[Barnes & Noble book link](#)]

Darrell Hammond has offered our society a story about pop-culture by describing his work as a comedian. He has also generously shared that which we don't see beneath the mask of entertainer: the depths to which child abuse destroys the psyche. A writer who can tell this story of trauma, its ramifications, and recovery is generous enough to let others know that they are not alone. It is significant to solving social problems when a celebrity reveals that all that glitters is not gold; breaking the silence of child abuse is a courageous step toward awareness of the need for prevention. Mr. Hammond describes

the crisis ridden life he led, which he fed with alcohol, drugs, and a constant need for intervention.

9] ["I've been in treatment since I was 19, and I'm 56," he tells Fresh Air's Terry Gross.](#)  
"That's a couple of bucks and a long time."

In 14 years on Saturday Night Live, Darrell Hammond did many impressions, including Bill Clinton, Al Gore and Sean Connery. Few of his cast members knew that Hammond struggled with drugs, alcohol and self-cutting as the result of childhood abuse. In his memoir *God, If You're Not Up There, I'm F—: Tales of Stand-Up, 'Saturday Night Live' and Other Mind-Altering Mayhem*, Hammond details the systematic brutality he suffered at the hands of his mother, who beat him, stabbed him and tortured him with a hammer and electrical outlet.

*"Child abuse casts a shadow the length of a lifetime." Herbert Ward*

*Folks, I heard this interview when it first aired....whoa!!! It is powerful, it is raw and emotional and yet it offers hope and healing....*

10] Prevention and Treatment of Child Abuse [Ten ways you can help prevent child abuse](#)

Every day five children die because of abuse and neglect. At [Childhelp](#), our goal is to see that number drop to ZERO.

11] [Childhood Adversity Increases Psychosis](#) Mad in America

Researchers in the U.K. and Netherlands found a nearly 3x greater chance of childhood adversity among patients with psychosis in 36 studies of various research designs from 1980 through 2011, representing a total of 81,253 study subjects.

The authors (including John Read, Jim van Os and Richard Bentall) mention that the results reflect associations with specific types of exposure (abuse, neglect, parental death, and bullying) but that adversity is a heterogenous concept requiring further study.

Results will appear in [Schizophrenia Bulletin](#).

*"It is easier to build strong children than to repair broken men and women." - Frederick Douglass*

12] A dear friend and fellow musician advocate, Margaret Bernstein has released her new CD, "Distant Thunder". You can hear and purchase your copy by visiting <http://cdbaby.com/cd/margaretbernstein3>

She hopes you enjoy it and would appreciate your positive feedback on the review page.

We at the Surviving Spirit are honored to carry her other musical releases and hope to have them posted from our web store in the not-to-distant future. On a personal note, I listen to her music a lot to help me unwind and de-stress. Margaret is a gifted musician and caring person who uses her music to help others in healing via her nonprofit [Azalea Blossom](#) - *Dedicated to the awareness, prevention, and education of domestic violence and child abuse through music, multi-media, and the Arts.*

*“As my sufferings mounted I soon realized that there were two ways in which I could respond to my situation -- either to react with bitterness or seek to transform the suffering into a creative force. I decided to follow the latter course.” - Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr*

13] [How The Justice System Fails Victims Of Child Abuse](#) Bill Moushey and Bob Dvorchak – Huffington Post

The disturbing issues surrounding child abuse and what happens to those who report it is a particularly poignant topic given that April is National Child Abuse Prevention Month and Sexual Assault Awareness Month, and a trial for former Penn State Coach Jerry Sandusky on fifty-two counts of abuse is fast approaching.

As journalists who have collectively spent eighty years in the trenches of the court system and beyond, we've repeatedly watched young children tell stories of horrible abuse from the witness stand. In all likelihood, those who accused Sandusky will also face intense questioning when they tell their stories under oath to a jury. It's happened so often in other cases that advocates of those who have been abused lament that those courageous enough to come forward will be victimized in a different way in court.

14] [Alice Miller, The Body Never Lies: The Lingering Effects of Hurtful Parenting](#)

“Thus he spent his whole life searching for his own truth, but it remained hidden to him because he had learned at a very young age to hate himself for what his mother had done to him. (...) But not once did he allow himself to direct his endless, justified rage at the true culprit, the woman who had kept him locked up in her prison for as long as she could. All his life he attempted to free himself of that prison, with the help of drugs, travel, illusions, and above all poetry. But in all these desperate efforts to open the doors that would have led to liberation, one of them remained obstinently shut, the most important one: the door to the emotional reality of his childhood, to the feelings of the little child who was forced to grow up with a severely disturbed, malevolent woman, with no father to protect him from her.”

15] [Work of Alice Miller on Emotions, Unhealthy Relationships and Corporal Punishment](#)

Alice Miller was trained as a psychotherapist. In 1979, after twenty years of practicing psychoanalysis, she decided psychoanalysis was not the best way to help people. She came to believe that it would be more helpful to write about the parent-child relationship. She wanted people to see how parents and teachers unintentionally damage children,

even when they believe they are acting in the best interests of the child. She wanted people to see how the belief that hurting children is good for them has been perpetuated from one generation to the next.

Until her death in 2010 she was one of the most articulate children's advocates in the world.

*When a child hits a child, we call it "bullying". When an adult hits an adult, we call it "assault". When a child hits an adult, we call it "hostility". When an adult hits a child, we call it good "discipline". – author unknown*

### [Every Smack is a Humiliation-- A Manifesto by Alice Miller](#)

Few insights gained in the last 20 years are so securely established as the realization that what we do to children when they are small, good things and bad things, will later form a part of their behavioral repertoire. Battered children will batter others, punished children act punitively, children lied to become liars themselves.

In the short term, corporal punishment may produce obedience. But it is a fact documented by research that in the long term the results are inability to learn, violence and rage, bullying, cruelty, inability to feel another's pain, especially that of one's own children, even drug addiction and suicide, unless there are enlightened or at least helping witnesses on hand to prevent that development.

16] [The Rainbird Foundation](#) is committed to a world free of child abuse, with no child left out.

Their mission is to build a global conversation for the end of child abuse and fulfill four areas of need:

1. Build a major fundraising entity that funds people and organizations who are doing effective work for the end.
2. Develop a long-term powerful relationship with the media to educate them about the real issues related to child abuse so that they can accurately educate the public.
3. Create viable partnerships with people & organizations around the world who are working for the end of child abuse.
4. Increase public awareness and participation in the eradication of child abuse and generate enormous visibility and demand for the end of child abuse.

*"Sometimes in tragedy we find our life's purpose - the eye sheds a tear to find its focus."*  
*– Robert Brault*

17] [Survivorship Ritual Abuse and Child Abuse 2012 Conference](#)

Our Healing Journey: Past, Present, Future - for clinicians and survivors

Two days of survivor and professional workshops, a safe room, great price, good food, safe environment, a chance to mingle with others who share your experience, a chance to

move the movement forward...

May 19 - 20, 2012 Executive Inn & Suite, 1755 Embarcadero, Oakland, CA 94606

18] Our good friends at "[Stop Child Abuse Now](#)" and [Dreamcatchers for Abused Children](#) have some great radio shows that they run weekly – do check them out for resources, *Hope, Healing & Help*

19] And finally, do visit our [Surviving Spirit web store](#) for our expanding collection of creative works from authors, musicians, artists and more...all of whom have been impacted by trauma, abuse and mental health concerns, and yet they show inspiration, courage and perseverance by their creative endeavors.

*"The turning point in the process of growing up is when you discover the core of strength within you that survives all hurt." - Max Lerner*

Thanks & take care, Mike, Rachel, Lynn, Mary, Zsuzsi, Cynthia, & John

ps. Please share this with your friends & if you have received this in error, please let me know.

*Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter.  
~Martin Luther King, Jr.*

*A diagnosis is not a destiny*

[The Surviving Spirit](#) - Healing the Heart Through the Creative Arts, Education & Advocacy - Hope, Healing & Help for Trauma, Abuse & Mental Health

[The Surviving Spirit Speakers' Bureau](#)

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**"BE the change you want to see in the world." Mohandas Gandhi**