



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 June 2013

Hi Folks,

Hope, courage and caring are reflected throughout this issue of the *Surviving Spirit* newsletter...along with lots of resources pertaining to June being designated as National PTSD Awareness Month.

Hope is a powerful ally for so many of us who have known the harder times in life, at times we may think and feel that it has slipped away from us, but here we are today, growing stronger, wiser and more compassionate in our respective efforts to help those impacted by trauma, abuse and mental health challenges.

June is also the time many get to celebrate Father's Day...but there are those who have been unable to for many different reasons. Father's Day [and Mother's Day] was not a time for me to feel excited about – growing up with two brutal and perverse parents gave those two days a whole new meaning, certainly not a time for celebration. That all changed for me at the ripe old age of twenty one when I became a dad – through my children I learned so much and one of those most special gifts, that will always be with me, was learning how to love. That gift helped to give me a whole new meaning on life, and I am forever grateful.

Once again there are a lot of resources to share and as the saying goes, *“Take what you like and leave the rest.”* And please do visit our [website](#) and [web store](#) for additional resources to help recognize National PTSD Awareness Month.

1] June has been designated [PTSD Awareness Month](#) by the [National Center for PTSD](#) [NCPTSD] in order to bring greater awareness to the issue of posttraumatic stress disorder [PTSD]. And the United States Senate designated June 27th as [National PTSD Awareness Day](#).

According to the NCPTSD, PTSD is an anxiety disorder resulting from exposure to a single traumatic event or multiple traumatic events, such as sexual or physical assault, natural or man-made disaster, and war-related combat stress. Symptoms of PTSD include persistent intrusive thoughts and distressing dreams about the traumatic event, triggered emotional responses to reminders of the trauma, efforts to avoid thinking or talking about

the trauma, and persistent hypervigilance for cues that indicate additional danger or trauma re-occurring.

The NCPTSD is a center of excellence for research and education on the prevention, understanding, and treatment of PTSD. Although a VA Center, their seven divisions across the country provide expertise on all types of trauma - from natural disasters, terrorism, violence and abuse to combat exposure. They provide no direct clinical care; their purpose is to improve the well-being and understanding of individuals who have experienced traumatic events, with a focus on American Veterans.

“The secret of change is to focus all of your energy, not on fighting the old, but on building the new.” Socrates

2] [The National Child Traumatic Stress Network](#) was established to improve access to care, treatment, and services for traumatized children and adolescents exposed to traumatic events.

The mission of the National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN) is to raise awareness about child traumatic stress. The NCTSN joins in the effort to raise awareness about PTSD. They offer the following [resources](#) to help educate individuals, families, professionals, policy makers, and communities about the significant impact that PTSD has on men, women, and children. Effective psychological interventions and drug treatments are available to assist those who suffer with PTSD to heal from their traumas and to lead healthy, productive lives.

“There is life after PTSD!!!” Robin Fallantine

3] [Even Without Stress, PTSD Effects Persist in Brain Regions](#) - Psych Central News – *Learn. Share. Grow.*

Emerging research on post-traumatic stress disorder ([PTSD](#)) finds that specific areas of the brain may show effects of trauma even in non-stressful situations.

Researchers now believe chronic trauma can inflict lasting damage to brain regions associated with fear and [anxiety](#).

“There are two ways to live your life: One is as though nothing is a miracle. The other is as though everything is a miracle.” Albert Einstein

4] [“Important Souls”](#) - A powerful, moving and aesthetically beautiful 6 minute video

Created by Susan Salasin of SAMHSA (Substance Abuse Mental Health Services Administration), in collaboration with Andy Blanch and Joan Gillece of NCTIC (National Center for Trauma Informed Care), and Leah Harris of NEC (National Empowerment Center) – all four of these women have been strong voices and educators in the area of women, violence prevention and trauma. Anna Caroline Jennings’ artwork

and story of childhood sexual abuse and years in the mental health system, are used throughout this video to great effect, and also with great love. The trauma-informed care movement is steadily gaining momentum, ending the historical silence surrounding childhood trauma and offering hope and healing for thousands of individuals with stories similar to Anna's. This sad, poignant story is a very effective way to communicate the essence of *why we need trauma-informed care*.

It is also posted at www.TheAnnaInstitute.org. The Anna Institute celebrates and honors the life of Anna Caroline Jennings, by using her artwork and life experience to educate others on the hidden epidemic of childhood, trauma and their horrific lifelong impacts on society, and paths to prevention and healing.

Ann Jennings Ph.D. Executive Director The Anna Institute, Inc. afj@gwi.net

“Never, never be afraid to do what's right, especially if the well-being of a person or animal is at stake. Society's punishments are small compared to the wounds we inflict on our soul when we look the other way.” Martin Luther King Jr.

5] [PTSD Spirituality - Healing Souls Wounded by PTSD - Why Deny the Possibility of PTSD?](#) by Dr. Z

Why do PTSD-sufferers sometimes refuse to admit they have PTSD? Some trauma survivors will deny they have PTSD. Their PTSD-coping behaviors damage themselves and their most important relationships, but they refuse the possibility of PTSD even though they have survived trauma. At times, someone who earlier recognized they may have PTSD may later deny it. What gives here? What follows is not so much an essay as quick thoughts written during my latest round of insomnia.

[full article - <http://www.ptsdspirituality.com/2013/01/12/ptsd-spirituality-why-deny-the-possibility-of-ptsd/>]

[About Dr. Z](#) - I am Dr. John Zemler, PhD. My students usually call me Dr. Z. I am a disabled US Army Veteran and I have Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. I was traumatized as a young officer serving overseas. I am not a combat veteran, although some people have said that I am. I have not served in anything like Iraq, Afghanistan or Vietnam. I was the security officer for a special weapons unit and I experienced what I call “interesting times.”

My PTSD cost me a number of relationships and almost my life. I spent 23 years with nightmares and other PTSD behaviors and there were several times I thought that life was no longer worth living. Fortunately the right people entered my life and I am much better off than I used to be. That said, my soul is still wounded by PTSD and I strive to nurse it back to health.

“Nothing can dim the light which shines from within.” Maya Angelou

6] [PTSD Spirituality: Michael Orban's Dedication to PTSD Education](#) by Dr. Z

Not all of our readers are familiar with the valuable contributions of Michael Orban, a Vietnam veteran, who provides authentic, meaningful education on PTSD. I was recently asked to write about my experience with Mike and his devotion to helping veterans heal from PTSD. I was happy to do so. While my written response begins after the click-through, you can also click directly to [Michael Orban's PTSD website](#) for additional information.

I have been acquainted with Michael Orban since 2007. To put it bluntly, he helped me to survive my own PTSD. His continual commitment to helping people understand and heal from PTSD is without peer.

Over the last six years Michael has made himself available to veterans, families, students, and professional educators, ranging from university classes in ethics to educating medical students about the many dimensions of PTSD. Indeed, he has presented material on PTSD, and the healing one can experience, to my own undergraduate classes. He is a natural teacher who easily navigates the cultural waters of today's youth without abandoning his own shores. Many of my students told me they not only learned about Combat PTSD from his presentations but also how to better manage some of the challenges in their own non-military lives.

Michael Orban is also an accomplished writer. His book, "[Souled Out: A Memoir of War and Inner Peace](#)," educates the reader on a turbulent portion of recent American history and also how the wounded soul can heal.

[Full article - <http://www.ptsdspirituality.com/2013/03/13/ptsd-spirituality-michael-orbans-dedication-to-ptsd-education/>]

"May we know once again that we are not isolated beings but connected...in mystery and miracle...To the universe, this community and to each other." Anonymous

7] Webcast [5 minutes] - [What does the latest brain imaging research tell us about PTSD?](#)
Dr. Frank Ochberg – [Gift From Within](#) - An International Nonprofit Organization for Survivors of Trauma and Victimization

"Anything that has real and lasting value is always a gift from within." Franz Kafka

8] [Depression Common in Those With PTSD, Study Finds - Depressive disorder diagnosis often missed in men, researchers say](#) Health Day – News for Healthier Living

More than half of people with post-traumatic stress disorder [PTSD] also suffer from depression, according to a new study.

Researchers reviewed the findings of 57 studies that included more than 6,600 civilians and military personnel who suffered from PTSD and found that 52 percent of them also had symptoms of depression.

Previous estimates suggested that anywhere from 20 percent to 80 percent of people with PTSD also had depression.

This new analysis also showed that rates of depression were similar among men and women with PTSD, said the researchers in Case Western Reserve University's department of psychological sciences.

The findings, published online in June in the [*Journal of Traumatic Stress*](#), show the need to routinely assess patients for both depression and PTSD, the study authors said.

“The biases against men with PTSD symptoms put them at risk for underdiagnosis and undertreatment of a major depressive disorder,”

“To keep our faces toward change and behave like free spirits in the presence of fate is strength undefeatable.” Helen Keller

9] [*Beyond the Tears: A True Survivor's Story – Lynn Tolson*](#)

Beyond the Tears: A True Survivor's Story is a memoir by Lynn C. Tolson. The story begins with her suicide attempt. In the aftermath, she commits to counseling. The reader accompanies the author through therapy sessions, where she reveals dysfunctional family relationships, including incest, domestic violence and sexual abuse. Her story illustrates physical, emotional, and spiritual transformation. In sharing her inspirational journey, she provides readers with a *message of hope*.

I lived my first eighteen years in the Northeast, and graduated high school in PA. Then I moved to the Southwest where my professions were in real estate and property management. When I moved to the Midwest, I returned to college to obtain a degree in social work. I also wrote a memoir, *“Beyond the Tears: A True Survivor's Story”*. This book was written during therapy to overcome abuse and adversity. My story illustrates physical, emotional, and spiritual transformation. I also beat breast cancer (for now.) I live in the Rocky Mountains with my husband and two energetic West Highland White Terriers. I started the Project for TEARS: Telling Everyone About Rape & Suicide. The mission is to: comfort victims by sharing my story, confront violence by breaking the silence, change society via information and action.

[Beyond the Tears: A True Survivor's Story: Lynn C. Tolson: 9781410724175: Amazon.com: Books](#)

The Surviving Spirit is honored to have Lynn serve on our Board of Directors.

“I am not afraid of storms for I am learning how to sail my ship.” Louisa May Alcott

10] [Mental Health America to Present Highest Honor to Susan Rogers of Philadelphia](#)

[Mental Health America](#) presented Susan Rogers of Philadelphia with its highest honor, the Clifford W. Beers Award, for her leadership and service at the Awards Banquet of its 2013 Annual Conference, Why Wellness Works: Breakthroughs and Pathways to Whole Health, on June 7 in National Harbor, MD.

Rogers is Director of the National Mental Health Consumers' Self-Help Clearinghouse (the Clearinghouse), a consumer-run national technical assistance center funded in part by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, and is Director of Special Projects of the Mental Health Association of Southeastern Pennsylvania (MHASP).

Each year, Mental Health America presents the Beers Award to a mental health consumer who best reflects the example set by Mental Health America founder Clifford W. Beers in his or her efforts to improve conditions for and attitudes toward people living with mental health conditions.

“All it takes is one bloom of hope to make a spiritual garden.” Terri Guillemets

11] [From Shackles to Well-Being...MHA's Continuing Quest](#)

Cast from the discarded shackles from former asylums, the [Mental Health Bell](#) serves as a powerful reminder that the invisible chains of misunderstanding and discrimination continue to bind people with mental illnesses and addictions.

Cast from shackles which bound them, this bell shall ring out hope for the mentally ill and victory over mental illness. Inscription on Mental Health Bell

During the early days of mental health treatment, asylums often restrained people who had mental illnesses with iron chains and shackles around their ankles and wrists. With better understanding and treatments, this cruel practice eventually stopped.

In the early 1950s, Mental Health America issued a call to asylums across the country for their discarded chains and shackles. On April 13, 1956, at the McShane Bell Foundry in Baltimore, Md., Mental Health America melted down these inhumane bindings and recast them into a sign of hope: the Mental Health Bell.

Until - A Poem by Melody Marler

Until I eliminate the stigma within me, the changes I wish to see in the world will never happen.

No matter where that voice came from, I must silence that voice or continue to be part of the problem.

Melody Marler is a self-disclosed consumer/employee with the public mental health system in Orange County, California where she has been providing peer support and systems advocacy services to community clients, as well as paraprofessional support to licensed colleagues and staff since 1998.

12] *[Addressing the Intimacy Interests of People with Mental Health Conditions](#)*

The Temple University Collaborative announces the availability of a new monograph focusing upon the intimacy concerns of individuals with mental health conditions. Acknowledging that sexual intimacy is a lifelong priority for all men and women, the monograph reviews current mental health research on the topic, the issues raised by men and women with mental health conditions with regard to the barriers they face in developing satisfactory intimate lives, and the uneasiness of most community mental health practitioners in discussing intimacy and sexuality with the people they serve. The monograph, which offers initial recommendations for the mental health community, seeks to initiate a national dialogue on these issues. You can view this document on our website -

http://tucollaborative.org/pdfs/Toolkits_Monographs_Guidebooks/relationships_family_friends_intimacy/intimacy.pdf

“Hope begins in the dark, the stubborn hope that if you just show up and try to do the right thing, the dawn will come.” Anne Lamott

13] [Curtis Albers HumanByDesign](#) – veteran, advocate, survivor

All over the country there are children experiencing neglect and abuse from a system that was tasked to protect them. I should know. I was one of them. In 2006 I was deployed with the United States Army as a Special Operations Army Ranger in Iraq and Afghanistan. In the destruction abroad and in the faces of suffering children I saw myself. With clear vision, I could reflect upon my upbringing in the foster care system and the atrocities me and my siblings endured.

Since that time, I have stepped out to shed light on the foster care system and speak out for the children in this country without a voice. I want to give to others what I never had: love and protection.

In my book, “The Curtis Albers Story,” I uncover my past and the death of my childhood, opening a necessary dialogue about the degenerate conditions forced upon innocent children in an antiquated system. In the launch of my non-profit HumanByDesign, I give refuge to children of similar experiences. Together, one child at a time, it is my mission to fix the foster care system once and for all.

As part of Curtis’s effort to help raise awareness, he has created [“Share Your Story”](#) at his website - A place designed specifically for you to share your story. Please contact him if you would like your story to be heard. Curtisalbers@hotmail.com

“There never was a time when a major social problem was solved by beating a child. And there never will be such a time... For centuries adults have injured children and have lied about it, and other adults have heard those lies and then merely turned away.”
Surgeon General Dr. C. Everett Koop, 1989

14] [After tragedy, who bounces back? Keys to resiliency may lie in childhood](#) by Rebecca Ruiz, contributor, NBC News

For Cheryl Sharp, 55, rebounding didn't come easily. Mental illness in her family and personal health problems at any early age turned her into someone who was prone to bouts of rage at the time. “Anything that was threatening, I would explode,” said Sharp, who is now a senior advisor for trauma-informed services for the National Council for Community Behavioral Healthcare in Washington, D.C.

By age 6, Sharp -- whose mother had schizophrenia and could be both loving and erratic – had endured multiple surgeries for kidney and bladder defects. She abused drugs and alcohol for several years. She first attempted suicide at age 13 and would try to take her own life eight more times before turning 24 and beginning what she calls a “journey to recovery.” Based on symptoms she exhibited at the time, Sharp was diagnosed with an array of disorders: schizophrenia, borderline personality disorder, bipolar disorder, major depressive depression disorder.

Sharp, who occasionally used medication, also relied on supportive relationships with nonjudgmental friends who had similar experiences with mental illness. Eventually, with the aid of cognitive behavioral and emotional release therapy over several years, Sharp’s life changed dramatically.

[Full article - http://vitals.nbcnews.com/_news/2013/06/02/18660723-after-tragedy-who-bounces-back-keys-to-resiliency-may-lie-in-childhood]

“Disappointment to a noble soul is what cold water is to burning metal; it strengthens, tempers, intensifies, but never destroys it.” Eliza Tabor

15] [Sexual and Emotional Abuse Scar the Brain in Specific Ways](#) – By [Maia Szalavitz](#)
TIME Health & Family

Childhood emotional and sexual abuse mark women’s brains in distinct patterns — with emotional abuse affecting regions involved in self-awareness and sexual abuse affecting areas involved in genital sensation, according to new research. The study links specific types of abuse with symptoms experienced by many survivors later in life.

The [research](#), which was published in the American Journal of Psychiatry, imaged the brains of 51 women in Atlanta who were taking part in a larger project on the effects of early trauma. Twenty-eight of the participants had been seriously maltreated as children, suffering from various combinations of neglect and emotional, physical and sexual abuse.

The other 23 experienced either no maltreatment or next to nothing. The women ranged in age from 18 to 45, but the average age was 27.

Read more: <http://healthland.time.com/2013/06/05/sexual-and-emotional-abuse-scar-the-brain-in-specific-ways/#ixzz2W7OmmC8B>

Maia Szalavitz is a neuroscience journalist obsessed with addiction, love, evidence-based living, empathy and pretty much everything related to brain and behavior. She is the co-author of *Born for Love: Why Empathy is Essential — and Endangered* (Morrow, 2010) and *The Boy Who Was Raised as a Dog* (Basic, 2006), both with Dr. Bruce D. Perry. Her 2006 book, *Help at Any Cost: How the Troubled-Teen Industry Cons Parents and Hurts Kids* (Riverhead, 2006) is the first book-length exposé of the “tough love” business.

Read more: <http://healthland.time.com/author/maiasz/#ixzz2W7PT5NPE>

“What’s difficult in life is to stay centered when somebody does or says something that tempts us to close our hearts because their heart was closed. That is hard. But that is also how we grow. We go through those circumstances in order to evolve into people who can hold to our loving center no matter what the world throws us.” Marianne Williamson

16] [How to Silence Your Self-Critic](#) by Cynthia Thaik, M.D. Psychology Today – *“Quiet that inner voice in your head that tells you “you're a failure”*

Are you your own worst enemy? Do you find that you constantly criticize, put yourself down, and strongly focus only on your bad qualities? Well, you’re not alone and it happens to a lot of us, many people are prone to self-criticism. Yes, a little self-criticism can be a good thing when it serves you as a reality check to spark some [motivation](#) for positive change and personal growth, but excessive self-criticism can be harmful to your overall health and wellbeing.

We can all be very judgmental when it comes to our own faults and weaknesses. Oftentimes we think that we are “not good enough,” that we are worthless, or that we just keep making mistakes and are not capable of making better changes. This can certainly make us feel sad, hopeless, angry, and even helpless. But when self-criticism prevents us from taking risks and believing in our own capabilities to function and thrive, then it becomes unhelpful and unhealthy. Constant negative self-talk has shown to be associated with higher levels of [stress](#), anxiety, and [depression](#).

Well, the good news is that you can learn how to defeat your inner critic and get away from being your own worst enemy. To learn more - <http://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/the-heart/201304/how-silence-your-self-critic>

“Re-examine all you have been told. Dismiss what insults your soul.” Walt Whitman

17] [Living With Chronic Pain - Living and Coping With Chronic Pain in Your Life](#) by Erica Jacques About.com

Being in pain is not easy, especially when the pain does not go away. [Chronic pain](#) is a debilitating condition for the millions of people who live with it every day. While medication goes a long way in pain [treatment](#), it is often not enough to control all of the [symptoms](#). When chronic pain is poorly controlled, living with chronic pain can be a challenge.

Living With Chronic Pain - Physical and Psychological Effects

Living with chronic pain limits what you can do. Chronic pain can interfere with your ability to work, to play with your children, to walk or even to take care of yourself. Pain can even cause what is known as disuse syndrome, which is the medical way of saying “use it or lose it.” To avoid pain, many people limit the amount of things they do in a day. Eventually, this causes weakness, which leads to even less activity, and a cycle is formed. While chronic pain is not all in your head, your psychological state plays a huge role in the effect it has on your life. If you or someone you know has chronic pain, you may notice irritability, anger, [depression](#) and difficulty concentrating. The psychological side effects of living with chronic pain can be as debilitating as the pain itself. This is what makes chronic pain such a complex condition.

Living With Chronic Pain - [Coping Skills](#) & full article - http://pain.about.com/od/livingwithchronicpain/a/living_with_cp.htm

“On this day, let me quietly reflect and search out any negative feelings that are left over from yesterday. Old resentments will interfere with my serenity today. Perhaps it is time to let them go. Courage to Change

“Each day, each new moment can be an opportunity to clear the air and start again, fresh and free.” In All Our Affairs

A ‘gentle’ reminder that the [Surviving Spirit](#) is nonprofit 501C3 and your gift of time, talent or treasure is greatly appreciated.

Take care, Mike, Mary, Zsuzsi, Rachel, Cynthia Lynn & Mary Ann

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

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mike.skinner@survivingspirit.com 603-625-2136 38 River Ledge Drive, Goffstown, NH 03045

[@SurvivinSpirit](#) Twitter

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