



*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 February 2014

*“There is always a hand reaching out to help you but it doesn’t always come in the form of a hand. Help materialize in songs we hear on the radio, books we read, conversations we overhear in public. Messages of help and hope are all around us. We just have to look for them.” Kate J. Tate*

Hi Folks,

50 years ago the Beatles came into my life and taught me how to play...and so much more. This was a time of transformation for a young boy who knew only fear and sadness...a nine year old boy whose dreams and plans were to attend West Point Academy, graduate as an officer, join the Army’s elite Rangers and then transfer to the Green Berets. My mission was simple, to learn all that I could about weapons, covert military warfare and then come back and protect children. First on my hit list were my abusive parents and their brutal friends...hard to imagine that a little boy thought this way, but that was my reality.

And then came the Beatles and my life was given meaning and inspiration to become a musician like them. It wasn’t easy, but it was worth it and I cherish every single moment and experience that music and all that it entails has given to me.

Music became my life saver and it gave me the means to grow as a human being. I taught myself how to play the drums and joined the neighborhood band which soon morphed into a well oiled and finely tuned instrument – we started winning the battle of the bands contests and were performing at parties, dances and nightclubs and getting paid for it. The accolades the band received for how good we were and for my talents as a drummer gave me something I had never had before – compliments for what I could do. There was never a word of praise or acknowledgement from either of my parents for anything that I did – to receive it from others was so valuable in shaping some sense of self-worth within me. I was proud of becoming a professional musician and it helped to mask the deep held shame and self-loathing.

The band became my family and also gave me the ability and confidence to meet girls and develop friendships. I learned the value of working hard as a team and what could be accomplished when people all pull in the same direction. My band family brought me

into contact with the parents of my musician friends – loving and caring parents. I was a sponge and from them I learned that life was not all evil – that good people do exist in the world.

Later in life I taught myself how to play the guitar while struggling with PTSD and depression – this too was another turning point in my life. Part of me would have preferred to go the route of the singer/songwriter/guitarist traveling the coffeehouse and college circuit – but the advocacy took hold of me and that too has brought me into contact with so many wonderful caring people.

Many of us have come to some crossroad in life where we take another path...it may not be what we thought we wanted, but sometimes the universe is pulling us in way that we may not see or fathom at the time it is happening...and that is okay.

Once again, grateful to be able to share with you some inspirational people and resources...what has been a transformational moment for you? Please let me know.

Take care, Mike Skinner

FYI – [The Ed Sullivan Show featuring The Beatles](#) – a truly magical moment!

*“I must be a mermaid...I have no fear of depths, and a great fear of shallow living.”*  
*Anais Nin*

1] [To Change Your Attitudes, Change Your Core Beliefs](#) – [Iris Weaver](#)

Recently I was thinking about changes I need to make within myself, and how large they are. I was wondering if I'll be able to make them successfully.

One large change I need to make is making decisions at the time they need making, instead of putting them off or waffling about them. That day it seemed like it would take more energy and strength than I could muster up, but the day after thinking about this, it felt like it would be easy.

What was the difference between one day and the next? It was the energy I had. When you have enough energy, the right kind of energy, then things are much easier, much more doable.

When changing your life, change your attitude  
Sometimes when you need to make changes in your life or behavior you need to change your attitude. Change your attitude and the rest will come more easily. Sometimes the hardest work you will do [continue reading](#)

[About Iris](#) - Iris Weaver is a Shamanic Herbalist, Educator, and Healer who works with the healing aspects of plants, both physical and spiritual. She works with individuals and

teaches classes that address the sustainable uses of plants for food and healing of the mind, body, and spirit. She focuses on three areas: identifying and using local wild edibles and medicinals, herbal skincare, and using a wholistic approach to support the needs of those on medication for depression and anxiety or looking to get off meds. This includes nutrient-dense nutrition, focusing on traditional foods and ways of preparation for better mental and physical health, as well as developing a personal spiritual connection.

*“Respect others. Help others. Love others. These are the keys that unlock our soul.” A.D. Williams*

## 2] [More evidence that childhood trauma can lead to psychosis - Medical News Today](#)

A review of 125 research studies in the last ten years strongly supports the hypothesis that early trauma in childhood (including abuse and neglect) can effect brain development in ways that increase the probability of developing [psychosis](#) later in life.

Anomalies in the brains of people diagnosed with [mental health](#) problems such as ‘schizophrenia’ have traditionally been used to support the notion that such problems are biologically based brain disorders that have little to do with life events. However, the review, to be published in *Neuropsychiatry*, a bimonthly peer-reviewed journal from Future Medicine, reinforces the 'traumagenic neurodevelopmental' model of psychosis, which suggests that those differences can be caused by adverse life events, especially those occurring in early childhood. For example, the maladaptive stress regulation mechanisms in the brain that are related to over-sensitivity to stressors are also found in the brains of traumatized young children. [Read the entire article.](#)

[Professor John Read](#) (Liverpool Psychosis Research Group, University of Liverpool, UK):

“We hope that this vast body of literature will encourage more mental health staff to take more of an interest in the lives of the people they are trying to help, rather than viewing hearing voices and having unusual beliefs as mere symptoms of an 'illness' that need to be suppressed with medication.”

*“Just let go. Let go of how you thought your life should be, and embrace the life that is trying to work its way into your consciousness.” Caroline Myss*

3] [Cured Meat](#) by Polly Trope - The Memoirs of a Psychiatric Runaway, **Cured Meat** is a novel-by-stories written on the daring road to happiness that visits insane asylums, hard drugs and hotel sex.

“Cured Meat is an elegant picaresque romp through the slums of the human soul, like Dante scored by Sondheim. The insanity, depravity and squalor have been written with such an elegant touch and scattered with poignant classical references, that this young woman’s personal ordeal has become more than a simple autobiographical account and approaches pure allegory when it hits its stride.” D M Mitchell

[Cured Meat: an Underground Art Take on Mental Healthcare](#) - Polly Trope - Mad In America - Science, Psychiatry and Community

There was a time when I, as a young woman, had not yet been a prostitute, a heroin addict, a homeless bum, and all that. I was, at that time, a literature student, at a famous school, and things were going well. But an eerie stampede of social workers and mental hospital stays were overshadowing it all. The tentacular reach of psychiatric drugs into the deepest recess of my being was performing a nasty assault on me from within the bloodstream. In order for my life not to be wasted, it became imperative that I get away. So I said goodbye, America. Goodbye, everybody that I used to know.

Often since that time, people have asked me, what could have been so terrible that I left such a prosperous-looking situation, and what made me take all these risks, and accept even being a sex slave rather than take my pills? After all, I always seemed so fine...

My experience of psychiatric hospital was brutal. I was a bystander as a man had his nose broken by security staff in order for him to be tied to a wheelchair and swiftly taken to a back room, injected with tranquilizers against his will, then receiving six month depo injections of major tranquilizers to make absolutely sure he wouldn't play up again. [Read the entire article.](#)

*"There is no passion to be found in settling for a life that is less than the one you are capable of living." Nelson Mandela*

4] [SAMHSA's Voices for Recovery - Share Your Story](#)

Share your recovery story to help others see that recovery is possible. We will post your story along with your first name, last name, city, State, or email address, if you choose to provide this information. If you prefer to remain anonymous, only provide your State and your story.

*"You will never be free until you free yourself from the prison of your own false thoughts." Philip Arnold*

5] [A Public Person Shines Spotlight On A Highly Private Issue](#) - Islip Herald

Terri Muuss is the picture of the idyllic American dream. She is the mother of two vibrant children, in a strong marriage and holds a position of prominence in the local community.

But to get where she is today, Muuss has had to overcome personal tragedy as the victim of incest as a child, with the perpetrator having been her father.

While the topic of incest continues to be taboo for some, she continues to publicly discuss her personal experience with the hope of helping others who have been victims of incest, child abuse and other traumatic experiences.

Muuss' latest work is "Over Exposed," a poetic memoir she describes as a mix of poetry and prose that focuses on what the trauma of incest looks and feels like and what it means to be a survivor.

Recently, Muuss spoke with IslipHerald.com about her new book and the reasons why she continues to publicly discuss what some view as a highly private topic. [Read the entire article.](#)

[Over Exposed](#) by Terri Muuss – Amazon

"In the pages that follow, Muuss brings us close to what we might describe as the secret war, the intimate war, which resides in closed rooms, in seemingly ordinary homes. Yet these poems are written, reader, with such delicacy, such concern for image, for pause, and purpose-for, in fact, beauty. Yes, these poems and prose pieces turn on the beauty of poetry, of what art can accomplish. I bid you open the book. It is a miracle." Veronica Golos

[Over Exposed Book Trailer](#) – You Tube video 2 minutes

[Terri Muuse](#) - singer/songwriter/playwright/social worker/survivor/conqueror

*"Prejudice is the child of ignorance." William Hazlitt*

6] [Green spaces have long-lasting benefit for mental health](#) - Medical News Today

UK researchers who analyzed data that tracked people's health for 5 years after they moved to greener areas suggests not only that it improved their mental health, but also that the benefit lasted long afterward.

Writing about their findings in the journal Environmental Science & Technology, researchers from the University of Exeter Medical School suggest creating more green spaces in towns and cities - for example parks and gardens - could bring lasting benefits to public health. [Read the entire article.](#)

*"Connect with those who remind you who you are." Ralph Smart*

7] [Essays and news about ritual abuse](#) – by Jean @ [rahome@ra-info.org](mailto:rahome@ra-info.org)

(1) [Kim Noble, Activist Artist](#)

I promised I would try and do a series on activist artists, and here I am keeping that promise. The first artist I profiled was Lynn Schirmer - (<http://ritualabuse.wordpress.com/2013/09/20/lynn-schirmer-activist-artist/>)

Now I am going to introduce you to Kim Noble. Kim is an fifty-three year old English woman who spent her teens and young adult life in and out of psychiatric hospitals. Like many, she collected a variety of diagnoses until her DID was recognized in 1995.

She has, and always has had, strong amnesic barriers between her personalities. There is no co-consciousness, no internal communication, and only a few personalities reluctantly concede they share the body with others. She has two ways of finding out about her other personalities: what her therapist tells her, and what her artworks shows her. She can't imagine it otherwise; co-consciousness, to her, would be a total invasion of privacy, as if somebody was constantly spying on her. And having to listen to alters talking inside! No thanks. [Read the entire article](#)

## (2) [Scheduling Flashbacks](#)

Here's an idea. It might work for you or it might not, but it's worth a try.

The parts that hold memories usually share them with the part that is "you" when they feel safe enough. You, however, don't always feel safe enough to attend to them. What if you are driving? What if you are at work? Or talking to somebody you don't know very well? Bad idea to switch or to get deep into a flashback and not be able to pay attention to the present. It would be so much easier to have flashbacks come when you weren't distracted.

So the idea is to reserve a time for the parts who hold memories to share them with you. A set amount of time every day — ten minutes, half an hour, whatever you can manage. Make it at the same time every day so that it is consistent. If you can't manage every day, choose one or two days a week. Find a comfortable place and bring things you think you might like to have around. A soft pillow, say, or a blanket in case you get cold, maybe some tea or a glass of water. Paper and pencils might come in handy, too. If you can't see a clock from this place, bring a watch or set a timer. [Read the entire article](#)

*"In life there are some things we might never really get over. Sometimes the best we can do is just get through. But that's okay, there's still a lot of beauty to find on the other side." Anonymous*

8] [I had a black dog, his name was depression](#) - YouTube 4:18 minutes

At its worst, depression can be a frightening, debilitating condition. Millions of people around the world live with depression. Many of these individuals and their families are afraid to talk about their struggles, and don't know where to turn for help. However, depression is largely preventable and treatable. Recognizing depression and seeking help is the first and most critical towards recovery.

In collaboration with [WHO](#) to mark World Mental Health Day, writer and illustrator Matthew Johnstone tells the story of overcoming the "black dog of depression".

*Maybe someday...all those who are impacted by depression can get their family and friends to watch this...and this might create a better understanding and not blame someone for being depressed & tell them to "just get over it" or that we are weak...MS*

[Matthew Johnstone](#) had 15 years + as a creative in advertising where he worked in Sydney, San Francisco and New York. He worked for some of the world's best agencies and won many industry awards.

In 2005 he published [I Had a Black Dog](#) an illustrated book on what it is to suffer depression and what can be learnt from it.

In 2008, with his wife Ainsley, he published the sequel [Living With a Black Dog](#), a guide to those who care for people living with depression.

He is currently working on 2 new books due out in 2013 and 2014.

Matthew also works as the Creative Director of the Black Dog Institute developing various creative, educational programs on understanding mental health, mood disorders, mindfulness and resilience for schools and the work place. [Learn more](#)

*"Music speaks what cannot be expressed, soothes the mind and gives it rest, heals the heart and makes it whole, flows from heaven to the soul." Anonymous*

## 9] [World Health Organization](#)

Human Rights Day - People with mental disabilities around the world face discrimination, violence and abuse in all aspects of their lives. Policies, laws and services in many countries reinforce human rights violations or fail to promote human rights. Today, as part of its "QualityRights" initiative, WHO is launching MiNDbank. This new online platform brings together key international resources and national policies, strategies, laws and service standards for mental health, substance abuse, general health, disability, human rights and development. MiNDbank will facilitate debate, dialogue, advocacy and research in order to promote national reform in line with international human rights and best practice standards.

### [WHO MiNDbank: More Inclusiveness Needed in Disability and Development](#)

WHO MiNDbank is an online platform bringing together country and international resources, covering mental health, substance abuse, disability, general health, human rights and development. It is part of WHO's QualityRights campaign to end violations against people with mental disabilities. MiNDbank aims to facilitate dialogue, advocacy and research, to promote reform in these areas in line with international human rights and best practice standards.

*“Every great dream begins with a dreamer. Always remember, you have within you the strength, the patience, and the passion to reach for the stars to change the world.”  
Harriet Tubman*

10] [International Association of Peer Supporters \[iNAPS\]](#) Webinar: Taking Arts Seriously with Gayle Bluebird

Wednesday, February 19, 2014 12:00 noon – 1 p.m. EST

Join us for a free webinar designed for peer specialists (also applicable for recovery coaches) on how peer supporters can use the arts to support others. The webinar will be presented by [Gayle Bluebird](#), an arts and peer support advocate for many years and recipient of the SAMHSA Voice Award in 2010.

[Click here for a PDF flyer with the webinar access information.](#) This webinar is made possible through the generous support of Optum.

To receive a free certificate of participation, complete the very brief quiz after the webinar

For continuing education credit, contact your state or local certification authority to determine if this webinar qualifies for credit. Questions? Contact us at: [webinars@naops.org](mailto:webinars@naops.org). [Click here to learn about other webinars in the series.](#)

The **InterNational Association of Peer Supporters**, Inc. (*formerly the National Association of Peer Specialists*), is a private, non-profit organization dedicated to promoting peer support in mental health systems. <http://inaops.org/>

[Bluebird on Transforming Lives with the Arts](#)

*“Healing doesn’t mean the damage never existed. It means the damage no longer controls our lives.” Raw for Beauty*

11] ['The Living Room' offers alternative treatment for emotional distress](#) - Medical News Today

Emergency departments may not be the best choice for persons suffering from severe mental illness or emotional distress. According to a new qualitative study by DePaul University School of Nursing researchers, persons in a [mental health](#) crisis may be better served in an alternative recovery-oriented, homelike environment instead of a traditional emergency department.

"Hospital emergency departments are not set up for people with emotional problems. Most people with emotional distress come from a chaotic environment and need a safe or calm space to receive proper attention and treatment," said Mona Shattell, a co-author on a paper published in the journal *Issues in Mental Health Nursing* titled "A Recovery-

Oriented Alternative to Hospital Emergency Departments For Persons in Emotional Distress: 'The Living Room.'

At The Living Room, guests reported being welcomed as "*a fellow human being, not like a patient*" and that the program was "*a helping, not judging zone.*"

Specific interventions by The Living Room staff were cited in the study as being identified by guests as "*helpful and caring.*" Those interventions included "*being understanding, attentive and respectful, exploration of coping techniques, and use of a gentle, calming voice.*" [Read the entire article.](#)

*"Words that enlighten the soul are more precious than jewels."* Hazurat Inayat Khan

12] [Until I Rise Again](#): A Memoir In Progress – Nicki

I am lying unconscious in the emergency room at Massachusetts General Hospital in downtown Boston. I want to die but instead I am about to wake up. Life has left me heaped like a bag of stones, yet something akin to grace awaits me.

This is my story; the end is really the beginning. Once I was a bird crawling on broken wings, but in time I learn of grander things than my small bird dreams, things that lift me higher than even my healthy wings could go.

*May we all shirk the darkness that binds us. May we all find the path we can dance on.*

Nicki has done many things in her life: shoe salesperson, poet, mental health advocate, waitress, writer, grocery store clerk, drug addict, musician and songwriter, dog walker, lived in homeless shelters, public educator, small business owner, yoga practitioner, seeker of the light, been confined to psychiatric units, artist in her soul, and healer, empath and intuitive. She has transcended an intricately laid darkness and instead is now simply a writer, healer, animal lover, and artist. She rises. May we all find the light that awaits us.

[Sometimes You Gotta Move, Sometimes You Gotta Stay Where You Are](#) – Blog

*"Ultimately, we have just one moral duty: To reclaim large areas of peace in ourselves, more and more peace, and to reflect it toward others. And the more peace there is in us, the more peace there will also be in our troubled world."* Ety Hillesum

13] [The Deadly Link](#) - A documentary film project on the link between animal abuse and domestic violence

- The Deadly Link is a documentary film about the connection between animal abuse and human violence (domestic violence, child abuse, elder abuse).
- The purpose of this documentary is to bring the issue of animal abuse in violent homes, and possible solutions, to the attention of a worldwide audience.

- It will also be an educational/training tool for social service providers, police officers, mail carriers, utility meter readers, animal control officers, veterinarians, family physicians, clergy, civic groups, politicians, and more.
- 32% of battered women report that their children had hurt or killed animals. We need to help stop this cycle.
- We are a group of filmmakers who really care about helping the animals who are the victims in violent homes – and the people who are not always able to protect their pets from batterers.

*“There are two ways of spreading light: to be the candle or the mirror that reflects it.”  
Edith Wharton*

14] [Its a Family Affair discusses Pet Cruelty w/ Lynn Tolson](#) - Butterfly Dreams Abuse Recovery - Self Help Podcasts 65:31 minutes

There are many of us who come from a violent home life who also remember having at least one family pet during our childhood. Was that pet ever abused or neglected? Most of you would probably answer yes and may even remember a pet being killed by your family dominator or abuser.

*“An activist is someone who cannot help but fight for something. That person is not usually motivated by a need for power or money or fame, but in fact is driven slightly mad by some injustice, some cruelty, some unfairness, so much so that he or she is compelled by some internal moral engine to act to make it better.” Eve Ensler*

15] [Petra Award](#) – Leaders for Justice - Nominate

The Petra Foundation was established in 1988 to sustain the trajectory of [Petra Tölle Shattuck's](#) life by honoring the kind of people she most admired—unsung individuals making distinctive contributions to the rights, autonomy and dignity of others.

Each year since then, through a national search and nomination process, the Petra Foundation has recognized such leaders as [Petra Fellows](#).

Often at risk and without the safety net of personal privilege or institutional support, Petra Fellows fight poverty, discrimination, environmental degradation and violence. They work in prisons and police departments, factories and migrant worker camps, health clinics, housing projects, family farms and public schools—wherever people lack the resources, connections or clout to participate fully in American society. Armed with the fierce passion for justice that inspired Petra Shattuck, they are fixing what's broken in America.

Download Nomination Form - [Microsoft Word Format](#) (DOC: 34 KB / 2 pages)

[Adobe Acrobat Format](#) (PDF: 87 KB / 2 pages)

Please complete the form by March 1, 2014 and either e-mail to [info@petrafoundation.org](mailto:info@petrafoundation.org) or print and mail to:

The Petra Foundation  
Robin Templeton, Executive Director  
115 South Oxford St. #575  
Brooklyn, NY 11217

*"You change your life by changing your heart." Max Lucado*

16] [Children's mental health menaced by 'unprecedented toxic climate'](#) – The Guardian

Charity warns of dangers young people face in a '24/7 online culture where they can never switch off'

Children and young people are growing up in an "unprecedented toxic climate" of stress and pressure, according to a survey.

Fear of failure, bullying, pressure to be thin and depression were some of the issues complained of by the 2,000 youngsters, aged 11 to 25, who were questioned in a poll commissioned for the national charity YoungMinds.

More than half of children and young people believed they would be a failure if they did not get good grades at school or college; half said they had been bullied and a third said they did not know where to turn to get help when they felt depressed or anxious.

More than half of 11- to 14-year-olds said they had seen online pornography, with four out of 10 of those saying it had affected their relationships with others of their age.

"Mental health is the biggest unaddressed health challenge of our age, and young people's mental health must be a top priority for Britain." [Read the entire article.](#)

[YoungMinds](#) is the UK's leading charity committed to improving the emotional wellbeing and mental health of children and young people.

*"And those who were seen dancing were thought to be quite insane by those who could not hear the music." Frederick Nietzsche*

17] [Deadly force series: Day 1](#) - The Portland Press Herald - Maine Sunday Telegram

**Five separate fatal shootings** of mentally ill people by Maine police in 2011 prompted the Portland Press Herald/Maine Sunday Telegram to examine law enforcement's use of deadly force. Since 1990, police have fired on 101 people, many of them mentally ill, and in every case the state attorney general ruled that the shooting was justified. The

newspaper sought to find out why so many mentally ill Mainers were being shot and whether the outcomes were avoidable. The investigation, involving hundreds of interviews and thousands of pages of documents, revealed that Maine and rest of the country have failed to employ methods or invest in training that could defuse life-threatening situations with mentally impaired people. [First in a four-part series](#)

*“The art of living lies less in eliminating our troubles than in growing with them.”  
Bernard Baruch*

18] [Blood Brother - A Film about Rocky Braat’s Life-Changing Experiences with HIV-Infected Orphans in India](#) - Independent Lens – PBS

Why would someone leave everything behind to devote their life to helping others? Director Steve Hoover explores that question in Blood Brother, the remarkable story of his long-time friend Rocky Braat, who did exactly that. A young man from a fractured family and a troubled past, Braat went traveling through India without a plan. There he met a group of HIV-positive children living in an orphanage — a meeting that changed everything for him.

Braat left his life, friends, and career in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania to live with the kids. Filmmaker Steve Hoover was intrigued and unnerved by his best friend’s radical life change. In an effort to find out what compelled him to give up every source of stability in his life, Hoover decided to trace Braat's story, following him to India.

He witnessed Rocky and the kids endure disease, abject poverty, and death. But in the midst of all these troubles, he also saw their deep joy, and came to understand why Rocky had given up everything he had to experience it. Blood Brother is a story of friendship and of life stripped down to its essence.

*Poignant & powerful....sad & uplifting – well worth watching. MS*

*“It's not the things we get but the hearts we touch that will determine our success in life.” Mac Anderson*

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

PS. Please share this with your friends & if you have received this in error, please let me know – [mikeskinner@comcast.net](mailto:mikeskinner@comcast.net)

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