



*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 May 2014

*Don't Quit*

*“When things go wrong as they sometimes will,  
When the road you're trudging seems all up hill,  
When the funds are low and the debts are high  
And you want to smile, but you have to sigh,  
When care is pressing you down a bit,  
Rest if you must, but don't you quit.  
Life is queer with its twists and turns,  
As every one of us sometimes learns,  
And many a failure turns about  
When he might have won had he stuck it out;  
Don't give up though the pace seems slow  
You may succeed with another blow,  
Success is failure turned inside out--  
The silver tint of the clouds of doubt,  
And you never can tell how close you are,  
It may be near when it seems so far;  
So stick to the fight when you're hardest hit  
It's when things seem worst that you must not quit.” Edgar A. Guest*

Hi Folks,

“Don't Quit” is one of my favorites...some dear friends of mine have given me cards over the years that share these words...these messages of hope and compassion came at the times I needed it...times when I just wanted to isolate from the world...one of them is posted above my bedroom dresser to help remind me every day to not give up...

Once again, there are some really great resources and inspirational stories of courage in action...please know that an honest effort is made to be inclusive to all, but sometimes things are misplaced or omitted - that usually comes from forgetfulness and information overload. Aahhh...the delights of middle-age...

In the efforts to be inclusive and share information that can be helpful, sometimes within groups or organizations there may be an individual who is not-so-helpful or trauma informed. As with everything in life, try to be mindful and open...but cautious....don't be afraid to tread slowly at times. And as the saying goes, "*Take what you like and leave the rest.*"

I'm very excited to be heading down to VA in a few days to present at the VOCAL Conference. I've long respected the works that these folks are doing year in, year out - to have an opportunity to be a part of their Annual Conference is an honor.

[VOCAL](#) is the Virginia Organization of Consumers Asserting Leadership.

Since 2001, VOCAL is a nonprofit organization of people in mental health recovery.

We are a statewide community, support network, social change movement and self-help education program. Our organization is created by and for people who have experienced emotional turbulence, mental health crisis, or extreme states of consciousness (commonly labeled as "mental illness").

VOCAL focuses on creating broad-scale social change, as well as change in the lives of individuals. We work to transform the mental health system and create alternatives to the system by promoting mental health recovery, self-determination and peer leadership.

*The Surviving Spirit* is honored to share their books of courage and hope – [Firewalkers and Firestories](#) - also available at [VOCAL Publications](#)

[Walk With Me© & Mental Health Awareness Month](#) – Michael Skinner blog post

May is celebrated as *Mental Health Awareness Month*. In of itself, the simple title sounds great...and yet, within this time of recognition and awareness, there is also the darker side of mental health. The stigma and discrimination that is still so prevalent, especially those two words that cause me [and others] a lot of discomfort – "*mental illness*" or "*mentally ill*".

I came to dread those words back in the early to mid nineties, when the horrors of my childhood abuse came back to 'visit' me in 1993. I became grief-stricken and overwhelmed by the terror associated with my early life. I was numb with shock and pain and deeply depressed because I was finally dealing with the unresolved sadness, hurt and losses associated with my childhood years. The flashbacks associated with that time frame seemed to roll on in an endless loop – having to 'watch' and revisit all of the sexual abuse memories I had worked so hard to suppress was overwhelming and it brought great suffering. Labels were placed upon the experiences I was having now, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder [PTSD] and Major Depression...and yes, within those

descriptions came the many treatment providers letting me know that I was “*mentally ill*”, and life as I knew it was over. My life, as they were prescribing, would be one of over-medication and the belief that I would never be able to work again. Hmnn... a person becomes sad, frightened and overwhelmed because of these horrible life experiences and that means you are destined to a life of nothingness? Wow! How sad and oh-so wrong to believe that. Please know, there were some wonderful mental health treatment providers who did not espouse these hurtful views to me, but sadly, many of them were part of a “*mental health*” system that did believe in these warped thoughts. [Read the entire article](#)

1] [Ride Above Depression \(R.A.D!\)](#) - Empowering whole life whole body wellness & [www.facebook.com/rideabovedepression](http://www.facebook.com/rideabovedepression)

We are so thankful to be connected with you. Community is a powerful thing. We aim to inspire everyone we meet, and if you made it this far, we hope you will go even further. Get to know us, our mission, and how we are going to make amazing things happen in this world, and how you can [be a part of it!](#) We simply can't do it without you.

OUR MISSION: To combine the power of therapeutic movement, holistic wellness and community building to help individuals overcome depression and have a truly joyful life.

OUR RIDE: We will be cycling from Ft. Myers, Florida to Seattle, Washington on a mission to bring our own depression to an end, as well as launching our nonprofit to help others fight theirs. We aim to inspire and motivate everyone we come in contact with. We are looking forward to meeting as many people as possible; cycling groups, schools, depression support groups, gyms and wellness centers, etc. Please send us requests if you know somewhere we can speak and share our story. You will be able to follow our journey across the USA beginning March 1st, 2014 through our blogs and pictures.

We also share our stories of living with depression/bipolar and some light education on what the illnesses are and gaps in the current medical system. [Learn more](#)

[Founders](#) – Elise Porter - I am a National Academy of Sports Medicine and National Personal Training Institute certified personal trainer and sports model. I prefer the title of Wellness Coach. My passion has always been to help people live a more joyful, rich life. Throughout my career I have found many venues to help that happen; running recreation programs at resorts and the city, ski instructing, challenge courses and team building, teen recreation programs, nutrition coaching, personal training and inspiring people to go after their dreams through life coaching. I also love photography, painting, and writing. It brings me the most joy to help people have their bodies back.

Jeremiah Reiner - My depression has been on-going. The earliest memories of my depressed state were when I was ten years old. They consisted of unexplained crying spells and the desire to be alone even though I really needed support. My teens were filled with athletic and academic success coupled with loneliness. In my mind, I was an outcast in school even though everyone liked me.

Cycling found its way into my life when I was 17, and I took part in races soon thereafter. I loved the freedom and rhythmic enjoyment that it gave me. College was brutal. I withdrew from my classes on four occasions. I have been under the care of psychiatrists, psychologists and counselors for seven years, gone through two extended hospitalizations, and 15 different medications. Through all this, I came to realize that for me cycling, nutrition, and community support have helped more than anything else. So I have decided to set off on this ride to inspire others to create their own empowering mind and body connections.

*“Try not to become a man of success, but rather try to become a man of value.” Albert Einstein*

2] [Leah Ida Harris](#) - Activist, storyteller, mother, survivor

I am a mother, a social entrepreneur, a survivor, and a storyteller. I use my lived experience to advocate for social justice in mental health; community-based alternatives to hospitalization and incarceration; crisis alternatives such as crisis respite; peer-to-peer supports as a way to revolutionize the way we do mental health care; supported/affordable housing initiatives; programs that enable access to education, creative opportunities, and meaningful work for persons with disabilities; innovations in suicide awareness and prevention; and greater public awareness of the impacts of trauma on individuals, families, and communities. Author of the forthcoming book *Trauma Nation: How to Truly Address the Roots of Violence, Suicide, and Suffering in America*.

3] [It's About the Trauma: How to Truly Address the Roots of Violence and Suffering in our Society](#) - by Leah Harris @ Mad In America

We are a deeply traumatized nation. It wasn't enough that 20 children were massacred at a school in Newtown, Conn., in 2012. It seems we are confronted with a new and devastating mass killing tragedy every few months in America, the latest being the recent shooting at Fort Hood. More soldiers have now died by suicide than by combat in Iraq and Afghanistan, and suicide now kills more Americans than car accidents.

What has been our collective answer to this appalling state of affairs? We shun serious discussions of gun control, and instead scapegoat people with mental health issues for the complex issue of violence in our society. But my intention is not to write about gun control. Even if by some miracle we were enlightened enough to take all guns away from people tomorrow, the fact remains that we are a traumatized nation. And the question is: what are we going to do about it?

Representative Tim Murphy is a psychologist who proposes unsatisfactory solutions to our most pressing social problems. In a “shockingly regressive” piece of legislation known as the “Helping Families in Mental Health Crisis Act of 2013” (H.R. 3717), he proposes to expand the highly controversial practice of Involuntary Outpatient Commitment (IOC) for persons with serious mental illnesses. But that approach is not

the answer, as documented in a fact sheet authored by the National Coalition for Mental Health Recovery: [Read the entire article](#)

**We should be focusing on trauma, not mental illness.**

*“When you feel like giving up, remember why you held on for so long in the first place.”  
Unknown*

4] [First They Ignore You: Impressions From Today’s Hearing on H.R. 3717 \(Murphy’s Bill\)](#) – Beyond Meds Leah Harris

As I walked alone up the stairs to the Rayburn House Office Building this morning to attend the hearing of the Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Health on H.R. 3717 – the Helping Families in Mental Health Crisis Act – I thought about how I wasn’t truly alone. In spirit with me were all the people who had experienced scary, coercive, and dehumanizing interventions in the name of help. In spirit with me were all the well-intentioned family members who didn’t want to force treatment on their loved ones, but didn’t have access to or know about alternative voluntary, recovery-oriented community resources. In spirit with me was every mental health provider who went into the field hoping to really make a difference in their communities, but became cynical and discouraged in the face of so many broken systems and broken spirits.

These are dark times we find ourselves in. People with mental health histories are being scapegoated as the cause of the complex problem of violence in our nation. This bill signifies one of the most frightening attacks on the civil rights and human dignity of people with mental health challenges that we have seen in three decades, of that there is no doubt. I won’t give a detailed report of the hearing itself; I won’t go into detail about how Representative Murphy viciously bullied and attacked the people whose views were different from his; you can experience it for yourself [here](#). What I would like to do is to share some impressions, and some reasons for us to be hopeful in this challenging time. [Read the entire article](#)

5] [The Many Problems with the Helping Families in Mental Health Crisis Act - World of Psychology - Part 2](#) - By John M. Grohol, Psy.D.

That’s Okay, We’ll Micro-Manage SAMHSA Too

Demonstrating they have little faith in many of SAMHSA’s current public education campaigns, programs and advocacy efforts, Tim Murphy also wants to micro-manage whatever SAMHSA has left to manage after it’s gutted of its community mental health blocks grant oversight. [Learn more](#)

*“There’s no need to be perfect to inspire others. Let people get inspired by how you deal with your imperfections.” Robert Tew*

6] [Hay House Radio](#) - Radio for your soul - Listen Live to Hay House Authors

*“Great Spirit, help me never to judge another until I have walked in his moccasins.”*  
*Sioux Indian Prayer*

7] [\*Whisper Rapture: A Bonfire Madigan Suite\*](#) - Kickstarter fundraising campaign – Ken Paul Rosenthal - I'd like to point out the significant mental health component to our symphony of song and cinema.

In-between each song, we will hear *Icarus Project* collective founding member Madigan Shive reading from her chapter in the groundbreaking anthology, ‘*Live Through This: On Creativity and Self-Destruction*’. Her story of trauma and transformation is the narrative core from which the music will emerge.

Like most of our prior work, *Whisper Rapture* is fundamentally a social justice project that merges art, music, and mental health activism. Your support will help us bring healing and hope to communities in need. No donation amount is too small, and our thank you gifts are phenomenal!

### **Not your ordinary music film**

Where traditional concert films feature musicians in performance, *Whisper Rapture* will present the music itself as the main character.

Madigan’s unique blend of avant-garde pop and punk-influenced chamber music will be embodied through a kaleidoscopic collection of newly recorded images from natural and urban environments; clips re-cycled from 1950’s-era educational and social hygiene films; and intimate close-ups of Madigan’s dramatic performance style. This orchestra of visual material will be conducted by the lens of the cinematographer and the hand of the editor in note-by-note harmony with the tone, tempo, and texture of Madigan’s uniquely expressive compositions. *The entire symphony of images will perform the music.*

*Whisper Rapture* will also have a significant social justice focus. Each song will be presented as a chapter, interspersed with Madigan’s autobiographical readings on madness, art, and mental health activism. Drawn directly from her contribution to the groundbreaking anthology, *Live Through This: On Creativity and Self-Destruction*, her story of trauma and transformation is the narrative core from which the music will emerge.

Thanks to each and every one of you, we will bring this music and social justice film to the doorstep of your heart. Mad love and love madly...Madigan & Ken [Learn more](#)

Ken Paul Rosenthal is a cinema artist and activist whose recent work weaves personal and societal narratives on madness through natural and urban landscapes, home movies, and archival footage from 1950’s-era social hygiene films. Emotionally intelligent and visually sensual, his films are ‘illuminated texts’ that touch the mind through the heart. Ken’s recently completed trilogy of poetic mental health films, *Mad Dance*, has collectively won sixteen awards, screened in forty-five film festivals, and been presented

at dozens of peer support networks, universities, mental health symposia and community events worldwide. Incorporating the music of Zoe Keating, Monteith McCollum, and Bonfire Madigan Shive.

*“When you look upon another human being and feel great love toward them, or when you contemplate beauty in nature and something within you responds deeply to it, close your eyes for a moment and feel the essence of that love or that beauty within you, inseparable from who you are, your true nature.” Eckhart Tolle*

8] [The Icarus Project](#) envisions a new culture and language that resonates with our actual experiences of 'mental illness' rather than trying to fit our lives into a conventional framework. We are a network of people living with and/or affected by experiences that are commonly diagnosed and labeled as psychiatric conditions. We believe these experiences are mad gifts needing cultivation and care, rather than diseases or disorders. By joining together as individuals and as a community, the intertwined threads of madness, creativity, and collaboration can inspire hope and transformation in an oppressive and damaged world. Participation in The Icarus Project helps us overcome alienation and tap into the true potential that lies between brilliance and madness. *The Icarus Project* is a collaborative, participatory adventure fueled by inspiration and mutual aid. We bring the *Icarus* vision to reality through an Icarus national staff collective and a grassroots network of autonomous local support groups and Campus Icarus groups across the US and beyond.

To read more about our mission, vision, and work - check out the full text of our [mission and vision statement](#).

To learn more about our history and the origin of our name, check out the [origins and purpose statement](#).

*“Always be a first-rate version of yourself, instead of a second-rate version of somebody else.” Judy Garland*

9] [“Medicating Our Troops Into Oblivion”](#): Prescription Drugs Said To Be Endangering U.S. Soldiers – Jamie Reno @ International Business Times

When former U.S. Army Specialist Kyle Wesolowski returned from Iraq in December 2010 following a brutal yearlong deployment, psychiatrists at the Fort Hood army post in Texas gave him “a cocktail of seven different drugs” for his anxiety, depression and other war-related mental health issues.

More than three years later, Wesolowski has come to an uncomfortable conclusion about the unintended consequences of ingesting those medications: They made him homicidal.

While desperately struggling to taper off the drugs without an exit strategy from his military doctors, Wesolowski contemplated murdering a young woman he met in a bar near the base. “When she talked to me, I put on a fake smile and tried to be nice,”

Wesolowski said, though in reality he recalled hating her for being happy and carefree, and now says that due to the side effects of his drug cocktail, he felt violent urges. “I began to fantasize about killing her,” he said.

Stories such as Wesolowski’s generally remain submerged unless they end in tragedy, as happened at Fort Hood on April 3 when Iraq war veteran Ivan Lopez shot and killed three people and wounded 16 others, then killed himself.

The violent tendencies of some mentally traumatized soldiers and veterans cannot be written off as an aberration, said Dr. Peter Breggin, a psychiatrist and author who’s written extensively about the potential dangers of the use of psychotropic drugs to treat mental illness among servicemen and servicewomen. Breggin contends such episodes are the result of what he describes as a “massive prescription drug epidemic” that encompasses the Department of Defense and the Department of Veterans Affairs, in which tens of thousands of soldiers and veterans returning from traumatic tours of duty ingest drugs – in some cases multiple varieties – that can have significant side effects, including intensifying feelings of rage. [Read the entire article](#)

*“You don't need another human being to make your life complete, but having your wounds kissed by someone who doesn't see them as disasters in your soul but cracks to put their love into is the most calming thing in this world.” Emery Allen*

10] [Dr. Peter Breggin](#) - author of the 2008 book [“Medication Madness: The Role of Psychiatry Drugs in Cases of Violence, Suicide and Crime”](#)

11] [Almost one-third of Canadian adults have experienced child abuse](#)

Almost one-third of adults in Canada have experienced child abuse - physical abuse, sexual abuse or exposure to intimate partner (parents, step-parents or guardians) violence in their home. As well, child abuse is linked to mental disorders and suicidal ideation (thoughts) or suicide attempts, found an article published in *CMAJ (Canadian Medical Association Journal)*.

“From a public health standpoint, these findings highlight the urgent need to make prevention of child abuse a priority in Canada,” writes Dr. Tracie Afifi, departments of Community Health Sciences and Psychiatry, University of Manitoba with coauthors.

Although the link between child abuse and mental health is known, in Canada there is a lack of recent, comprehensive information on the prevalence of child abuse and the link between different types of abuse and mental conditions in adults. This article in *CMAJ* is the first nationally representative study on child abuse and mental disorders in Canada. [Read the entire article](#)

*“No matter how far out your dreams are, it's possible and, you know - fair play to those dare to dream and don't give up...hope, at the end of the day, connects us all, no matter how different we are.” Marketa Irglova*

12] [Neighborhood Properties Inc.](#)

Neighborhood Properties, Inc. (NPI) is a unique and innovative service provider in Northwest Ohio. Our goal is to end homelessness for persons with mental illness and addiction disorders. How does NPI tackle such an ambitious goal? With permanent supportive housing. It is one thing to offer a person a place to live. It takes much more to follow up and ensure they have the support they need to remain stable, healthy and housed. At NPI we try to cover all the bases.

Founded in 1988 with a grant from The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, NPI today owns 565 apartments in 62 locations in Greater Toledo.

[Success Stories](#) – *Hope, Healing & Help* - Wayne Colman - *Finds Happiness After Depression and Homelessness*, Monica Allison - *God Fills the Hole in Her Life*, Thomas Linn - *Blind But Now He Sees*, John Whitlow - *A Prodigal Son Makes Good*, Melvin Johnson - *Humble Hero*

NPI is a leader in supportive housing development both regionally and nationally. Our outstanding employees have led trainings, seminars and conference panels on how to develop and maintain effective programs. For more information about NPI, please call 419.473.2604 extension 100. [Learn more](#)

*“The true sign of intelligence is not knowledge but imagination.” Albert Einstein*

13] [Sarah Levis](#) - Writer, Advocate, Activist, Educator

As the owner of [Running Steps](#), Sarah draws on 20 years of combined volunteer and work experience with people with disabilities to pursue two passions: writing and working toward a society where all people feel safe, welcome, and empowered to participate fully and meaningfully in their schools, workplaces and communities.

Sarah's involvement with the disability community as front-line worker, friend, and person living with both visible and invisible disabilities gives her a unique perspective from which to comment on disability-related issues and to teach others about the realities of living in society as a person with a disability. She uses her award-winning blog, "[Girl With The Cane](#)", to talk about disability-related issues, and has written for several online and print publications, including "Disability Horizons", "Ollibeau", "Abilities" magazine and the Accessible Clean Taxis Coalition website

Sarah does freelance writing and blogging, and can also assist organizations to design, implement and monitor social media campaigns. She is also happy to work with businesses, organizations and agencies to become more "disability-friendly".

[Girl With The Cane -My Brain AVM](#) -Tales of a Bleeding Brain and a Weak Left Side

[Goodwill, Disability, and Discrimination: Slave Wages Aren't Cool](#) - Girl With The Cane

*“Watch your thoughts; they become words. Watch your words; they become actions. Watch your actions; they become habits. Watch your habits; they become character. Watch your character; it becomes your destiny.” Frank Outlaw*

14] [Mayo Clinic](#) - A brain AVM (arteriovenous malformation) is an abnormal connection between arteries and veins. An AVM is usually congenital, meaning it dates to birth.

An AVM can develop anywhere in your body but occurs most often in the brain or spine. A brain AVM, which appears as a tangle of abnormal arteries and veins, can occur in any part of your brain. The cause isn't clear.

You may not know you have a brain AVM until you experience symptoms, such as headaches or a seizure. In serious cases, the blood vessels rupture, causing bleeding in the brain (hemorrhage). Once diagnosed, a brain AVM can often be treated successfully.

*“Success is to be measured not so much by the position one has reached in life, as by the obstacles which one has overcome while trying to succeed.” Booker T. Washington*

15] [Schizophrenia Myths and Facts - Understanding Schizophrenia](#) - By Connie Brichford @ Everyday Health

Schizophrenia is an illness that ranks high in the public's consciousness, but low in our collective understanding. In fact, while most Americans can identify schizophrenia as a mental health disorder, only about a third of people are familiar with the symptoms. There is also an underlying false assumption that the experiences of schizophrenia are the same from person to person.

Ken Duckworth, MD, medical director for the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), says it's hard to generalize about people with schizophrenia: “It's extremely complicated. No two people with schizophrenia are the same.”

These misperceptions along with negative portrayals of schizophrenia in the media, can stigmatize people with the condition, further affecting their quality of life.  
Common Myths and the Truth About Schizophrenia

Myth: People with schizophrenia have split personalities. This is perhaps the most pervasive myth about the condition, and it is perpetuated in the news, movies, and television shows. [Learn more](#)

*“Look deep into nature, and then you will understand everything better.” Albert Einstein*

16] *“The hardcore drug addicts that I treat, are, without exception, people who have had extraordinarily difficult lives. The commonality is childhood abuse. These people all enter life under extremely adverse circumstances. Not only did they not get what they need for healthy development; they actually got negative circumstances of neglect. I*

don't have a single female patient in the Downtown Eastside of Vancouver who wasn't sexually abused, for example, as were many of the men, or abused, neglected and abandoned serially, over and over again. That's what sets up the brain biology of addiction. In other words, the addiction is related both psychologically, in terms of emotional pain relief, and neurobiological development to early adversity." [Dr. Gabor Maté](#) - *Human development through the lens of science and compassion*

17] Trailer - "[Whispers In The Night](#)" – You Tube 2:51 minutes

"*Whispers In The Night*" is an American self-help television program created and executive-produced by author, speaker, and empowerment coach Cory George. This gripping 2-hour interview/discussion-based program highlights the stories of three courageous black men (Reginald Prince, O'Brien Dennis, & Brent Smith) who have managed to find personal and professional success despite their experiences with childhood sexual abuse.

18] [How Medicaid forces the disabled to be poor \(but some bipartisan help is on the way\)](#). The Washington Post - Harold Pollack

Imagine that you are a young woman expecting your first child. Then you get into an awful crash that leaves you in a wheelchair. Or imagine that you suffer a high school wrestling injury that results in quadriplegia. Or imagine that you are intellectually disabled or living with severe mental illness, and you require long-term services and supports. If you have been reading my work, you might do more than imagine, since each of these stories involves real people who have experienced the best and the worst of what our American medical welfare state offers.

Medicaid plays a crucial role in each story. Of course the program has familiar shortcomings. Long-standing administrative challenges, ideological polarization over health reform perpetuate these difficulties. So does our nation's tenuous commitment to the well-being of disadvantaged citizens. [Read the entire article](#)

*"I do it because I can, I can because I want to, I want to because you said I couldn't."*  
*Unknown*

19] [More support and understanding needed for people wanting to try a no meds approach](#) - Jean Davison

I'm concerned about the medicalisation of life; over-prescribing and how sometimes normal difficult emotions are (mis)diagnosed as an illness requiring medication. I expressed this view on twitter and said how I think Dr Joanna Moncrieff does make some valid points. Immediately I was accused of pill shaming, lack of empathy and insulting people who suffer from real deep depression.

...I took pills, for depression and heaven knows what else, for five years. Maybe meds helps some people and not others. There is no shame in taking them or in not taking them

(though hopefully both through informed decisions). But let's not forget, too, that people choosing to come off pills are often told they're 'ill' and have long been made to feel they are doing something wrong, dangerous or shameful in making that choice. More support and understanding is needed for people who do want to try a no meds approach. [Read the entire article](#)

*Please note, we at the Surviving Spirit support those who find help in their choice of medication and those who don't*

*"Never give up on something that you can't go a day without thinking about." Unknown*

20] [The secret to better care: It really is all in your head](#) – Philly.com - Jeffrey Brenner, MD, Founder of the Camden Coalition of Healthcare Providers, Medical Director of the Urban Health Institute at Cooper University Healthcare

For nearly 15 years we've had the secret to delivering better care at lower cost in America. The information has sat, hidden away in the medical literature, and barely mentioned among physicians. It's a remarkable story of bias. The neglect of this information by the medical community tells you a lot about our failings as a profession and the poor training we receive. It's also a powerful commentary on the values of our society and the biases built into our society's view of health and healthcare.

In the 1990's, a physician at Kaiser Permanente in California, Dr. Vincent Felitti, conducted a mail survey with 17,000 middle class patients. He asked them questions about traumatic events that might have happened to them as children. Incredibly, over 70% of people receiving the survey responded, and they gave permission to connect their survey answers to their medical records.

The survey asked questions about things like death of parent, physical abuse, sexual abuse, and substance abuse by a parent. Nearly 50% had at least one [Adverse Childhood Event](#) (ACE) and he coined the term "[ACE score](#)" for the point score created for the survey.

In the years since the study was published, our understanding of the brain has caught up with these findings. Science is beginning to explain the toxic impact of early life trauma on the developing brain of a child. It causes re-wiring with physiological and anatomical changes that become maladaptive in later life.

**In my training as a family physician, I was told not to pull up the lid on something you don't have the time and training to deal with, like early life trauma.** I am deeply embarrassed in looking back at my career caring for patients in Camden because I followed this advice too often. It's likely that many of my patients had early life trauma that was probably sitting right below the surface, but I rarely asked. It's frightening to open up a Pandora's box in a 10-15 minute visit of an overwhelmed primary care office.

It's interesting to ask why this information hasn't permeated medical training, healthcare reform efforts, or even our broad cultural narratives about health and healthcare. It's becoming clearer and clearer in the research literature that mental health, addiction, and

early life trauma are extremely important drivers of health outcomes and health spending. The answer is simple: our society has a huge cognitive bias against discussing these issues and the medical community is a reflection of such broader biases.

I believe we need more trauma victims to publicly discuss how their early life experiences have impacted their life and their health and we need more physicians to talk publicly about the importance of this issue. We also need research on ways to bring ACE scores into routine primary care. **The stigma surrounding early life trauma needs to be lifted.** [Read more at](#)

*“Be who you are and say what you feel because those who mind don't matter and those who matter don't mind.” Dr. Seuss*

21] [Almost half of homeless men taking part in study had suffered traumatic brain injury](#)  
- Medical News Today

Almost half of all homeless men who took part in a study by St. Michael's Hospital had suffered at least one traumatic brain injury in their life and 87 per cent of those injuries occurred before the men lost their homes.

While assaults were a major cause of those traumatic brain injuries, or TBIs, (60 per cent) many were caused by potentially non-violent mechanisms such as sports and recreation (44 per cent) and motor vehicle collisions and falls (42 per cent).

The study, led by Dr. Jane Topolovec-Vranic, a clinical researcher in the hospital's Neuroscience Research Program, was published in the journal CMAJ Open.

Dr. Topolovec-Vranic said it's important for health care providers and others who work with homeless people to be aware of any history of TBI because of the links between such injuries and mental health issues, substance abuse, seizures and general poorer physical health. [Learn more](#)

*“In the end, it's not going to matter how many breaths you took, but how many moments took your breath away.” Shing Xiong*

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

[The Surviving Spirit Speakers' Bureau](#)

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