



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 2014

Hi Folks,

I hope all is well for everyone...I can't believe that we are well into June and almost half-way through 2014...I have come to believe that time does fly faster when you get older, well, at least for me it seems that way. Not complaining, just my unscientific observation

June is recognized as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder Awareness Month [PTSD]...I'd like to see the 'disorder' dropped from the title...but grateful that there is a month that helps to shine a spotlight onto an issue that affects so many of us. I've got a feeling that most of the world does not go unscathed by the impact of trauma and abuse somewhere in their lives or in the lives of those they love.

I don't know if PTSD Awareness Month was even recognized back in 1992...and if it was, would I have even noticed, probably not. But I wish I was aware back then of how the trauma and abuse in my life affected me mentally, physically, emotionally, spiritually and socially. It had a devastating impact upon my life in so many ways, and that engulfed those I loved and cared for the most, my family and friends. If the trauma awareness and knowledge that I know now was available to me back then, maybe life would have been different...perhaps I would have stayed involved in the music business and I wouldn't have gone down this road of advocacy. I'll never know. But it did happen, so here I am today doing my level best to raise awareness and share **Hope, Healing & Help** so that others may not lose so much of themselves and those they love. How life might have been different if I was asked - "*What happened to you*", and not, "*What's wrong with you*"...and blamed for what I was experiencing...

There are some great resources shared in this newsletter to help offer insights and knowledge about post traumatic stress – the article with Bessel van der Kolk is long, but well worth reading. He talks about different types of healing modalities...I believe there are all kinds of ways to heal from trauma...including more use of the creative arts in all of their forms.

Here are a few articles that I have been involved with that might be of help – the feedback I have received from so many pertaining to these issues have let me know that more needs to be said about these matters.

[Fox News' "destructive" ignorance: Network gets schooled by male rape survivor](#) – Salon.com – Katie McDonough

[Father's Day – Lessons learned, Love lost, Life reclaimed](#) – Michael Skinner

[Half Of Young Men Sexually Coerced](#) – Huffington Post – 22 minutes

"All great achievements require time." Maya Angelou

1] [Post-traumatic stress disorder: We need more awareness about events that trigger it](#) - Medical News Today

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder [PTSD] is more likely to be recognized in those suffering military combat trauma than in rape and accident victims, according to new research.

During the research, nearly 3,000 participants were shown a description of an individual experiencing identical PTSD symptoms, such as flashbacks, in relation to either military combat, a serious industrial accident or sexual assault, in particular rape.

In comparison to those shown the military scenario, participants were much less likely to recognize the symptoms as PTSD, or even consider them a mental health problem, when associated with either an industrial accident or serious sexual assault.

Dr Tharp says: "The association between PTSD and military combat experience is frequently portrayed in film and television, and the current research supports the pervasive 'traumatized veteran' stereotype.

"However, PTSD can arise from a variety of traumatic experiences, including road traffic accidents, physical or sexual assault, and natural disasters. Across the wider population, these non-military traumas are much more common.

"Furthermore, the likelihood of experiencing and subsequently developing PTSD following these type of events can be much greater than that for military combat."

Dr Tharp concludes: "*The implications are that many people who develop PTSD following non-military combat traumas - particularly rape - are less likely to have it recognized by those around them, and are also less likely to seek help for their difficulties.*" [Read the entire article](#)

"Love is the great miracle cure. Loving ourselves works miracles in our lives." Louise L. Hay

2] [What Is Post Traumatic Stress Disorder? What Is PTSD? What Causes PTSD?](#) - Medical News Today

PTSD [Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder] is triggered by a traumatic event - it is a kind of anxiety. The sufferer of PTSD may have experienced or seen an event that caused extreme fear, shock and/or a feeling of helplessness. Most of us experience a brief period of difficulty adjusting and coping with traumatic events. However, we gradually get better with time and healthy coping methods. On the other hand, there are times when symptoms get worse and may last for several months, or years. This study

explains how PTSD can surface two years after a traumatic event. Another study found that one in eight Lower Manhattan residents likely had PTSD two to three years after the 9/11 attacks.

A person can suffer from PTSD after experiencing or witnessing the following events:

- Military confrontations
- Natural disasters
- Serious accidents
- Terrorist attacks
- Violent deaths
- Rape
- Personal assaults
- Any situation which triggers fear, shock, horror, and/or helplessness [Learn more](#)

3] [Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder \(PTSD\): Symptoms, Treatment and Self-Help](#) – Help Guide.org A trusted non-profit resource – Expert, ad-free resources

“Happy are they who take life day by day, complain very little, and are thankful for the little things in life.” Anonymous

4] [A Revolutionary Approach to Treating PTSD](#) - NYTimes.com

Bessel van der Kolk sat cross-legged on an oversize pillow in the center of a smallish room overlooking the Pacific Ocean in Big Sur. He wore khaki pants, a blue fleece zip-up and square wire-rimmed glasses. His feet were bare. It was the third day of his workshop, “Trauma Memory and Recovery of the Self,” and 30 or so workshop participants — all of them trauma victims or trauma therapists — lined the room’s perimeter. They, too, sat barefoot on cushy pillows, eyeing van der Kolk, notebooks in hand. For two days, they had listened to his lectures on the social history, neurobiology and clinical realities of post-traumatic stress disorder and its lesser-known sibling, complex trauma. Now, finally, he was about to demonstrate an actual therapeutic technique, and his gaze was fixed on the subject of his experiment: a 36-year-old Iraq war veteran named Eugene, who sat directly across from van der Kolk, looking mournful and expectant. [Read the entire article](#)

“To understand the heart and mind of a person, look not at what s/he has already achieved, but at what s/he aspires to.” Khalil Gibran

5] [Learning to #LoveUrself Unconditionally](#)- Lorraine C. Ladish

As a kid I had a really hard time loving myself. As a teen, I loathed who I was and despised what I looked like. An eating disorder ensued. Self-mutilation in private was a common occurrence. I had an abusive relationship with clinical depression and I flirted with thoughts of suicide. Fortunately, I never had the guts to go ahead with it.

My twenties were spent trying to peel off layer upon layer of self-hatred. At 29 I managed to write and publish my first book, [Me siento gorda](#) (I Feel Fat) about my battle with bulimia and depression. And I felt like a fake. There I was being interviewed on TV, telling others how to recognize and overcome a distorted self-image and where to find help for their eating disorder, and yet I had not conquered mine.

It wasn't until I turned 35, was married and pining for a baby, that I started to really take care of my body and soul as they deserved. That marked the beginning of my path to self-love. A few more authored books later, I also started feeling more respect towards myself intellectually. And when, at 37, I held my first-born in my arms, I experienced unconditional love for her and a sense of spiritual and emotional fulfillment that has only expanded since. [Learn more](#)

[Viva Fifty - A Bilingual Community That Celebrates Being 50+](#) - Lorraine C. Ladish is the published bilingual author of 17 books, writer and editor, and was most recently Editor-in-Chief of [Mamiverse.com](#), the award-winning online hub for Latina moms. She has contributed to People en Español, La Palma- of The Palm Beach Post, Babycenter and Redbook, and was the managing editor of VOXXI Mujer, an online news site for English-speaking Hispanics. She is based in Sarasota, FL with her blended family. mail@lorrainecladish.com

"You want me to do something...tell me I can't do it." Maya Angelou

6] [Living For Two – A Daughter's Journey from Grief and Madness to Forgiveness and Peace](#) - Lauren Spiro

Lauren Spiro's courageous personal memoir describes her journey from unbearable emotional pain following her father's murder, down into psychosis, through the depths of our dysfunctional mental health system, and finally to a place of transcendent healing and peace where she knows that we are all connected much more deeply than we understand. This book been described as *"a magical book that conjures creativity from tragedy, visions from madness, and leadership from despair."*

The book is also available @ [The National Empowerment Center Book Store](#)

[For more information about Lauren Spiro](#) - I am an educator, facilitator, consultant, public speaker, writer and artist.

My vision of social justice and community inclusion fuels my human liberation and community building work. I believe in the trans-formative power of envisioning the world the way we want it, speaking it, believing it, and living it.

A community that embraces liberation is one where all people are free from exploitation and oppression regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, sexual preference, age, economic status, level of ability or any other areas where we create an illusion of separation amongst people. It also means taking exquisite care of the environment.

"When you stand up and share your story in an empowering way, your story will heal you and your story will heal someone else." Iylanla Vanzant

7] [We All Belong](#) You Tube 14:29 minutes Northwest Down Syndrome Association [NWDSA]

"We All Belong" is a documentary film exploring the issues of belonging and diversity in our classrooms. It profiles real parents and the dreams and fears they share. This film is a frank discussion of civil, human, and educational rights and offers a window into best practices and the struggle families face to achieve inclusion for their children. The film also examines the Kindergarten Inclusion Cohort,

a parent-driven program created by NWDSA that empowers families to be active, informed partners on their children's educational journey. We All Belong is ideal viewing for educators, parents and policy makers. The questions raised in this film could create answers that lead to more diverse classrooms and create success for all learners.

Featuring interviews with NWDSA Executive Director Angela Jarvis-Holland, Kindergarten Cohort Coordinator Alicia Delashmutt, NWDSA President Steve Holland, President of National Disability Rights Network Michael Bailey, Speaker and Self-Advocate Eleanor Bailey, and parents of the Kindergarten Inclusion Cohort.

"We All Belong" is part of the All Born (In) Movement which hosts an annual conference to inspire and share tools and information to reach and teach every learner. Join the movement at <http://www.allbornin.org> and <http://www.nwdsa.org>

"Everything on the earth has a purpose, every disease an herb to cure it, and every person a mission. This is the Indian theory of existence." Mourning Dove

[Mourning Dove](#) or Christal Quintasket was a Native American author and best known for her 1927 novel *Cogewea the Half-Blood: A Depiction of the Great Montana Cattle Range*, which tells the story of Cogewea, a mixed-blood ranch woman on the Flathead Indian Reservation. The novel is one of the first written by a Native American woman and one of few early Native American works with a female central character. She is also known for *Coyote Stories* (1933), a collection of Native American folklore (using her term).

8] [Elliot Rodger and the NRA myth: How the gun lobby scapegoats mental illness](#) - Salon.com

9] [Mark's Weekly Message: The Presumption of Innocence](#)

Mark Perriello is the President and CEO of the American Association of People with Disabilities ([AAPD](#)), the nation's largest disability rights organization.

Unfortunately, in the rush to safeguard the public from future mass shootings (a necessary goal), one group of Americans is potentially losing their presumption of innocence en masse, in both real and perceived terms - Americans with mental health conditions.

...Mark discusses the need for legislation to not infringe upon the rights of people with mental health conditions in the wake of the Isla Vista shooting. Though media coverage of these shootings largely implies that people with mental health conditions need to be locked-up (in the form of institutionalization and forced treatment), the truth is that [there is no correlation between mental health conditions and propensity for gun violence](#).

"There are a thousand hacking at the branches of evil to one who is striking at the root." Henry David Thoreau

10] [The Winning Adventure](#) - Rae Luskin

I am now offering a FREE download of my book ART FROM MY HEART which is not just for kids.

These exercises are based on my own work in healing. I hope you enjoy them...if you can hold a crayon you will be successful.

At The Winning Adventure we believe that everyone has a unique gift. It does not matter if you are a little league coach, head of the local PTO or the CEO of your business you have a sphere of influence. We are all leaders. Doing work you love and creating impact is your birthright.

I see my mission as pretty simple: Explore, Listen and Share To help you explore your brilliance and possibilities, listen to your story, and to share... [The Creative Edge](#).

Most of my life I lacked the confidence to go after my dreams. I was stuck in I am not good enough or I can't mentality. I walked around with my head down, tip toeing around the elephant in the living room (gramps sexually abused me) trying to be a fly on the wall. I did not want anyone to find out my "secret." I was afraid if you knew the real me you would go running from the room. Furthermore, I thought that if I was too visible, too outspoken, bad things would happen.

My inner critic was on high alert most of the time. Who do you think you are? Don't get too big for your britches? What are you stupid or crazy? So I played it safe. I kept myself invisible. I did what was expected of me. But I was miserable. Depressed. Obese. Lonely. But with a sense of Adventure, Courage, and Creativity I was able to overcome my limiting beliefs and fear based behavior and become a confident author, artist, [speaker and coach](#). I went from shy to outspoken. I became an effective leader and community activist. As a radio talk show host I was able to share stories of victim to victor, from stuck to unstoppable and change my life and the lives of thousands of other people.

"Nothing on earth consumes a man more completely than the passion of resentment." Friedrich Nietzsche

11] [The National Safe Child Show](#)

The National Safe Child Show will cover topics that address the failures in our Nation to Protect Children. This show will provide insight, education and suggestions so a Safe Childhood doesn't continue to become Endangered. We fight for the rights of animals now it's time to show that same passionate participation for the thousands of children who suffer and die right here in our country. A child deserves to be heard, believed and Protected and we are going to make sure children get what they deserve. Please join us to become informed of the systemic failures that are killing children everyday. Be a Voice for a Child!

[National Safe Child Coalition](#) - Tammi Stefano is the Executive Director of The National Safe Child Coalition (NSCC). Tammi has spent over two decades on front-lines fighting for child safety. She understands the emotions of being victimized, having survived a kidnapping in her younger years. Determination was the driving force that prompted her to go undercover to catch a pedophile school teacher. Tammi's hands-on advocacy work has drawn comparisons to Erin Brockovich. She brings a background of legal research, training in child sexual abuse, certification as a Supervising Visitation Monitor and years working with parents on their Family Court cases. Having launched Capital Campaigns for Law Enforcement, Fire Organizations and Public Schools, Tammi is eager to launch a campaign to reform a broken system. [Learn more](#)

Tammi is on the Planning Committee for the International Violence Abuse and Trauma Conference (IVAT). She also is on IVAT's Sub-Committees; Child Maltreatment Victims (physical and Sexual Abuse); Children Exposed to Violence; Legal & Criminal Justice Issues. Tammi is a member of the National Partnership to End Interpersonal Violence (NPEIV) and is Co-Chairwoman on their Networking & Public Relations Committee. www.facebook.com/nationalsafechild
www.twitter.com/NSCC4

"We are not to simply bandage the wounds of victims beneath the wheels of injustice, we are to drive a spoke into the wheel itself." Dietrich Boenhoffer

12] [Havenly Blue Foundation](#) - Priscilla Perez

A child advocate and the founder of The Havenly Blue Foundation, Priscilla's passion is to help abused and neglected children through a variety of advocacy programs and education. Priscilla has become a respected role model for children's rights and she intends to take her passion all the way to the hill. Her objective is to provide a platform for the Human and Civil Rights for Children. Having experienced the systemic failures first hand, Priscilla is determined to bring about an awareness that provokes a change in laws which govern children's rights on a Federal and State level.

Nominated to lead the Anti-Child Abuse Million Man March on April 22, 2013 in Los Angeles, CA. Priscilla's ultimate goal is to defend those who cannot defend themselves.

[Learn more](#) www.facebook.com/HavenlyBlueFoundation

"You cannot protect yourself from sadness without protecting yourself from happiness." Jonathan Safran Foer

13] [Reaction To Women Abusing Men In Public](#) – ABC News - YouTube 6:27 minutes

14] [What Happened to Kevin?](#) Cassandra Casey

We don't really know what happened to Kevin, except that he died. The legal record says he committed suicide – death by self-inflicted gunshot wound to the head.

That day is but a distant memory that lacks clarity and definition, but still has the power to cause my heart to ache more painfully, and can still bring tears to these eyes that rarely cry anymore.

I'll admit he had been struggling. He was an adolescent boy, trying to figure out how everything fits together, and unless you really knew him, you'd never imagine this jokester was quite an introspective kid. He was sensitive and very bright -- the "Straight A's" kind of bright, and he had been attending a special pilot program in his school for the gifted. He would have been quite tall, probably towering over his brothers, who are now 6'4 and 6'2. He liked neither his freckled, fair skin which burned easily in the sun, nor his red hair (which was actually thick and full, and the most beautiful hue of auburn), nor did he like his thick glasses – which he had to wear to see anything. Unfortunately, his vision could not be easily corrected with contacts. [Learn more](#)

Cassandra Casey w/ [ASPIRE Academy](#)

ASPIRE Academy was established for the purpose of assisting others in learning about the many resources that are available to be well and stay well.

We embrace all methods proven to strengthen the mind, body and spirit, but our primary focus is on effective solutions for those struggling with stressors that affect their mental and emotional well-being.

“We don't see things as they are, we see things as we are.” Anais Nin

15] [The Trauma and Dissociation Project](#)

Dissociative identity disorder (DID) is a disturbance in the normal integrative function of memory, identity and self. ([Turkus](#)) Pierre Marie Félix Janet, and Morton Prince, ([Noricks, 2011](#), p.1) researchers in the late 1800's and early 1900's understood there is a connection between past events and present day symptoms of trauma. Janet concluded that the personality is a structure comprised of various systems. ([van der Hart, 2006](#), p. 2) Researchers since have struggled to catch up with Janet, and have not always understood how the separate parts of the personality work together and are made, but more recently, due to significant contributions from excellent researchers, such as the ones seen on our [reference list](#) it is now widely accepted and understood that all humans have multiple aspects to their personality. The main difference is that people with dissociative identity disorder lack continuity between their self-states and thus experience their self-states as separate. ([Howell, 2011](#), p. 7) [Learn more](#)

The Trauma and Dissociation project offers three PRIVATE peer support communities.

- (1) For those with Dissociative Identity Disorder and the like. [Online peer support forum for dissociative identity disorder](#)
- (2) This one for very private things which may be upsetting to people. It's telling about our childhood abuse. [Online peer support forum](#) to tell your story of childhood abuse.
- (3) Our general support group for those with Trauma (PTSD) and Dissociative Disorders. [Online support forum](#) for those with PTSD, and other trauma-stressor disorders as well as those with dissociative disorders.

“Love is not consolation, it is light.” Simon Weil

16] [The Trauma-Stressor and Dissociative Disorders Project](#)

Welcome to the wiki branch of the [Trauma and Dissociation Project](#), which offers a wealth of information on mental disorders caused by trauma, including simple and [complex, posttraumatic disorder \(PTSD\)](#), [dissociative identity disorder \(DID\)](#), and other [dissociative disorders \(OSDD\)](#). See our [top ten pages](#).

We encourage those with knowledge of the trauma-stressor and dissociative disorders to join with us in creating an accurate and helpful information based site. Simply make an account and review our [editor guidelines](#). All information is to be referenced to expert information except our section on peer to peer tips. See the bottom of the table of contents at the bottom of this page for the peer section.

17] [A couple's love life may be tainted even 20 years later by early depression, anger](#) - Medical News Today

A University of Alberta study is helping crack the code to happiness by exploring the long reach of depression and anger over more than two decades.

The study, published recently in the *Journal of Family Psychology*, followed 341 people for 25 years, and found that negative emotions they may have suffered as young adults can have a lasting grip on their couple relationships, well into middle age.

The fact that depression and anger experienced during the teen years clung to people, even through major life events such as child-rearing, marriages and careers was surprising, said University of Alberta researcher Matthew Johnson.

"We assume or hope that high school experiences fade away and don't necessarily resonate 25 years later. The fact that symptoms of depression and expressions of anger can endure over many large events in life shows how important it is to deal with mental health early. Sometimes, problems don't just dissipate. How you grow and change over those early years becomes crucial to future happiness," said Johnson, an assistant professor of human ecology in the Faculty of Agricultural, Life and Environmental Sciences. [Read the entire article](#)

"Patience is the key to paradise." Turkish Proverb

18] A conference to help survivors of severe child abuse (ritual abuse) and torture will be held on August 15 - 17, 2014, between 8 - 5 PM Saturday and Sunday at the Double Tree Hotel near Bradley International Airport, 16 Ella Grasso Turnpike, Windsor Locks, CT 06096 (between Hartford, CT and Springfield, MA). This conference will help educate survivors of this abuse and their helpers. S.M.A.R.T., P. O Box 1295, Easthampton, MA 01027-1295 E-mail: smartnews@aol.com Conference information is at: <http://ritualabuse.us/smart-conference/>

[Ritual Abuse And Extreme Abuse Clinician's Conference August 15, 2014](#) - A one day conference preceding our regular conference will be open to licensed practitioners in related fields to discuss issues in working with clients suffering from ritual abuse and extreme abuse symptoms.

[SMART Newsletter](#) - An easier to read online version is available

"We cannot tell what may happen to us in the strange medley of life. But we can decide what happens in us – how we can take it, what we do with it – and that is what really counts in the end." James Fort Newton

19] [Men from ethnic minorities take longer to recover from mental illness, study finds](#) - Medical News Today

Men from minority ethnic groups experiencing mental health problems in the UK take longer to recover than white men as they are more reluctant to seek professional help, according to research at Royal Holloway, University of London.

Researchers at Royal Holloway have called for an active programme that promotes mental health to black and minority ethnic (BME) men, as a disproportionate number, compared with white men, have been shown to come into contact with mental health services. This could, for example, include publicity at places where BME men congregate or regularly attend.

Speaking during Mental Health Awareness Week (Monday 12 May to Sunday 18 May), Dr Frank Keating, from the Department of Social Work at Royal Holloway, said: "Mental illness can have a devastating effect on people and their families, but sadly many men from black and ethnic minority communities can be hesitant to seek help. [Learn more](#)

"You don't have to suffer continual chaos in order to grow." John C. Lilly

20] [Healing Shame](#) - Understanding How Shame Binds Us and How to Begin to Free Ourselves by Robert D. Caldwell, M.Div.

Shame is the inner experience of being "not wanted." It is feeling worthless, rejected, cast-out. Guilt is believing that one has done something bad; shame is believing that one is bad. Shame is believing that one is not loved because one is not lovable. Shame always carries with it the sense that there is nothing one can do to purge its burdensome and toxic presence. Shame cannot be remedied, it must be somehow endured, absorbed, gilded, minimized or denied. Shame is so painful, so debilitating that persons develop a thousand coping strategies, conscious and unconscious, numbing and destructive, to avoid its tortures. Shame is the worst possible thing that can happen, because shame, in its profoundest meaning, conveys that one is not fit to live in one's own community.

In this quite imperfect world where we were all nurtured by parents who were themselves, in some sense, shame-bound, we have learned to feel shame--some more than others. There are four kinds of families which are most adept at spawning shame-dominated progeny--abusive, neglecting, controlling, and enmeshing families. To understand something of how shame is created in these family contexts is to begin to be aware of the origins and dynamic of one's own shame, and to begin to take steps toward its undoing. [Learn more](#) Please note, Robert Caldwell passed away, but he left an incredible body of work.

"We must learn to lean on others, and sometimes accept others' leaning on us...We can't do it alone." Ala-teen – Hope for Children of Alcoholics

21] [SELF-Therapy: Shame - What You Can Do About It](#)

Most of us have problems with shame, to one degree or another. The first article in this series ("About Shame") helped you to learn if you have a big problem with shame. This second article is for anyone who finds any shame in their life.

YOUR OVERALL GOAL

To overcome shame, you need to learn that it's OK to be who you are! To get there, you must have and absorb deeply many separate moments of being accepted, loved, or valued. I'll be giving you some practical ideas about how to do this.

Stop relying on anyone who treats you as if you are not OK. Spend more and more of your time with the people who know you are OK the way you are.

And let them know more and more about you. Choose your relationships based on how you are treated - not just on whether the other person feels "comfortable."
[We are "comfortable" with what we are used to - even when it's bad for us!] Treat people the way you want to be treated. It's contagious.

WHEN PEOPLE TREAT YOU POORLY

Tell them to stop it! If they keep it up, don't tell them over and over. This is like "begging." It makes you feel weak in their presence. You need to feel strong when you have to be around such people! Expect people who treat you badly to keep it up and hold them responsible for how they treat you.

WHEN PEOPLE TREAT YOU WELL

Absorb it! Always take at least a few seconds to FEEL the good feelings you get when you are treated well. Let your appreciation show. (Your natural smile will do just fine!) Showing your appreciation reinforces the other person and encourages them to stay around you longer. ***Don't talk yourself out of it!*** Most compliments are honest.

Even when someone is trying to manipulate you they say things they mean! Turn down the manipulation but accept the compliment! [Learn more](#)

"Take risks: If you win, you will be happy; if you lose, you will be wise." Anonymous

22] [Continuing Education For Mental Health Professionals * Trauma Therapy Training * Bodyworkers * Trauma Healing](#)

23] [Poetry Corner - NAMI NJ Expressive Arts Mental Health Poetry Contest](#)

April is the National Poetry Month and May is Mental Health Awareness Month. The NAMI New Jersey Expressive Arts Poetry Program inaugurated the Annual NAMI NJ Expressive Arts Mental Health Poetry Contest this year.

We received many worthy entries however, after multiple rounds of careful reading, we finally selected ten poems that stood apart from the rest.

The judging criteria consisted of: • Using the theme of mental health • The way the subject matter was handled • Originality • Style

Enjoy the poetry!

TOP TEN POEMS

Listed in alphabetical order by the authors' last names.

Download [all ten poems here](#) or click below for individual poems.

[“Untitled” By Kelly Brennan](#)

[“Recovery” By Valerie Brown](#)

[“HOPE” By Patricia M. Cannon](#)

[“Black Bird” By Stewart Charles](#)

[“Untitled” By Virginia Erazo](#)

[“Different” By Jennifer Manning](#)

[“Skydiver” By Suzanne Mills](#)

[“Untitled” By Hannah Morris](#)

[“Untitled” By Carly Rizza](#)

[“I never told you” By Rebecca Yu](#)

Poetry is an expression of the soul as unique as every individual who puts the pen to paper. We at NAMI NJ Expressive Arts Poetry Program maintain that any creative expression of an individual is a poem whether it rhymes or not; whether it is one word or pages long.

The Expressive Arts Poetry Program started on the second Tuesday in May 2013 with an open-mic that an encouraging amount of people took part in. Everyone shared their poetry and we really enjoyed ourselves. On the fourth Tuesday of May 2013, we held our first writing workshop that included people all dedicated to improving and expressing themselves through writing.

Come and join us! We have three venues. The second Tuesday of every month, we host a [Poet’s Open-Mic](#) which is open to the community, and on the fourth Tuesday of the month, we have a Poetry Writing Workshop strictly for those who are in mental health recovery. Both of our activities are housed in the Moving Forward Self-Help Center in New Brunswick. We’ll look for you there.

In addition to the programs, we are starting a Poetry Corner here on NAMI NJ website. Send your poems to us and we will choose as many as we can fit for the page. Of course, the poems must be community friendly.

So, bring those poems out of the closet and dust them off. Please contact Jacquese Armstrong, Expressive Arts Program Volunteer Coordinator and Facilitator, at jacquesearmstrong@hotmail.com.

About Jacquese:

Jacquese Armstrong is a poet/writer/inspirational speaker and has been a NAMI-NJ volunteer for about 8 years. Her work has been published in Black Magnolias Literary Journal, Linden Avenue Literary Journal, Blackberry: a magazine, SZ Magazine, Anchor Magazine and BlackMentalHealthNet.com. She earned her B.A. in Journalism from the University of Toledo, Toledo, OH. View one of her poems: [“e-merge”](#)

“The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams.” Eleanor Roosevelt

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

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](#)

[The Surviving Spirit Facebook Page](#)

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[@SurvivinSpirit](#) Twitter

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