



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 July 2014

Hi Folks,

Welcome to another edition of the Surviving Spirit newsletter. Wow! It's July and I do hope that you are getting some time for yourselves to kick back and relax in whatever manner, shape or form that helps to bring you peace and comfort – you deserve it. We all do, and yet, it is so easy for so many of us to forget that simple concept, that we are worth it. Or we just get too darn busy...but taking that time for ourselves is so important. I have been a work in progress on this particular matter, but I have gotten so much better and grateful for it. Recognizing that a big part of my constant busy-ness was a coping skill to keep the trauma demons at bay has helped me immensely. Working through the fears and the hurts of past traumas and the abuse has brought me some sense of serenity – even when it rears its ugly head from time to time, I can *let it be* and remind myself that it will pass....and it does.

On a somewhat related note is a short blog of mine - [“Victims of Sexual Abuse: Do They Ever Get Over It?”](#) Your thoughts and comments are always welcome.....

Thank you as always for allowing this newsletter and what it represents into your lives...once again I feel there are some great examples of Hope, Healing & Help for those impacted by trauma, abuse and mental health challenges.

Grateful for an event I was part of recently in New Jersey and I would like to share that information with you as well. All the best to you!!!

“Always tell someone how you feel, because opportunities are lost in the blink of an eye, but regret can last for a lifetime.” Unknown

1] [The New Jersey Governor’s Council on Mental Health Stigma](#) honored members of the media with 2014 Mental Health Ambassador Awards on May 1, 2014.

Council chairwoman Sylvia Axelrod also thanked the recipients for their judgment and sensitivity.

“All the news outlets, editors, producers and media professionals that are recognized demonstrated outstanding insight and sensitivity in their coverage of issues related to mental health and mental illness. They advanced the interests of people affected by mental illness through their articles, feature stories and broadcasts. They educated the public, encouraged people to seek the help if needed and inspired communities to provide support and understanding for those affected by mental illness,”

Axelrod said. "They set an example for providing media coverage related to mental health issues that dispels myths and combats the pervasive stigma that too often surrounds mental illness."

Each recipient received a congratulatory letter from Governor Chris Christie, who praised the efforts of the awardees to de-stigmatize mental illness and encourage people to seek treatment and recovery.

The Governor's Council on Mental Health Stigma was created by executive order in 2004 to combat mental health stigma as a top priority in New Jersey's effort to create a better mental health system.

"Honoring Excellence in Media Coverage" Ambassador Award Recipients:

Christopher DePatria, VP of Revenue, Signpost Inc.

Steve Adubato, Ph.D., Emmy Award-winning Anchor-Thirteen/WNET (PBS)

David Matthau, Radio News Reporter, 101.5-FM Radio

Paul Grzella-General Editor/Manager, Courier News-Somerset Cty, Home News Tribune-Middlesex Cty.

Sunita Sohrabji-Staff Reporter, India-West

Jessica D'Amico, Managing Editor, Greater Media Newspapers

Sino Monthly New Jersey – Ivy Lee, Editor-in-Chief and Founder

Michael Skinner-Writer and Editor, Surviving Spirit

Larry Cartwright-Radio Host, Mental Health Matters

Kelly Ebbels-Community Editor, The Montclair Times

Euna Kwon Brossman-Columnist, Attitudes in Reverse

NJNTV News-John Servidio-Vice President, Subsidiary Stations WNET, General Manager, NJTV

http://hwcdn.net/a5h8p3i4/cds/stigma/2014_ambassador_awards_highlights.mp4 - 4 minutes

"You are under the unfortunate delusion that simply because you run away from danger, you have no courage. You're confusing courage with wisdom." the Wizard of Oz

2] [An Unreal Dream: The Michael Morton Story](#) - Award-winning Documentary

"Our procedure has been always haunted by the ghost of the innocent man convicted. It is an unreal dream." Justice Learned Hand, 1923

In 1986 Michael Morton's wife Christine is brutally murdered in front of their only child, and Michael is convicted of the crime. Locked away in Texas prisons for a quarter century, he has years to ponder questions of justice and innocence, truth and fate. Though he is virtually invisible to society, a team of dedicated attorneys spends years fighting for the right to test DNA evidence found at the murder scene. Their discoveries ultimately reveal that the price of a wrongful conviction goes well beyond one man's loss of freedom.

"A stirring story of triumph... an inspiring tale of spiritual uplift...Documentarian Al Reinert effectively emphasizes understatement, recounting an outrageous miscarriage of justice without a trace of manufactured melodrama or visual hyperbole." Joe Leydon, Variety

"Music is the mediator between the spiritual and the sensual life." Ludwig van Beethoven

3] [12 Ways to Reduce Stress with Music: Fill Your Life with Music that Reduces Daily Stress](#) – Help Guide.org - Frank Fitzpatrick, Director / Founder of EarthTones, is a multi-Platinum producer, Grammy-nominated songwriter, award-winning filmmaker, and a leading voice in the use of music for personal and social transformation.

When it becomes hard to find your way out of the downward spiral caused by overwhelming stress and anxiety, try turning to music.

Music has the ability to quickly shift our mood, affecting our subconscious mind where pesky negative thoughts feed on our fears and fuel the fires of stress.

Listening to music is a relatively inexpensive, quick-acting solution that's almost always available, and it could just save your life.

Here are 12 ways you can use music in your daily routine to help manage stress and create more joy in your life. [Learn more](#)

“Few things can help an individual more than to place responsibility on him, and to let him know that you trust him.” BT Washington

4] [Art and Activism](#) - Elizabeth Gordon

Art Galleries - In the galleries on my [ART](#) page are some of my drawings, paintings, lino cuts, prints and other art-work in different media. My art-work tells the story of ordeals of non-State torture and trafficking in my childhood and my journey to freedom.

Some of my drawings and paintings are in journals and publications and are included in exhibitions, education classes and conferences specifically to raise awareness and in education about non-State torture violence against women and children that happens in the home and other private spaces.

About

I was born into a family environment where torture violence was the norm and childhood freedom was a human right I could not imagine. All through my childhood from infancy onwards, I was subjected to imprisonment and torture at home. I was also trafficked to other places by persons in my family and other known and unknown perpetrators.

When I was a child the environment I struggled to survive and grow up in impacted on me devastatingly. When I was a teenager I did begin to tell at school but was terrified as I was constantly violently torture threatened not to tell by my perpetrators. I was still captive and trying to escape when I was 18 and a student. I escaped when I was 21. I studied a post-graduate degree course at university where I specialized in art and arts education in schools.

I worked as a freelance musician and in arts education in schools for some years while struggling with traumatic stress responses, flashbacks and body talk. Though I had escaped the home torture environment, I was still vulnerable and accessed and prostituted by my perpetrators for some years until I found good support and learned I had a right not to be harmed. [Learn more](#)

"Love is an act of endless forgiveness, a tender look which becomes a habit." Peter Ustinove

5] [Black Mental Health Net.com](#) - An online community empowering the Black community by promoting mental health.

Dedicated to Promoting Black Mental Health

Here at BlackMentalHealthNet.com, we appreciate the strengths of the Black community while acknowledging its unique challenges, both in a broader social sense, and specifically in matters of mental health.

Untreated or under-treated mental illness can be limiting, disabling and even life threatening. Furthermore, the current economic, legal, and educational environments leave little room for error: without mental health, progress is fragile, and hurdles can become impassable obstacles.

This website was created with the premise that the Black community's traditional reluctance to discuss mental health and illness comes with much too high a cost (especially in such a climate as this). Here you will find informative articles and videos about mental illness and treatment as well as educational content about strategies for mental illness prevention, mental health promotion and positive coping. There are also opportunities to have virtual discussions about mental health topics through our forum.

Our goal is that this website's visitors, armed with information and bolstered by the testimonies of others, will feel empowered to act as agents of change in their own lives, in the lives of their loved ones, and in their communities. [Learn more](#)

"If I have the belief that I can do it, I shall surely acquire the capacity to do it even if I may not have it at the beginning." Mahatma Gandhi

6] [Anna Clendening: Nervous Singer Delivers Stunning "Hallelujah" Cover](#) - America's Got Talent 2014 – YouTube 7:13 minutes

A 20-year-old singer overcomes her anxiety disorder to connect with the judges and audience in a moving performance – a stunning cover of Leonard Cohen's "Hallelujah"

"Hope is the thing with feathers, That perches in the soul, And sings the tune without the words And never stops at all." Emily Dickinson

7] [In a Flash: Miracles Here and Beyond](#) - Kim Justus

A piercing pain suddenly shot through Kim's brain, like a bolt of lightning snapping and tracing through the sky. An ordinary day was instantly transformed into a fight for survival. Within days, she underwent aggressive, brain surgery. Her doctor's initial misdiagnosis led to her speech and comprehension being severely compromised, before she lost consciousness. From the depths of a coma, Kim entered a near death experience, awaking to find her life profoundly changed. Facing mortality, changes in her body, mind and spirit were thrust upon her without warning. Her courageous fight to overcome unconventional obstacles is intimately shared in this compelling story.

In a Flash: Miracles Here and Beyond offers Kim's personal account of her battle to survive a ruptured brain aneurysm, the presentation of a near death experience, and the miracles that ensued. *In a Flash* is a powerful story of survival, challenges of faith, and divine orchestration. Kim artfully describes a journey where the tenants of science and spirituality collide, resulting in a dynamic union.

Kim is also the host of the [Brain Injury Radio Network](#) - Online Radio | Blog Talk Radio

"It is during our darkest moments that we must focus to see the light." Aristotle Onassis

8] [Juvenile Prison: \\$5 Billion for Child Abuse](#) - Global Research

We spend in the United States \$88,000 on average per year to lock a child up, compared to \$10,652 to educate a child. We have over 66,000 children locked up, 87% of them boys, and our police arrest 2 million juveniles each year.

A recent longitudinal study of 35,000 young offenders found that those who are locked up are over twice as likely to be locked up as adults compared to those who committed similar offenses and came from similar backgrounds but were given an alternative penalty or were just not arrested. In some states over 80% of those locked up as kids will be convicted of later crimes. Studies have found that, more than family difficulties or gang membership or any other factor, the best predictor of criminality is whether someone has been imprisoned in what amount to factories for crime.

Well, but then, isn't the best predictor the initial commission of a crime that led to the initial incarceration? Actually, no. Eighty to 90% of teenagers in the United States commit illegal acts that could land them behind bars. Most of those put behind bars are put there for minor, nonviolent offenses. A third of all teenagers have even committed a somewhat serious crime, but most are never arrested, much less imprisoned. Almost all grow out of it. [Read the entire article](#)

". . . you cannot heal what you do not acknowledge, and what you do not consciously acknowledge will remain in control of you from within, festering and destroying you and those around you . . ." Richard Rohr

9] [Walking Prey: How America's Youth Are Vulnerable to Sex Slavery](#): Holly Austin Smith: Amazon.com: Books

Today, two cultural forces are converging to make America's youth easy targets for sex traffickers. Younger and younger girls are engaging in adult sexual attitudes and practices, and the pressure to conform means thousands have little self-worth and are vulnerable to exploitation. At the same time, thanks to social media, texting, and chatting services, predators are able to ferret out their victims more easily than ever before.

In *Walking Prey*, advocate and former victim Holly Austin Smith shows how middle class suburban communities are fast becoming the new epicenter of sex trafficking in America. Smith speaks from experience: Without consistent positive guidance or engagement, Holly was ripe for exploitation at age fourteen. A chance encounter with an older man led her to run away from home, and she soon found herself on the streets of Atlantic City. Her experience led her, two decades later, to become one of the

foremost advocates for trafficking victims. Smith argues that these young women should be treated as victims by law enforcement, but that too often the criminal justice system lacks the resources and training to prevent the vicious cycle of prostitution. This is a clarion call to take a sharp look at one of the most striking human rights abuses, and one that is going on in our own backyard.

“Strong people stand for themselves but stronger people stand for others.” Jeyhan Neyga

10] [How I Coped with Suicidal Thoughts and Feelings](#) You Tube 11:57 minutes – Douglas Bloch

This video describes how a survivor of major depression found the coping resources to deal with his suicidal thoughts and feelings. The key was to live one day at a time and to avoid thinking catastrophic thoughts about the future.

11] [Healing From Depression](#) - Depression Help, Support and Counseling - Your Site for Hope and Healing

Welcome to healing from depression. The purpose of this web site is to share with you the most up to date and effective strategies for treating depression and anxiety. As a depression survivor, I know this territory well and can assure you that there is a path to healing and recovery. There is a reason for hope.

As you navigate this site, you will encounter useful tools and resources that are designed to help you to feel better and to reduce your symptoms of anxiety and depression. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions about the information you find. I wish you the best on your healing journey.

Sincerely, Douglas Bloch, M.A.

“The best and most beautiful things in the world cannot be seen or even touched - they must be felt with the heart.” Helen Keller

12] [Healing From Depression Naturally](#) – YouTube 14:59 minutes – Douglas Bloch

This video is a survivor's testimony of how he overcame suicidal anxiety and depression. With his faith in recovery and the help of a group of caring people who prayed for his healing, Douglas Bloch emerged from a major depression illness and returned to the land of the living. He describes his dark night of the soul experience in his book, *“Healing From Depression: 12 Weeks to a Better Mood.”*

13] [THE S WORD Official Teaser Trailer](#) on Vimeo 2:54 minutes long

From the filmmakers of the award winning OF TWO MINDS comes a new documentary that explores one of the most feared and misunderstood topics in the human experience - suicide. But speaking the word itself is not the problem. The silence that so often follows is.

Both attempt survivors and the loved ones of those who have died by suicide are portrayed in all the complexity, pain and even humor of their experiences, and THE S WORD looks towards a movement that might be the next important social change of our time.

JOIN US! On Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/SuiDoc> and Twitter @SuiDoc

“Health is the greatest gift, contentment the greatest wealth, faithfulness the best relationship.” Buddha

14] [Dark Water: Healing From Stress After Trauma](#) – Opal Rose

This book is about healing from post-traumatic stress, or PTSD. It is about how post-traumatic stress can feel and about how you can approach healing. It is not a template for healing as that is best done with professional help, and healing is very individual anyway. This book is meant to lend a hand and to offer understanding during difficult times. It helps to organize thoughts and feelings and mentions symptoms, how they might feel, and how they might occur. It approaches post-traumatic stress as an injury that has happened to the whole being that is you. [Book preview](#)

15] [Art and Nature](#) – Sunny Franson

Currently I live on a small walnut acreage and feel connected to earth and surroundings. I began painting about twelve years ago, and my love of it grew from there, becoming more and more important to me. It's very important to me to continue to evolve as an artist although as happens for all of us, time is a precious commodity and sometimes life and its pitfalls overtake you, and then you have to make art a high priority. It's so important to stay as committed because it's a lifetime calling.

Each painting experience has something to teach, and that's really how I learn the most. Best not to put your moments off. Once they're past, they're gone forever. And don't forget to be grateful and to share.

“Don't judge each day by the harvest you reap but by the seeds that you plant.” Robert Louis Stevenson

16] ["The Tales of a Stroke Patient"](#) - Joyce Hoffman

I was well and then I wasn't. In one second, my life changed forever. I type with only one, functional hand. Even so, I am the author of *"The Tales of a Stroke Patient"* the true story behind my stroke and its consequences, including deplorable nurses, gruesome depression, a motorized shopping cart gone wild, and lots more. I'll take you on the expedition in this blog called the same as the book, but be prepared for a bumpy ride. 0

I was employed at Cozen O'Connor, an international law firm. I worked at the largest office in Philadelphia when I had my stroke on April 8, 2009, in the middle of the night. It took me a year to realize I could never go back there. It also took that long to realize I was disabled. I don't embrace the stroke - not now, not ever - but I accept it because I have two options: live with the stroke or... well, you know the alternative. Contact info: Joyce Hoffman - hwriter@gmail.com

17] [Grounding and Protecting My Spirit](#) by Rita Loyd - Spirit Nurturing Artist and Writer

This painting depicts the five step exercise that I practice for grounding, healing and protecting my spirit.

1. Woman calling her full spirit back into her body.
2. Woman placing a blanket of earth around her body for protection and healing.

3. Woman grounding her energy into the earth through her feet.
4. Woman receiving nurturing energy from the earth through her feet.
5. Woman placing a bubble of protection around her.

I created this set of exercises as a way to feel more grounded before going over to care for my mom who has Alzheimer's disease.

[MORNING EXERCISES FOR GROUNDING, PROTECTION AND HEALING](#)

[Rita Loyd](#) is a professional water-color artist and writer. The message of her work is about the healing power of unconditional self-love.

Rita began to paint in 1996 as a way to cope with chronic illness and depression. As she continued to paint through the years the creative process became her teacher, healer and friend guiding her to find the true meaning of self-love. Rita writes about this experience and more in her new book *Unconditional Self-Love: What It Is, Why It's Important and How to Nurture It in Your Life*.

"Your present circumstances don't determine where you can go; they merely determine where you start." Nido Qubein

18] [What's One Key Thing You Can Do If You're Depressed?](#) By Art Smukler, author & psychiatrist - Inside The Mind Of a Psychiatrist - *How far can you run from your own mind?*

Feel melancholy, out of sorts, tired, cranky, a lack of energy, no enthusiasm, a sense of doom, a negative attitude, wake up early in the morning and can't fall back to sleep, don't feel like reading, writing, playing golf or any of the hobbies that you usually love?

Any of the above can be a sign of depression.

Should you immediately call your family practice doc for an Rx of Prozac or for a psychiatric referral? I wouldn't. Not yet...

I'd take some time to think about what's going on in your life. Carefully go over the last few days before the symptoms started or got worse. What did you do? Who did you talk to? Did a friend or family member say something that hurt your feelings? Were you rejected? Left out? Disrespected?

The key underlying feeling that often triggers depression is ANGER. Not expressing anger is usually the problem. [Read the entire article](#)

19] [The Power of Mindful Breathing](#) – by Jessica Dibb @ Omega

Modern medical and scientific articles continue to draw the same conclusions that breath-work practitioners have known for thousands of years: mindful breathing is good for you. Jessica Dibb explains some of the physical and spiritual benefits of breath-work and how anyone can reap those benefits now.

Breath is life. The very first and last thing we do in life is take a breath. More and more medical and

scientific articles and research reports are suggesting that the origin of most illnesses, both physical and psychological, is a lack of oxygenation in our bodies. [Learn more](#)

“What we achieve inwardly will change outer reality.” Plutarch

20] [Mental health disorders much more strongly linked to self-harm or suicide than gun violence](#) - Medical News Today

Recent mass killings in Isla Vista, California, and elsewhere have again raised concern among lawmakers and the media about the possible connection between mental illness and gun violence. A new study sets the record straight and recommends an evidence-based approach to limiting firearms fatalities.

A group of international scholars, including co-author Vickie Mays of UCLA, analyzed dozens of epidemiological studies on gun violence and mental illness and compared the results to media-fueled public perceptions about the dangerousness of mentally ill individuals.

The researchers found that mass murderers with mental health problems, while they receive a tremendous amount of media attention, are not typical of those who commit violent crimes, and the vast majority of those with serious mental illness do not engage in violent acts. [Learn more](#)

“Sometimes, the prettiest smiles hide the darkest secrets. The prettiest eyes have cried the most tears. And the kindest hearts have felt the most pain.”

21] [Welcome to PAS Intervention](#)

PAS Intervention stands for Psychological Abuse Support and Intervention. It is a federally tax-exempt non-profit dedicated to Ending Child Abuse and Parental Alienation. With Chapters all over the world they provide free International services including online support groups, educational awareness, research/development and are trying to obtain grants and funding to help financially assist families. They are also involved legislatively, legally and are almost always there for victims 24/7.

Please feel free to contact us at info@pas-intervention.com We are always there for you.

“Try to be a rainbow in someone's cloud.” Maya Angelou

22] [Ceremonial PTSD therapies favored by Native American veterans](#) - Medical News Today

Native American veterans battling Post Traumatic Stress Disorder find relief and healing through an alternative treatment called the Sweat Lodge ceremony offered at the Spokane Veterans Administration Hospital.

In the Arizona desert, wounded warriors from the Hopi Nation can join in a ceremony called Wiping Away the Tears. The traditional cleansing ritual helps dispel a chronic "ghost sickness" that can haunt survivors of battle.

These and other traditional healing therapies are the treatment of choice for many Native American

veterans, - half of whom say usual PTSD treatments don't work - according to a recent survey conducted at Washington State University. The findings will be presented at the American Psychological Association conference in Washington D.C. this August.

Historically, Native Americans have served in the military at higher rates than all other U.S. populations. Veterans are traditionally honored as warriors and esteemed in the tribal community. A 2012 report by the Department of Veterans Affairs showed that the percentage of Native veterans under age 65 outnumbers similar percentages for veterans of all other racial groups combined. [Learn more](#)

“We must let go of the life we have planned, so as to accept the one that is waiting for us.” Joseph Campbell

23] [Mentally Ill Are 2.5 Times More Likely To Be Murdered; Challenging Assumptions About Mental Illness And Violence](#) – Medical Daily

People with mental illness are far more likely to be victimized by violence than to perpetrate it, psychologists in the United Kingdom say, after publishing a study they hope will change attitudes about the “mentally ill.”

Published in mid-June in The Lancet, the National Confidential Inquiry into Suicide and Homicide by People with Mental Illness analyzed data for victims and perpetrators of nearly 1,500 homicides recorded during the years 2003 to 2005 in England and Wales. People with known mental illness were 2.5 times more likely than others to get murdered, the researchers found. [Read the entire article](#)

“Every good thought you think is contributing its share to the ultimate result of your life.” Greenville Kleiser

24] [Time To Change - let's end mental health discrimination](#) United Kingdom

Mental health problems are common - but nearly nine out of ten people who experience them say they face stigma and discrimination as a result. This can be even worse than the symptoms themselves. Time to Change is England's biggest program to challenge mental health stigma and discrimination.

Many people say that being discriminated against in work and social situations can be a bigger burden than the illness itself.

It has an impact on society and the economy too, when people who can work are denied the opportunity to, and when people are prevented from playing an active role in their communities.

25] [Trauma & Dissociation Conference](#): Clinicians, Survivors & Loved Ones – United in Healing

- The 2014 Trauma and Dissociation Conference will be held in Seattle, Washington at the Double Tree Hilton at Sea-Tac from Friday, October 3rd through Sunday, October 5th.
- There will be a Survivor Art Show, an Ivory Garden Spirit Items, a sight-seeing tour, books by our speakers and other sponsors, and much more!
- We welcome your questions or comments! Please email Felicity4us2@gmail.com

All of the professional workshops have been approved for credit units by the Washington Chapter, National Association of Social Workers (NASW) for Licensed Social Workers, Licensed Marriage & Family Therapists and Licensed Mental Health Counselors. (provider #1975-362). You will find information concerning CEU's on the schedules.

"I can't change the direction of the wind, but I can adjust my sails to always reach my destination."
Jimmy Dean

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

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