



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 2015

“There's really no such thing as the voiceless. There are only the deliberately silenced, or the preferably unheard.” Arundhati Roy

Greetings folks,

Finally Spring has arrived here in New Hampshire, a 'balmy' 85 degrees yesterday in my little corner of the world...and I am taking great delight and healing with time spent in the gardens around our home.

May is designated as Mental Health Awareness Month and there are several resources shared in this newsletter to help with that.

I thought to open up first with [The Bristlecone Project](#) - Portraits and Biographies of Male Survivors of Childhood Sexual Abuse - *We were wounded. Now we thrive. We are your neighbors, your fathers, your sons.* Over 40 men sharing Hope, Healing & Help from the ravages of sexual assault.

Sexual assault, traumas of life and any type of abuse are going to have an impact upon our mental health...and these concerns must be asked with the question, “What happened to you?”...versus, “What's wrong with you?”. The mindset of blame, shame and weakness is still present for most of society when it comes to the matters of “mental illness”.

I cannot undo the harm that was inflicted upon me when I first entered the 'mental health arena' back in 1993, when I was treated for my 'diseased brain' and over-medicated - but what I can do, is speak out and continue to share resources that will help someday, to usher in a new paradigm, for helping people who are experiencing distress in their lives.

Last week I shared the link for the Bristlecone Project on Facebook; the response was incredible. I could devote a whole newsletter just to the comments and feedback I received. I would like to share one of these with you.

One woman wrote to me and spoke of how she tried for so many years to be close to her father...he was a loving man, but always kept her at a distance and pushed her away many times. It was on his death bed from cancer, that he finally shared with her of his love and apologizing for keeping her at a distance - it was because of his being sexually abused as a young boy...He worried that if he got too close to his daughter that he would hurt her...she finally understood his pain and forgave him for the years of isolation.

She wanted me to know that all of those speaking out via the Bristlecone Project are doing great things to help others in breaking the silence and the shame....On a personal note...I kept those I loved away from me, by my 'work-a-holism.', because of the shame I felt inside.

"Go to where the silence is and say something." [My Bristlecone page](#)

Take care, Michael Skinner

"We may encounter many defeats but we must not be defeated." Maya Angelou

Editor's note - *Ilona Spiegel represents all that is good about being human - she is creative, compassionate and a dedicated advocate for those with mental health concerns and the disenfranchised. I first met Ilona in September 2014 at the [NYAPRS Conference](#) @ the Open Mic nights I host. Her sharing of song and spoken word left us all humbled and grateful to come to know this gentle, but powerful spirit.*

1] [The Road to Independence](#) - video 5:26 minutes – featuring Ilona Spiegel and others

This video examines how Paul, Weiss and its client, Disability Advocates Inc. [now known as Disability Rights New York] helped adults with mental disabilities build new lives by securing a landmark settlement with the state of New York.

[MY LIFE; MY HOME](#) [PDF] By Ilona Spiegel
Dedicated to late writer Lucy Freeman and Susan J. Clair

I haven't written a poem, Since I've moved to my new home
The rooms are precious, and newly painted white
white - Embracing me I can feel my might.

I glide across the glowing golden wooden floors.
I have three whole rooms, closets, a locked front door –
To which I alone possess the key!
After so many years in a box...I'm finally free!!
If I don't want to reside in one room; I have another
And if that one doesn't suit my mood there's yet another.

Each spacious, possessing my belongings
Where I can live breathe, do different things
Play my guitar, watch cable, write my book.
I have to pinch myself to realize it's real
I'm finally free to live my life and feel what I feel

There's nothing to conceal Drop by for a meal I'm a superb cook
Come into my haven; take a look.
Free to create in despair, Free to feel elation
Realizing life is a celebration!

Yes I'm alone, I take pride in me, Feeling others' love
All around my home. In my books the songs on the radio
The pictures of those I love on the wall
Washing dishes watching a TV show
At night gazing out at the stars aglow
In everything I do: in my three rooms
I became me from you ...The memories loom!

So really I'm not alone And if I am what's wrong with that!
So much fills my new home; The times I've had ...
The people I've known, Brought me to where I'm at!
Sometimes I have a great time
Drinking my slightly frozen water with a piece of squished lime
Strolling from one room to another
Occasionally getting a call from friends, sister, mother or brother
This place is my home, my haven my shrine
It's special most of all this Place is mine!

[Ilona Spiegel - LinkedIn](#) – Peer Advocate Brooklyn College

“I will not chain myself to the past with self-defeating guilt, or by inflating the importance of my errors. Instead, I want to face my past and heal old wounds so that I may move forward into a richer, fuller, and more joyous life today.” Courage To Change, Al-Anon

2] [Safe Space Radio - Radio Podcasting with Dr. Anne](#)

A show about the subjects we would struggle with less if we could talk about them more.

About Us

Safe Space is a show about subjects that are hard to talk about—a respectful forum for courageous conversations about difficult subjects in order to reduce stigma, provide education, offer hope and access to resources. It is a space for the in depth discussion of matters that touch hearts and yet feel risky to share; subjects that deserve, but rarely get, thoughtful consideration.

The topics on Safe Space often deal with the guests' courage to accept difference in themselves, especially when they feel afraid or ashamed about that difference. Shame is a painful psychological and emotional experience, but it is also a cultural and political force. All acts of courage inspire others to take risks, to express themselves, to be themselves. Such acts have political force to stand up to silencing, to create change.

Each show attempts to name and acknowledge difficult feelings, and to honor those who have found their own way of putting them into perspective. Listening to Safe Space will introduce you to many who are daring to speak about what is true for them as they find a way to turn their deepest wounds or hidden struggles into a gift for others. Giving voice to the unspeakable is ultimately an act of generosity and courage that makes our world more hospitable and welcoming to the parts of each of us that feel vulnerable.

Mission - The mission of Safe Space Radio is to invite the courageous, respectful and compelling discussion of stigmatized stories and subjects in order to:

1. Affirm difference; and honor suffering and vulnerability;
2. Invite understanding and compassion for those who are ashamed, marginalized, disadvantaged, misunderstood, judged, silenced, isolated or hidden; and
3. Celebrates small victories and inspires courage in the listener; offering an inclusive vision of our shared humanity and a sense of belonging.

Safe Space brings voice where there has been silence, and quiet listening where there has been the noise of blame, stigma and denial.

Dr. Anne is a Board certified psychiatrist in Portland, Maine. She trained at Harvard Medical School, and served on the faculty at Harvard, teaching at Cambridge Hospital, before moving to Maine. Her interest in creating space for open conversation about difficult subjects began in her teens when she noticed that very few adults seemed to be talking about intimate or difficult subjects. While at Harvard, she taught classes on Death and Dying, Human Sexuality, Psychiatric Interviewing, Psychotherapy and Cultural Competence. The one thing these classes all have in common is that they address subjects that people avoid talking about. She approaches these tender subjects respectfully, in a way that gives acknowledgment and recognition to feelings and fears that have been carried in silence.

Dr. Anne is also initiating a study on pediatric medical trauma, looking at the long term impact of urological procedures that are done on young girls. This is another not-discussed subject that can have long-lasting impact particularly if the fear and pain of the procedures are not named and acknowledged. If you are interested in participating in this study, please contact her at dr.anne@safespaceradio.com

Gabe Grabin is the producer of Safe Space Radio. He is a graduate of Brown University and the Salt Institute for Documentary Studies. His radio pieces have aired on Maine Public Radio, New Hampshire Public Radio, WMPG, and WLRN Miami.

“And there are those who have little and give it all. These are the believers in life and the bounty of life, and their coffer is never empty.” Kahlil Gibran

[How telling our silenced stories can change the world](#) - Anne Hallward – YouTube 15:05 minutes

This talk was given at a local TEDx event, produced independently of the TED Conferences. Shame is at the intersection of individual psychology healing and social change. Clinically, when we follow the path of our shame, we experience the greatest healing, and culturally, when we move past the power of shame we can act together to improve civil rights for all.

“I wish I could say that racism and prejudice were only distant memories. We must dissent from the indifference. We must dissent from the apathy. We must dissent from the fear, the hatred and the mistrust... We must dissent because America can do better, because America has no choice but to do better.” Thurgood Marshall

3] A fine piece of advocacy and inspiration from the folks at the Western Mass Recovery Learning Community - [Save the RLCs](#) – YouTube 8:19 minutes

Their efforts and the work of others paid off, full funding has been restored.

[Massachusetts Recovery Learning Communities](#) - Peer-To-Peer Support For Massachusetts

What are Recovery Learning Communities (RLCs)? - RLCs are peer-to-peer communities that are the product of decades of advocacy from individuals who have received services in the mental health system in partnership with providers and other allies in the community who understand the deep value of peer support. RLCs offer a wide range of supports that can be life-changing for individuals who are struggling with the impact of psychiatric diagnosis, trauma, homelessness, addiction and a variety of other life-interrupting challenges. Supports are offered by people who have been through similar struggles and have particular skill in being able to share their successes and what they've learned along the way.

“Ten years ago, I still feared loss enough to abandon myself in order to keep things stable. I'd smile when I was sad, pretend to like people who appalled me. What I now know is that losses aren't cataclysmic if they teach the heart and soul their natural cycle of breaking and healing.”
Martha Beck

4] [Marty Hadge - Hearing Voices Beyond the Labels](#) – YouTube 32:16 minutes

Despite childhood trauma, hearing voices, drug addiction, years of treatment, and being given a dismal prognosis, Marty Hadge has transformed her life. Marty will share her story and describe the importance of peer-run organizations, such as the Western Mass RLC and the Hearing Voices Network. Additionally, Marty will discuss her current work as a Community Bridger, supporting people leaving some of the same psychiatric hospitals she once resided within.

“In recognizing the humanity of our fellow beings, we pay ourselves the highest tribute.”
Thurgood Marshall

5] [Peers TV](#) – YouTube – *Promoting mental health, empowerment and social inclusion*

Peers TV showcases the latest events and topics of Mental Health, aiming to end the stigma and discrimination through education, advocacy, and social inclusion. [several videos are shared]

6] [PEERS](#) [Peers Envisioning and Engaging in Recovery Services] - *We offer new solutions for wellness and lead by example that mental health recovery is possible.*

Our Mission - We are innovators who continue to overcome adversity and defy the status quo. We offer new solutions for wellness and lead by example that mental health recovery is possible.

Our Vision - We envision a world where people can freely choose among many recovery options that address the needs of the whole person. We see a future where people with mental health challenges are valued for their essential contributions to society.

“Healing is a matter of time, but it is sometimes also a matter of opportunity.” Hippocrates

7] [20 Signs of Unresolved Trauma](#) - Discussing Dissociation - Kathy Broady MSW - *Thoughts from a Trauma Therapist*....

Many people enter the therapy process with minimal awareness of their trauma history. When the trauma survivors are dissociative, they have the ability to block out an awareness of their trauma. They may know that their family had problems, or that their family was dysfunctional, etc, but they may believe they were never abused.

However, blocking out conscious awareness of trauma does not mean that the survivors have no effects of that trauma. Using denial and dissociative skills does not mean that the abuse did not happen. Denial means that the person simply is refusing to acknowledge or accept the fact that they were traumatized. They are pretending they were not hurt, when they were actually hurt very badly.

Even if the memories of abuse are hidden from the survivor's awareness, blocked trauma / unresolved trauma creates very noticeable and obvious symptoms that can be easily seen in their every day lives.

People will enter therapy aware of some of the following symptoms, but they may not realize these complications are suggestive of unresolved trauma issues:

1. Addictive behaviors – excessively turning to drugs, alcohol, sex, shopping, gambling as a way to push difficult emotions and upsetting trauma content further away.
2. An inability to tolerate conflicts with others – having a fear of conflict, running from conflict, avoiding conflict, maintaining skewed perceptions of conflict
3. An inability to tolerate intense feelings, preferring to avoid feeling by any number of ways
4. An innate belief that they are bad, worthless, without value or importance
5. Black and white thinking, all or nothing thinking, even if this approach ends up harming themselves
6. Chronic and repeated suicidal thoughts and feelings
7. Disorganized attachment patterns – having a variety of short but intense relationships, refusing to have any relationships, dysfunctional relationships, frequent love/hate relationships
8. Dissociation, spacing out, losing time, missing time, feeling like you are two completely different people (or more than two)
9. Eating disorders – anorexia, bulimia, obesity, etc
10. Excessive sense of self-blame – taking on inappropriate responsibility as if everything is their fault, making excessive apologies
11. Inappropriate attachments to mother figures or father figures, even with dysfunctional or unhealthy people

12. Intense anxiety and repeated panic attacks
13. Intrusive thoughts, upsetting visual images, flashbacks, body memories / unexplained body pain, or distressing nightmares
14. Ongoing, chronic depression
15. Repeatedly acting from a victim role in current day relationships
16. Repeatedly taking on the rescuer role, even when inappropriate to do so
17. Self-harm, self-mutilation, self-injury, self-destruction
18. Suicidal actions and behaviors, failed attempts to suicide
19. Taking the perpetrator role / angry aggressor in relationships
20. Unexplained but intense fears of people, places, things [Learn more](#)

“Meditation can help us embrace our worries, our fear, our anger; and that is very healing. We let our own natural capacity of healing do the work.” Thich Nhat Hanh

8] [81 Awesome Mental Health Resources When You Can't Afford a Therapist](#) – **Greatist**

Sure, pretty much everyone could benefit from therapy. But not everyone can afford it. Thankfully, there's a whole world of free or affordable mental health care out there designed to help you with just about every issue, whether that's kicking an addiction, managing your emotions, finding a group of like-minded peers, or recovering from trauma. Even better? Some of these resources are available whenever you need them. [No need to schedule an appointment between the hours of 9 and 5.] Support groups, hot-lines and call centers, websites and online forums, and even apps can be put into action when you have a crisis or just need extra support.

But finding out which resources are best for you takes some legwork. We've rounded up 81 of the very best affordable [or free] mental health resources. Keep this list handy whenever you need some backup.

Note: Resources are listed alphabetically by type. [Learn more](#) [Please note, quite an extensive list folks, MS]

“You get to the point where your demons, which are terrifying, get smaller and smaller and you get bigger and bigger.” August Wilson

9] [So What's a "Greatist"?](#) - We're glad you asked. A *greatist* is someone who chooses healthy because they want to. In other words, you don't have to be the greatest and perfect all the time, but instead, be a greatist and make healthy choices some of the time, when you want, and because they make you feel good. We find that's the only way you'll actually stick with them!

Because it's not about the choices you make, but why you make them.

Being Healthy Doesn't Have To Suck

We don't think you need six-pack abs to be happy. Because *Greatist* celebrates choosing whatever healthy means to you.

Our mission? Help the world think of health in a healthier way. And today we do that by publishing award-winning, crazy-shareable articles written by someone just like you [and verified by the best experts on the planet] with love, coffee, and whole lot of laughs.

Think of *Greatist* as the healthy, happy, empowering best friend you've always wanted.

"I refuse to accept the view that mankind is so tragically bound to the starless midnight of racism and war that the bright daybreak of peace and brotherhood can never become a reality... I believe that unarmed truth and unconditional love will have the final word." Martin Luther King, Jr.

10] [Leah Ida Harris](#) - I am a mother, a survivor, storyteller, and a crusader for social justice, human rights, and disability rights. Working for cultural shift in how we understand and respond to emotional distress, toxic stress, addiction, violence, homelessness, incarceration, and suicide. I promote a focus on the social determinants of health, redefining health care to meet the real needs of people, families, and communities.

A survivor - I am a survivor of many things. I am a trauma survivor. I have survived multiple adverse childhood experiences, suicide attempts, psychiatric disability, addiction, profound losses. I was born to a single mother, a creative artist with a delightful spirit who was diagnosed with schizophrenia, whose care I was removed from by the age of five. She cycled in and out of state hospitals, wandering the streets, hearing voices. She died by a passive suicide at the age of 46, a life that was lost far too soon. My father, a brilliant man with an encyclopedic memory, also struggled with bipolar disorder, and died suddenly at age 63, another devastating blow to my family. I witnessed firsthand how poor quality treatment, discrimination, and lack of hope led to both of my parents' untimely deaths. As we all know, people with serious mental health diagnoses die earlier than the general population, and my parents sadly fell into that category.

All my life, the doctors said that I would likely end up like my parents, a sort of genetically-based fatalism. I believed them, and "patient" became my primary identity. As an adolescent, I struggled from the devastating effects of all I had experienced in my short life. I entered mental health treatment for depression, and was traumatized by systems that did not seek to understand and support me, but to blame me, label me, and heavily medicate me. Sometimes I wonder which was more traumatic: my turbulent 0-5 years, or five years of scary experiences in incompetent treatment settings. I witnessed many instances of brutality of staff against minors; I was warehoused in institutions for months on end; heavily medicated; given no less than five psychiatric diagnoses; denied a meaningful education; denied dreams; denied a real life. Being treated like a mental patient is inherently damaging to the human spirit.

I almost gave up hope at the tender age of eighteen. My adulthood began by rotting in a decrepit, filthy

group home, instead of with my loved ones in my community, because the treatment team said “I belonged there” for my own good. I was intensely suicidal in that awful place. I managed to convince my family to let me leave; they agreed to defy doctor’s orders. I began to complete the high school education I had missed while institutionalized. That was the small beginning of hope returning to my life.

When I was in my mid twenties, I heard for the first time about the concept of “recovery” in mental health. It began as a radical notion that a mental illness diagnosis need not mean that you become a permanent patient. People can and do recover from even the most severe conditions and diagnoses. I learned about an international movement of survivors and ex-patients, a civil rights movement that existed on the margins of mainstream attention, and I joined up. This group of people has worked tirelessly for over four decades to stop the perpetuation of harmful, traumatic practices and attitudes in mental health. We may be one of the last unacknowledged civil rights movements. At the same time, we are creating our own parallel networks, efforts to create non-traumatizing, voluntary, respectful, community-based services and supports for people in distress and crisis. Our approach emphasizes the the importance of people retaining dignity and the right to self-determination, a central value of the cross-disability rights movement.

The first step in my healing was to tell my own story as a survivor and an advocate, without shame. Profound healing came for me when I finally felt safe to examine and begin to resolve the traumatic and violent experiences of my own childhood. I reclaimed my dignity through becoming a social entrepreneur and lending my love and energy to the causes I most deeply believe in. I’m obsessed with figuring out how to transform the way we as a society relate to and support people in crisis, people who are suicidal, people who hear voices, people who are homeless, people who are marginalized, people who are systemically discriminated against, people who are witnesses to violence, and survivors of abuse. People are not “broken,” the system is. How can we do away with these antiquated “systems of care” and create innovative networks of support that are above all hopeful, flexible, creative and collaborative, and person- and family-centered?

Today, I am a parent, and the cycle of suffering and inter-generational trauma stops with me. I feel blessed that I was able to take back my life, and did not have to suffer the tragic fate of my own parents.

I’m dedicated to making this earth a safer place to be human. [Learn more](#)

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

“Change, like healing, takes time.” Veronica Roth

11] [Trauma-Informed Judges Take Gentler Approach](#), Administer Problem-Solving Justice To Stop Cycle Of ACEs [Adverse Childhood Experiences] - Social Justice Solutions

Three years ago, Judge Lynn Tepper of Florida’s Sixth Judicial Circuit Court in Dade City, FL, learned about the CDC-Kaiser Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study The ground-breaking research links childhood abuse and neglect with adult onset of chronic disease, mental illness, violence and being a victim of violence.

It was like flipping a switch.

“I suddenly had this trauma-informed lens, as we call it. I see it everywhere,” she says, giving an example of someone in front of her on child abuse charges for whom she might recommend counseling and/or anger management. “I have discovered the reality is that when I start asking a few questions, that parent or partner has experienced ACEs,” she says.

The 10 types of childhood trauma measured in the ACE Study are: physical, verbal and sexual abuse, and physical and emotional neglect; a family member who abused alcohol or other drugs, who was depressed or mentally ill, or was in prison; witnessing a mother being abused, and loss of a parent through separation or divorce.

Tepper, a veteran of 37 years on the bench, realized that childhood trauma experienced by the people who ended up in her courtroom was much worse than their paperwork showed. “When you dig down deeper, you wonder how these people get up in the morning,” she says. “I remember thinking at one point, ‘Oh boy, did we blow it all these years on these delinquents.’”

Most judges in the United States are unfamiliar with the ACE Study and the research on the neurobiology of toxic stress that has emerged over the last 15 years. But that’s beginning to change in courtrooms across the U.S., due to a number of educational programs aimed at producing trauma-informed judges—and courts. As a result, trauma-informed judges have made three big changes:

- They’ve modified their courts to be safer and less threatening to defendants with histories of childhood trauma and who are often already traumatized.
- They recognize that trauma is passed from one generation to another, and take a two- or three-generational approach in child abuse and neglect cases.
- Because, they say, the traditional approach in criminal justice continues the traumatization of children, youth and families, they’re taking a solution-oriented approach. [Learn more](#)

*“We must learn to lean on others, and sometimes accept others leaning on us... We can't do it alone.”
Alateen – Hope for Children of Alcoholics*

12] [Social Justice Solutions](#) - Is a social worker conceived and operated organization born out of the Stony Brook School of Social Welfare’s commitment to active participation in creating a socially just world.

Vision - We envision a world where political offices are held by social workers and other helping professionals who are committed to empowering and bettering the lives of their constituents, no matter the platform or political affiliation. We see a time when the culture of our society focuses more on unity and commonalities rather than our differences.

“As my sufferings mounted I soon realized that there were two ways in which I could respond to my situation -- either to react with bitterness or seek to transform the suffering into a creative force. I decided to follow the latter course.” Martin Luther King Jr.

13] [ACEs Too High](#) - ACESTooHigh is a news site that reports on research about adverse childhood experiences, including developments in epidemiology, neurobiology, and the biomedical and epigenetic

consequences of toxic stress. We also cover how people, organizations, agencies and communities are implementing practices based on the research. This includes developments in education, juvenile justice, criminal justice, public health, medicine, mental health, social services, and cities, counties and states.

“Everything that irritates us about others can lead us to an understanding of ourselves.” Carl Jung

14] [6 Ways Drumming Heals Body, Mind and Soul](#) - From slowing the decline in fatal brain disease, to generating a sense of oneness with one another and the universe, drumming's physical and spiritual health benefits may be as old as time itself.

Drumming is as fundamental a form of human expression as speaking, and likely emerged long before humans even developed the capability of using the lips, tongue and vocal organs as instruments of communication.

6 Evidence-Based Health Benefits of Drumming

Drumming has been proven in human clinical research to do the following six things:

1. **Reduce Blood Pressure, Anxiety/Stress:** A 2014 study published in the Journal of Cardiovascular Medicine enrolled both middle-aged experienced drummers and a younger novice group in a 40-minute djembe drumming sessions. Their blood pressure, blood lactate and stress and anxiety levels were taken before and after the sessions. Also, their heart rate was monitored at 5 second intervals throughout the sessions. As a result of the trial, all participants saw a drop in stress and anxiety. Systolic blood pressure dropped in the older population postdrumming.
2. **Increase Brain White Matter & Executive Cognitive Function:** A 2014 study published in the Journal of Huntington's Disease found that two months of drumming intervention in Huntington's patients (considered an irreversible, lethal neurodegenerative disease) resulted in “improvements in executive function and changes in white matter microstructure, notably in the genu of the corpus callosum that connects prefrontal cortices of both hemispheres.” The study authors concluded that the pilot study provided novel preliminary evidence that drumming (or related targeted behavioral stimulation) may result in “cognitive enhancement and improvements in callosal white matter microstructure.”
3. **Reduced Pain:** A 2012 study published in Evolutionary Psychology found that active performance of music (singing, dancing and drumming) triggered endorphin release [measured by post-activity increases in pain tolerance] whereas merely listening to music did not. The researchers hypothesized that this may contribute to community bonding in activities involving dance and music-making.
4. **Reduce Stress (Cortisol/DHEA ratio), Increase Immunity:** A 2001 study published in Alternative Therapies and Health Medicine enrolled 111 age- and sex- matched subjects [55 men and 56 women; mean age 30.4 years] and found that drumming "increased dehydroepiandrosterone-to-cortisol ratios, increased natural killer cell activity, and increased lymphokine-activated killer cell activity without alteration in plasma interleukin 2 or interferon-gamma, or in the Beck Anxiety Inventory and the Beck Depression Inventory II."
5. **Transcendent (Re-Creational) Experiences:** A 2004 study published in the journal Multiple Sclerosis revealed that drumming enables participants to go into deeper hypnotic states, and another 2014 study published in PLoS found that when combined with shamanistic instruction,

drumming enables participants to experience decreased heart rate and dreamlike experiences consistent with transcendental experiences.

6. Socio-Emotional Disorders: A powerful 2001 study published in the journal Evidence-Based Complementary and Alternative Medicine found that low-income children who enrolled in a 12-week group drumming intervention saw multiple domains of social-emotional behavior improve significantly, from anxiety to attention, from oppositional to post-traumatic disorders [Learn more](#).

“Music has healing power. It has the ability to take people out of themselves for a few hours.” Elton John

15] [Playing the Congas & having fun!!!](#) Feb 2015 - YouTube 1:02 minutes long

Some time for fun and working off stress!!! A short little clip of something that I do on a daily basis, playing the congas, my drums and/or guitar...In the future, I plan to make some videos that can help teach you how to use whatever is in your home to create your own set of bongos or congas, even if living in an apartment, to help relieve stress, get your anger/rage out in a healthy constructive way and have fun all at the same time. Even if you are 'rhythmically' challenged...*you can do it!!!* MS

“Music melts all the separate parts of our bodies together.” Anais Nin

16] [Oceans Merge Music](#) -Two oceans merge to form a beautiful collaboration inspiring music and soul

When two oceans merge, it is a powerful act of nature. Perhaps more powerful is the poetic concept of seamless ‘joining’, which the image evokes or invokes.

Oceans Merge Music represents a joining of hearts, souls and bodies. It is the merging of two personalities with different tones, flavours, temperatures, textures and colours; yet combine to form a unified entity.

In this case, the meeting of creative minds is between two artists, Amanda Waegeli and Daniel Habermann, who were drawn together from opposite sides of the country with a burning desire to bring music into this beautiful world in which we live.

Inspired by a connection with nature and insights into the ‘Other World’ of limitlessness and timelessness, their music creates a powerful connection, comfort, even healing through a soulful mix of poetry and tone.

“Music is and always has been cathartic for me, a release, an escape, a way of maintaining relative sanity.” Danny

“The songs I write tell of real life stories, of strong feelings of pain and suffering, joy, love, inspiration and wisdom's learnt.” Amanda

“I think music in itself is healing. It's an explosive expression of humanity. It's something we are all touched by. No matter what culture we're from, everyone loves music.” Billy Joel

“The friend who can be silent with us in a moment of despair or confusion, who can stay with us in an hour of grief and bereavement, who can tolerate not knowing... not healing, not curing... that is a friend who cares.” Henri Nouwen

17] [Mental Health Awareness Month: How to help a friend in need](#) - By Jess Scherman @ The College of St. Scholastica.

Fast facts about mental health on college campuses

A reported one in four college students lives with diagnosable mental illnesses, according to NAMI. It is also reported that 75 percent of lifetime cases of mental illness begin to surface by age 24. But only 50 percent of college students who have been diagnosed with a mental health condition disclose that information to a staff or faculty member at their school. One of the main reasons given for withholding this information is fear that the stigma that surrounds their conditions will alter the college's perception of them.

Administrators are working toward alleviating that fear, but they're not the only ones who can help struggling students.

That's where you come in. Friends and loved ones have an opportunity to make an impact in the lives of those struggling with mental health conditions in a way that college administrations aren't always able - you're on the front-lines!

4 ways to help a struggling friend

1] Educate yourself - “For those who have friends and family who are dealing with mental illness, it is helpful to get some accurate information,” says Dr. Anita McLean, licensed clinical psychologist. You may not be able to relate directly to what your loved one is going through, but there is a wealth of resources you can access online or at your local library to help you learn as much as you can.

Familiarize yourself with early warning signs of mental health conditions and read up on health care professionals' advice on how to initiate a conversation. It can be just as helpful to acquaint yourself with what not to say when speaking with a friend or family member who is struggling.

But when all else fails, reach out to the counseling center on your campus. “Most counseling centers see a lot of students who are trying to help family and friends with mental illness and can help educate the helper,” McLean explains.

2] Be a consistent listener - Discussing something as private and sensitive as mental health requires a great deal of trust. “If someone opens up for the first time, express gratitude,” says AJ French, executive director of [Sacred Creations](#), an Illinois-based recovery services provider for individuals who have been diagnosed with mental illness.

“Reassure them that a lot of people live with mental health conditions. It's okay to say, 'I don't know exactly what you're going through, but I want you to know that I care about you.’”

Your willingness to listen without judgment can make a profound difference, but it's not always an easy task. “People withdraw because they feel overwhelmed or not sure how to help. This is

understandable," McLean adds. "Staying connected and offering support counteracts the isolating impact of mental illness, which can be devastating."

3] Know your boundaries - "It is important to remember that while support from friends and family is critical for those dealing with mental illness, it is also important [they] don't become their therapists or treatment providers," urges McLean.

It can be tempting to use the insight you gleaned from your introductory psychology course to diagnose or prescribe help, but there are several levels to the treatment of mental health conditions that only health-care professionals should address.

What you can do is offer to assist them in seeking professional help. "Offer to help your friend connect with a therapist and incorporate healthy lifestyle choices," says Dr. Traci Lowenthal, clinical psychologist and owner of Creative Insights Counseling.

4] Be an advocate - "A major reason people don't seek support and mental health care is because our society openly ridicules people with mental health conditions," French explains, citing the customary Halloween "scary insane asylum" and flippant jokes often witnessed in popular culture.

"Don't tolerate this kind of behavior," French urges. "**Have the courage to point out that a health condition should never be used as a pejorative adjective.**" Anything you can do to chip away at the stigma that surrounds mental health conditions will aid in alleviating the fear that halts people from seeking the professional care they need. [Learn more](#)

"Unconditional love really exists in each of us. It is part of our deep inner being. It is not so much an active emotion as a state of being. It's not 'I love you' for this or that reason, not 'I love you if you love me.' It's love for no reason, love without an object." Ram Dass

Take care, Michael, Mary, 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](#)

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

[@SurvivinSpirit](#) Twitter

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