



*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 August 2015

*“Music is the language of the spirit. It opens the secret of life bringing peace, abolishing strife.”  
Kahlil Gibran*

Hi Folks,

I hope all is well for everyone and those they care for....no complaints here.

I thought I would jump right into an important event for all of us impacted by trauma, abuse & mental health concerns. I hope to see you there. I will be there with my guitar, voice and songs to help with this event. Please share this with everyone, let's be a part of the change for DIGNITY!! We deserve it and it is long overdue.

Join the March for Dignity and Change for Mental Health! August 24, 2015

[Destination Dignity](#) is a collaborative project for change and public engagement around mental health in America. The Destination Dignity march as its focus will bring people from around the world and nation together, with people affected by mental health conditions in the lead, to create energy and solidarity for a more supportive nation. It will consist of a kick-off rally at the Hyatt Regency Hotel and a march on the National Mall. Many communities, local and national organizations are contributing to this effort through the Dignity Mental Health Coalition.

Dignity and rights for people affected by mental health conditions are the counterpoint to a legacy of stigma, shame and discrimination that has caused social isolation, chronic under-funding of services, unnecessary levels of disability and unemployment, and the unacceptable levels of premature death, including by suicide, of people affected symptoms of mental illness. Public awareness for these issues must be led by people who have experienced these impacts personally, along with their supporters, allies and related professionals, in order to both realize change and engage the previously silent majority of Americans affected to these issues. [Learn more](#)

[About the March](#) - The moment has come to re-frame mental health as a basic right that must be realized in the context of human dignity. The Destination Dignity March, a collective effort of thousands affected by mental health conditions, is a crucial step in this direction for a healthier America.

[Dignity Mental Health Coalition](#) Contact - [dignitymarch@mentalhealthsf.org](mailto:dignitymarch@mentalhealthsf.org) #MHDignityMarch

*“A great deal can be learned as a result of painful circumstances, but they are not my only teachers. I live in a world of wonders. Today I will pay attention to their gentle wisdom.” Courage to Change*

1] [Mike Skinner on PTSD, mental health advocacy, music and more](#) - Portland Mental Health Examiner.com Jenny Westberg

PTSD Awareness Month has come and gone again [it was in June], but post-traumatic stress is no respecter of calendars, and PTSD awareness is always needed.

Post-traumatic stress disorder develops as a result of severe trauma, such as sexual violence, actual or threatened death, military combat, torture or being kidnapped. According to PTSD United, an estimated 8% of Americans have PTSD at any given time, totaling 24.4 million people – the same as the population of Texas.

There are lots of ways to boost your PTSD awareness, but one of the best is simply talking to someone who lives with the condition. I talked to Mike Skinner.

Skinner, 61, is a musician, father of five, and mental health advocate who was diagnosed with complex post-traumatic stress disorder in the early 1990s, after a turbulent childhood where he says he was subject to “all types” of abuse.

Today Skinner powers his advocacy with [The Surviving Spirit](#), a website-newsletter-organization-change agent Skinner created “to promote Hope, Healing and Help for those impacted by trauma, abuse and mental health concerns through the use of the creative arts.” The group has a speaker's bureau, media center, abundant material on trauma and recovery, and a newsletter archive that goes back to 2008.

In the following interview, Skinner talks about trauma, recovery, art and music, and advocacy - [Read the entire article](#)

*"Live your life from your heart. Share from your heart. And your story will touch and heal people's souls." Melody Beattie*

2] [Caregivers Take Note – Music as Therapy](#) - Alzheimer's Association - Blog

When Glen Campbell took the stage at the Grammy Awards and accepted his Lifetime Achievement Award, he did so as one of the more than 5 million Americans diagnosed with Alzheimer’s disease. What is inspiring about the 75-year-old Campbell’s Grammy night appearance is that he has not retired from his love of making music despite his recent diagnosis. In fact, he is starting his Farewell Tour and is cutting a new album.

**Is music one of the keys to a longer, happier life – despite your health issues?**

The news about Campbell got me thinking about studies and articles I have read about music therapy. Although music has been with us since the dawn of time, in the last few decades studies have found that music as a therapeutic tool can increase cognitive function in Alzheimer’s patients, help premature

infants gain weight, encourage autistic children to communicate, lead stroke patients to regain speech and mobility, control pain for dental, surgical and orthopedic patients, and manage anxiety and depression for psychiatric patients.

Dr. Oliver Sacks, a renowned neurologist and psychologist at Columbia University Medical Center best known for his 1973 book *Awakenings*, which became an Academy Award-nominated film starring Robin Williams and Robert De Niro, and who also wrote *Musicophilia: Tales of Music and the Brain*, testified at the Hearing before the Senate Special Committee on Aging entitled, “Forever Young: Music and Aging,” and issued this statement:

“The power of music is very remarkable... One sees Parkinsonian patients unable to walk, but able to dance perfectly well or patients almost unable to talk, who are able to sing perfectly well... I think that music therapy and music therapists are crucial and indispensable in institutions for elderly people and among neurologically disabled patients.”

**The Magic Brain Workout Is Music**    [Learn more](#)

*“I have learned that some of the nicest people you’ll ever meet are those who have suffered a traumatic event or loss. I admire them for their strength, but most especially for their life gratitude - a gift often taken for granted by the average person in society.”* Sasha Azevedo

3] [“Childhood Disrupted”](#) - Donna Jackson Nakazawa explains how your biography becomes your biology...and that you really can heal - ACEs Too High

If you want to know why you’ve been married three – or more - times. Or why you just can’t stop smoking. Or why the ability to control your drinking is slipping away from you. Or why you have so many physical problems that doctors just can’t seem to help you with. Or why you feel as if there’s no joy in your life even though you’re “successful”, there’s a book that will show how the problems that you’ve been grappling with in your adult life have their roots in childhood events that you probably didn’t even consider had any bearing on what you’re dealing with now. After hundreds of interviews and two years of writing, science journalist Donna Jackson Nakazawa’s long-awaited book, [Childhood Disrupted: How Your Biography Becomes Your Biology, and How You Can Heal](#), hit the bookstores [and e-bookstores] on Tuesday.

Besides being the first self-help book about ACEs, it’s the first book that explains what’s been called the unified science of human development in clear language for people who aren’t scientists or medical professionals. ACEs refers to adverse childhood experiences, a term coined in the [CDC-Kaiser Permanente ACE Study](#) that was first published in 1998.

The study revealed that childhood trauma is very common - two-thirds of us have experienced at least one type - and how that can lead to adult onset of chronic disease, mental illness, violence and being a victim of violence. It also showed that the more types of trauma you experience, the greater the risk of alcoholism, heart disease, cancer, suicide, etc. [[Got Your ACE Score?](#)] *Childhood Disrupted* goes into great detail about how the consequences of the toxic stress caused by that trauma damages kids’ developing brains [and damaged our developing brains when we were children], as well as our bodies and genes. The good news is that the resilience research shows just our plastic our brains are, and how

much our bodies can heal, given the chance. What makes Childhood Disrupted come to life are the 13 people whom Nakazawa followed for year through their histories of trauma and their journeys of healing. Through their stories, it's easy to see ourselves. [Learn more](#)

*“The shock of any trauma, I think changes your life. It's more acute in the beginning and after a little time you settle back to what you were. However it leaves an indelible mark on your psyche.” Alex Lifeson*

4] [ACEs Too High](#) 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.

*“Sometimes a breakdown can be the beginning of a kind of breakthrough, a way of living in advance through a trauma that prepares you for a future of radical transformation. Cherrie Moraga*

5] [Project Semicolon - Your Story Isn't Over Yet](#) - Project Semicolon is a faith-based non-profit movement dedicated to presenting hope and love to those who are struggling with depression, suicide, addiction and self-injury. Project Semicolon exists to encourage, love and inspire.

STAY STRONG; LOVE ENDLESSLY; CHANGE LIVES

*You are not alone. Your story isn't over yet.* - Amy Bleuel Founder & President

Through ***Hope is Alive*** we are sharing stories of those who have struggled with Depression, Abuse, Addiction, Self-Injury, Mental Illness and Suicide. It is our hope that through this campaign we can show others that there is hope despite the pain. No matter how hard it gets we can declare that ***Hope is Alive***.

Listed below are stories of those who found HOPE in the midst of their pain. We will continue to add these stories throughout this campaign. We encourage you to share your stories throughout social media by use our hashtag: #HopeisAlive15. [Learn more](#)

*“There came a time when the risk to remain tight in the bud was more painful than the risk it took to blossom.” Anais Nin*

6] [Have you seen anyone with a semicolon tattoo? Here's what it's about.](#) - by Laura Willard - Upworthy - *Things That Matter: Pass 'Em On.*

***One small character, one big purpose.*** That's right: the semicolon. It's a tattoo that has gained popularity in recent years, but unlike other random or mystifying trends, this one has a serious meaning behind it. (And no, it's not just the mark of a really committed grammar nerd.)

This mark represents mental health struggles and the importance of suicide prevention. ***Project Semicolon*** was born from a social media movement in 2013.

They describe themselves as a "movement dedicated to presenting hope and love to those who are struggling with depression, suicide, addiction, and self-injury. Project Semicolon exists to encourage, love, and inspire."

But why a semicolon? - "A semicolon is used when an author could've chosen to end their sentence, but chose not to. The author is you and the sentence is your life."

Originally created as a day where people were encouraged to draw a semicolon on their bodies and photograph it, it quickly grew into something greater and more permanent. Today, people all over the world are tattooing the mark as a reminder of their struggle, victory, and survival. [Learn more](#)

*"We need 4 hugs a day for survival. We need 8 hugs a day for maintenance. We need 12 hugs a day for growth." Virginia Satir*

7] [SAMHSA recognizes honorees at the 10th anniversary Voice Awards](#) - The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

This is the 10th anniversary of the Voice Awards – program based on proven strategies to counter negative attitudes, beliefs, and behavior associated with mental and substance use disorders by recognizing accurate depictions of behavioral health conditions by entertainment media. The Voice Awards also connects the entertainment community with the people they are portraying: consumers and peer leaders. This year, the event will spotlight the importance of preventing suicide through meeting behavioral health care needs.

"Whether they are watching a movie or television program, or listening to a personal story of recovery first-hand, it is critical to reach our audiences with messages that reinforce behavioral health is essential to overall health, prevention works, treatment is effective, and people recover," said SAMHSA Administrator Pamela S. Hyde. "We applaud the Voice Award winners for their honesty, leadership, and courage in giving voice to millions of individuals living with mental and substance use disorders and their recovery journeys." [Learn more and see the listing of who was recognized](#)

*"People with clenched fists can not shake hands" Indira Gandhi*

8] **Angel Program** - [Gloucester, Mass., Police Program Provides Treatment For Drug Users](#) : NPR  
Please note – Audio Recording also available at website 4:15 minutes

Drug addicts have begun turning themselves into the police department in Gloucester, Mass., after the police chief announced an amnesty program. Addicts who turn themselves in and hand over their drugs will go right into treatment, without criminal charges.

**Partial Transcript of the show** - MELISSA BLOCK, HOST:

And now to Gloucester, Mass., where police are trying out a different way of dealing with drug users. This comes amid a rising number of fatal opioid overdoses. Instead of arresting users, police are helping them get treatment. Since the program went into effect on Monday, four people have come to police asking for help. From member station WBUR, Deborah Becker reports.

DEBORAH BECKER, BYLINE: With five fatal overdoses since January in this seaside city of about 29,000 people, Gloucester police Chief Leonard Campanello says it's time to admit that the war on drugs has failed.

LEONARD CAMPANELLO: We can take a drug dealer down and three will replace him. And that drug dealer that's taken off the street does not affect the user at all. What we see now with the coming to light of the addiction issue is that we need to be involved on that side of it, on the demand side of it.

BECKER: Under Gloucester's so-called Angel program, someone can go to police asking for addiction treatment. Police would then call an angel. That's a volunteer who waits with that person at the local hospital for what is usually publicly-funded treatment unless there's private insurance.

CAMPANELLO: To do a short intake with the person who comes to the station. We contact an angel. We transport the person to the hospital where they're met by the angel and then they're fast-tracked towards a treatment.

BECKER: When the first person came to police asking for help this week, 57-year-old George Hackford got the call at about 3:30 a.m. He met the 31-year-old man at the hospital and waited with him for about 11 hours.

GEORGE HACKFORD: It's a very sensitive time for them because they've, you know, they've come in. They've decided that they're going to change their lives, and so it's a critical point. So they just wanted somebody to sit with them and chat to them.

BECKER: Although officials say they will not turn anyone away, the program does have some exceptions. It will not accept anyone with an outstanding arrest warrant or anyone with a history of serious drug offenses, like trafficking. Police will allow someone to turn in their drugs without being charged if that person gets treatment. Some prosecutors question whether police can make that promise.

KATHY DAY: The success in this program will be the conversation it's generated, the language, the use of addiction as a disease. It may be breaking some of the stigma that stops people from getting help.

[Learn more](#) Please note - Audio Recording also available at website 4:15 minutes

*“Never stop learning because life never stops teaching.” Unknown*

9] [For Addicts and their Friends, Families, and Caregivers](#) - Gloucester Police Department

Are you addicted to heroin, opioids, or other drugs? Know someone who is?

It's time to get help.

The Gloucester Police Department has created a revolutionary new policing program aimed at getting addicts the help they need, instead of putting them in handcuffs.

How does it work?

If an addict comes into the Gloucester Police Department and asks for help, an officer will take them to

the Addison Gilbert Hospital, where they will be paired with a volunteer “ANGEL” who will help guide them through the process. We have partnered with more than a dozen additional treatment centers to ensure that our patients receive the care and treatment they deserve — not in days or weeks, but immediately.

If you have drugs or drug paraphernalia on you, we will dispose of it for you. You will not be arrested. You will not be charged with a crime. You will not be jailed.

All you have to do is come to the police station and ask for help. We are here to do just that.

*“Feeling our feelings is one important part of the recovery process. Learning how to balance feelings with appropriate action is another.” Courage to Change*

10] [WAKING THE BONES](#), a memoir by Elizabeth Kirschner [see her e-mail 7/28/15 to do this right]

WAKING THE BONES is a poetic tour de force encompassing the full spectrum of a life. Book-ended by the speaker’s current years in Kittery Point, ME, this memoir not only chronicles an early childhood marked by the violence her mother and father perpetrated upon her, it also narrates her adolescence, early adulthood, the zenith and demise of her marriage, motherhood, transfiguring madness and subsequent flight to an old, falling down camp on the water in Kittery Point, ME.

The book turns on how the speaker, by rehabilitating her little house, nail by nail, bone by bone, rehabilitated herself. The speaker achieves this by allowing the “miraculous to come close,” as evidenced when she and the “Wednesday Walkers” witness a monarch migration, one that concludes her own epic migration with a “grand Kirschnerian finale.” This finale is an arrival into the “bright world” to which she, we, thee, all belong.

The drive behind writing this memoir is both simple and complex. Almost everyone has a family member, friend or they themselves, have been subject to child abuse, both physical and sexual, trauma or mental illness. My story is universal. Sadly and, yes, deathly, the silences around these matters is, in its own way, horrifying. To speak of the terrific harm that we, as children, or those we love have experienced, is taboo, yet this taboo is what allows such violence to run rampant.

My intention doesn’t stop here. Using our voices is power, and using our voices to speak about the human soul’s propensity to heal is just as expansive and necessary. That a joyful life is possible, even when a child has been terrorized by atrocity, is a critical message, one which I wish to broadcast loudly. I am a living testament of the grace and tenacity of the human spirit’s will not just to survive, but thrive.

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Elizabeth Kirschner has published five volumes of poetry, most recently, Surrender to Light, 2009, Cherry Grove Editions and My Life as a Doll, 2008, Autumn House Press. My Life as a Doll was nominated for the Lenore Marshall Prize and named Kirschner as the Literary Arts Fellow in state of Maine in 2010. She has also published over two dozen essays with The Coal Hill Review and is widely published in numerous literary magazines, both nationally and internationally. Most recently, Kirschner

taught in Fairfield University's low-residency Program in Creative Writing. Previous teaching experience includes Boston College, Boston University and Carnegie-Mellon University. She offers both Poetry Writing and Memoir Writing workshops in her Kittery Point community, as well as mentoring and tutoring services. [Learn more](#)

*"We must alter our lives in order to alter our hearts, for it is impossible to live one way and pray another." William Law*

11] [Eyes Upon Us – film](#) - Written by Andy Golub and Jennifer Scott

*"Life doesn't always end...just because you want it to." Taren Foley*

"Eyes Upon Waking" is a passion project, told from my heart, about the disease of suicide and how it is misunderstood by society.

This film uncovers the darkness in the minds of those who suffer from their emotions, yet shows how light can be found with the right kind of help. Those who are lost to us cannot be returned - I want to bring awareness of what they went through to those they've left behind.

This story is for any person with a friend or family member who has taken their own life, and is left asking why.

*"The truth will set you free. But first, it will piss you off." Gloria Steinem*

12] [Benzodiazepines not recommended for patients with PTSD or recent trauma](#) - Medical News Today

Benzodiazepine drugs are widely used in patients with posttraumatic stress disorder [PTSD], but available evidence suggests that they are not effective - and may even be harmful, concludes a systematic review and meta-analysis in the July Journal of Psychiatric Practice. The journal is published by Wolters Kluwer.

"Benzodiazepines are ineffective for PTSD treatment and prevention, and risks associated with their use tend to outweigh potential short-term benefits," write Dr. Jeffrey Guina and colleagues from Wright State University, Dayton, Ohio. They also find evidence to suggest that using benzodiazepines in patients with recent trauma can even increase the risk of developing PTSD.

**Benzodiazepines Are 'Relatively Contraindicated' for PTSD** - The researchers performed a systematic review to identify clinical trials or observational studies concerning the use of benzodiazepines in patients with PTSD, or in patients with recent trauma evaluated for possible PTSD. The study was the first comprehensive review and meta-analysis [pooled data analysis] to focus on this issue.

Benzodiazepines are a "common and controversial" treatment for PTSD. Some mental health professionals argue that benzodiazepines can reduce anxiety, insomnia, and irritability associated with PTSD. Others suggest that benzodiazepines may actually prolong and worsen the disorder. "With all the news stories today pertaining to the inadequate treatment and mistreatment of military veterans with PTSD, it is important that the health care community continues to analyze what we are doing," Dr.

Guina comments. [Learn more](#)

*“Music acts like a magic key, to which the most tightly closed heart opens.” Maria Augusta von Trapp*

13] [Shell Shocked](#) – audio track - Robby Keating - Gympie, Queensland Australia

Having lived a crazy alternative life the last few decades- I have ended up writing quite a few song ideas - I have only one song called Shell Shocked- the first to be published.

I have not lived the music life that so many have lived, that I know of, although, my Grandfather was a Jazz muso in England- so music is bound to come out somewhere in the offspring - I have mostly played at home or around campfires - although I have had the support of some very authentic, highly experienced musicians, that have made this first song way better than my original puny guitar tune - Without a great catalyst friend that spurred me to record in a good studio, I might never have started to actually take my music to the next level.

Basically I am still in kindy when it comes to music - however I am loving it ..& More to come ..

[FYI – 'kindy' – Australian for kindergarten]

### **Shell Shocked**

I'm shell shocked  
from my childhood  
This is why I'm like I am  
Yet I can still feel good

I copped a lot of shrapnel when  
I was you I was shooting blanks for years  
Now I take my time a  
and I still shed some tears

I've got a paranoid streak  
and at times it's handy  
Although I'm still learning to love  
sometimes I still can't stand me

I'm shell shocked  
Its' traveled to my brain  
Sometimes I boarderline  
A world where it's all gone insane  
It's all gone insane do do do do do do do do  
Do do do do do

I'm still here  
I stand with no shame

I didn't let it take my heart I  
realize there is no blame

I'm still here, I'm still here  
I don't want to break your heart  
I realize you too got pain

Now I'm a rollin' dice  
when I'm in a down mood  
But when I'm up do you handle me will you  
handle me Being real to you

I'm shell shocked  
its' traveled to my brain  
Sometimes I boarderline  
A world where it's all gone insane  
It's all gone insane it's all gone insane  
do do do do do do do do  
Do do do do do do

I'm shell shocked  
From my life  
This is why I'm like I am  
But I can still feel good I can still feel good  
I can still feel good Even on a bad day  
I can still feel good I can still feel good  
I can still feel good Much better on a good day

I'm shell shocked  
it's traveled to my brain  
Sometimes I boarderline  
A world where it's all gone Insane

*"Music can change the world because it can change people." Bono*

14] [Healing from the Inside Out](#) : Committed to Freedom - A nice short read...but hits home for most of us - this partial excerpt applies when we look for a savior, a hero; when in reality, we are our own superhero to pull us out of the wreck..

"A hindrance for many survivors is that they are waiting for someone else to begin that validation process. They want someone, somewhere, to make it right or pay for what happened to the extent that it no longer has a hold on them. When that doesn't take place, the interior crumbles a bit more and the strength or tenacity to continue can wither."

We say this constantly, but you are facing a very unjust battle. You are fighting to reclaim yourself from the actions of others. There is absolutely nothing fair about it, and yet, the only person who can make the necessary changes to become healthier is you." [Read the entire article](#)

*“Where you stumble, there your treasure lies.” Joseph Campbell*

15] [Leveraging The Lived Experience Of Peer Support Staff](#)

"The Lewin Group, in partnership with the Medicare-Medicaid Coordination Office [MMCO] which is part of the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services [CMS)], has recently produced two videos and corresponding tip sheets for behavioral health provider organizations. These products describe success stories of peer support staff and advise organizations on how they can best use peer support staff to improve their care delivery."

The links are below. Please feel free to share widely:

<https://www.resourcesforintegratedcare.com/peer-support/stigma>

<https://www.resourcesforintegratedcare.com/peer-support/leveraging>

If you have any questions, please contact Brigit Kyei-Baffour [brigit.kyei-baffour@lewin.com](mailto:brigit.kyei-baffour@lewin.com) 703-269-5762.

*“Though no one can go back and make a brand new start, anyone can start from now and make a brand new ending.” Carl Bard*

16] [Facebook Introduces New Tools to Help Prevent Suicide](#) - NBC News

People struggling with thoughts of suicide or self-harm often drop hints to friends in conversation, in emails - even on Facebook. The social network is adding resources to help people having such thoughts. Starting in the next few months, a post indicating suicidal or harmful thoughts can be flagged by a friend as such, at which point Facebook will be alerted - after advising the flagger to call emergency services if deemed necessary.

“We have teams working around the world, 24/7, who review any report that comes in,” the company wrote. “They prioritize the most serious reports, like self-injury, and send help and resources to those in distress.”

The troubled poster will then receive a message from Facebook saying that someone was concerned about them, and providing options for talking with a friend or mental health expert at the [National Suicide Prevention Lifeline](#). The service will be rolling out over the next few months, but only in the U.S. for now - though similar capabilities are being worked on for other countries.

*“If you would be loved, love, and be lovable.” Benjamin Franklin*

17] [Scientists have discovered that living near trees is good for your health](#) - The Washington Post

In a new paper published Thursday, a team of researchers present a compelling case for why urban neighborhoods filled with trees are better for your physical health. The research appeared in the open access journal Scientific Reports.

The large study builds on a body of prior research showing the cognitive and psychological benefits of nature scenery - but also goes farther in actually beginning to quantify just how much an addition of trees in a neighborhood enhances health outcomes. The researchers, led by psychologist Omid Kardan of the University of Chicago, were able to do so because they were working with a vast dataset of public, urban trees kept by the city of Toronto - some 530,000 of them, categorized by species, location, and tree diameter - supplemented by satellite measurements of non-public green space [for instance, trees in a person's back yard.

They also had the health records for over 30,000 Toronto residents, reporting not only individual self-perceptions of health but also heart conditions, prevalence of cancer, diabetes, mental health problems and much more.

“Controlling for income, age and education, we found a significant independent effect of trees on the street on health,” said Marc Berman, a co-author of the study and also a psychologist at the University of Chicago. “It seemed like the effect was strongest for the public [trees]. Not to say the other trees don't have an impact, but we found stronger effects for the trees on the street.”

Indeed, given the large size of the study, the researchers were able to compare the beneficial effect of trees in a neighborhood to other well-known demographic factors that are related to improved health, such as age and wealth. Thus, they found that “having 10 more trees in a city block, on average, improves health perception in ways comparable to an increase in annual personal income of \$10,000 and moving to a neighborhood with \$10,000 higher median income or being 7 years younger.” [Berman notes that self-perception of health is admittedly subjective, but adds that it “correlates pretty strongly with the objective health measures” the study considered.]

Indeed, the finding wasn't limited to self-perceived health. For cardio-metabolic conditions - a category that includes not only heart disease but stroke, diabetes, obesity and more - the study similarly found that an increase of 11 trees per city block was “comparable to an increase in annual personal income of \$20,000 and moving to a neighborhood with \$20,000 higher median income or being 1.4 years younger.”

The results are powerful because of the size of the study, however, because they are “correlational,” as scientists put it, they cannot definitively identify the precise mechanism by which trees seem to improve health. However, there are some obvious possibilities, including one explanation that seems likely to at least partly account for the results. This is that trees are known to improve urban air quality by pulling ozone, particulates, and other pollutants into their leaves and out of the air, and thus, partly protecting people from them.

But that's not the only possible explanation. Others, says Berman, include stress reduction that comes from being around greenery - a mental effect that translates into physical benefits - or the possibility that being around trees somehow increases one's propensity to exercise. He also suggests that air quality improvement alone may not be able to explain why people subjectively perceive their health to be better when they live around more trees, in addition to the improvements seen in other health measures - implying a possible psychological factor. “People have sort of neglected the psychological benefits of the environment,” [Read the entire article](#)

*“Woman must not accept; she must challenge. She must not be awed by that which has been built up*

*around her; she must reverence that woman in her which struggles for expression. Margaret Sanger*

18] [New research suggests nature walks are good for your brain](#) - The Washington Post

In the past several months, a bevy of studies have added to a growing literature on the mental and physical benefits of spending time outdoors. That includes recent research showing that short micro-breaks spent looking at a nature scene have a rejuvenating effect on the brain - boosting levels of attention — and also that kids who attend schools featuring more greenery fare better on cognitive tests.

And Monday, yet another addition to the literature arrived - but this time with an added twist. It's a cognitive neuroscience study, meaning not only that benefits from a nature experience were captured in an experiment, but also that their apparent neural signature was observed through brain scans.

....both before and after the walk, the participants had their brains scanned. In particular, the researchers examined a brain region called the subgenual prefrontal cortex - which the study calls “an area that has been shown to be particularly active during the type of maladaptive, self-reflective thought and behavioral withdrawal that occurs during rumination.”

The result was that individuals who took the 90-minute nature walk showed a decrease in rumination - they actually answered the questionnaire differently, just a short period of time later. And their brain activity also showed a change consistent with this result. In particular, the scans showed decreased activity in the subgenual prefrontal cortex, the region of interest.

“This provides robust results for us that nature experience, even of a short duration, can decrease this pattern of thinking that is associated with the onset, in some cases, of mental illnesses like depression,” says Gregory Bratman, the lead author of the study. [Read the entire article](#)

*“Only unflinching realization of one's own past reality, of what really happened can break through the chain of abuse. If I know and can feel what my parents did to me when I was totally defenseless, I no longer need victims to befog my awareness. I no longer need to reenact what happened to me with the help of innocent people because now I KNOW what happened. And if I want to live my life consciously, without exploiting others, then I must actively accept that knowledge.” Alice Miller*

19] [Child abuse is everybody's business](#) - Jan Hunt's response to a letter in the July-August issue of *Mothering*

I was distressed by the letter from “Concerned Mother in New York” who believes that families should have the freedom to raise their children as they please, and the rest of us should “mind our own business”.

While families do have the right to make many choices in their approach to parenting as with any other facet of their lives, they do not have the moral right to hurt another person. No one has that right. There can be nothing right in one human being deliberately hurting another human being, no matter what their relationship happens to be. Would “Concerned Mother” agree that families who are caring for an elderly, bedridden relative have the right to hit that person if it is “needed”? I suspect that anyone could see how cruel such treatment would be. Yet babies and young children are even more helpless than the elderly, and they have the right to learn by example what compassion is.

Babies are born with vast quantities of love to share, and no one has the right to betray that love and trust. And if they do, the suffering that betrayed person can inflict later on can be staggering. For more on that subject, I recommend Alice Miller's illuminating books on Hitler's childhood, and her article on my web site, "[Adolf Hitler: How Could a Monster Succeed in Blinding a Nation?](#)". While not all punished children will become as heartless as Hitler, their capacity to love and trust others will inevitably suffer to some degree. With that in mind, it seems clear that the welfare of children should be everybody's business.

As Lillian Katz has warned, "Each of us must come to care about everyone else's children. We must recognize that the welfare of our children is intimately linked to the welfare of all other people's children. After all, when one of our children needs life-saving surgery, someone else's child will perform it. If one of our children is harmed by violence, someone else's child will be responsible for the violent act. The good life for our own children can be secured only if a good life is also secured for all other people's children."

I hope Concerned Mother will consider the wisdom and seriousness of this statement.

Jan Hunt, M.Sc., Director [The Natural Child Project Society](#) [NCPS]

*All children behave as well as they are treated.*

**NCPS** -Mission Statement - Our vision is a world in which all children are treated with dignity, respect, understanding, and compassion. In such a world, every child can grow into adulthood with a generous capacity for love and trust.

*"Elder abuse is a violation of human rights and a significant cause of illness, injury, loss of productivity, isolation and despair."* World Health Organization

*"Patience is the key to paradise." Turkish proverb*

20] [National Center on Elder Abuse](#) - Directed by the U.S. Administration on Aging, NCEA is a resource for policy makers, social service and health care practitioners, the justice system, researchers, advocates, and families.

The NCEA is the place to turn to for up-to-date information regarding research, training, best practices, news and resources on elder abuse, neglect and exploitation. The Center provides information to policy makers, professionals in the elder justice field, and the public.

The Administration on Aging is proud to be a leader in the field of elder rights. Research shows that as many as two million elders are abused in the United States. As a government, as a society and as individuals, we must increase our efforts to insure that all older Americans age with dignity and honor. Whatever brings you to the NCEA site, we hope you find it helpful. We are always interested in feedback.

*"The three grand essentials to happiness in life are something to do, something to love, and something to hope for." Joseph Addison*

21] [Elder Abuse and Neglect: How You Can Help](#) – Help Guide.org - A trusted non-profit guide to mental health and well-being

**Warning Signs, Risk Factors, Prevention, and Reporting Abuse** - Many elderly adults are abused in their own homes, in relatives' homes, and even in facilities responsible for their care. If you suspect that an elderly person is at risk from a neglectful or overwhelmed caregiver, or being preyed upon financially, it's important to speak up. Learn about the warning signs of elder abuse, what the risk factors are, and how you can prevent and report the problem.

*"Those who believe they can do something and those who believe they can't are both right." Henry Ford*

22] [Mental Wellness Today](#) - launch of brand new issues for both Anchor and SZ Magazine.

Each magazine has undergone significant changes: from an improved format, to a more readable layout, to brighter imagery, to even more special features that our readers have been asking for. We are very pleased with the results, and encourage you to check them out and let us know your thoughts.

For those who may not know, Anchor: Overcoming Depression, Bipolar and Anxiety is a digital magazine specifically designed to aid those dealing with those disorders on their roads to recovery. SZ Magazine is your #1 source for information on schizophrenia, schizoaffective disorder and psychosis. Both magazines are published 4 times each year and can be purchased as individual issues or in a full-year subscription on our website. Preview <http://mentalwellnesstoday.com/publications/>

*"I discovered the secret of the sea in meditation upon a dewdrop." Kahlil Gibran*

23] [Breaking My Silence by Maya Hope Kitwana](#) - Friesen Press Bookstore

In this memoir, Maya Hope Kitwana exposes her truth; showing from the inside out what was required for her to survive her childhood nightmares. These nightmares no longer torment Maya Hope Kitwana. Her story provides a lighthouse for others who have suffered abuse. A way out to discover love. A strong word of caution - the material shared isn't for everyone. Maya's story is not just a recap of unflinching secrets. This is a graphic, yet fearless look at a woman's journey through rape, incest, and abandonment - and her movement toward hope, healing, intimacy, and love. Maya charts a course that is painful and powerful.

This work is about secrets and rage. It is about honesty and revenge. Despair. Faith. Kindness.

***Over thirty years of silence is too long.***

My name is Maya Hope Kitwana, and I'm a mother of three beautiful and generous souls. Trained as an aesthetician and holistic practitioner, I've made it my life's work to bring out the beauty in - and give comfort - to those I encounter. My Caribbean heritage offers me a different perspective, and my humble beginnings keep me grounded. This journey has taken over thirty years.

*"Argue for your limitations, and sure enough they're yours." Richard Bach*

*This story highlights why we need to end abuse...at the very least, have help for those who have been hurt so they do not go on to hurt others... MS*

24] [Mandela, I'm Not: The Taxing Life of a Mother Coping With Trauma](#) – Indian Country Today Media Network.com - Mary Annette Pember

“Not everyone can be like Nelson Mandela. Some of us are just ordinary,” I explained to a younger relative who was complaining about my mother’s challenging behavior and lack of motherly love towards the family.

I told her that my mother was raised in an Indian boarding school with precious little experience of family life or examples of good parenting skills. The mere fact that she actually stayed around and tried to mother us at all was a miracle in itself. The young relative had scoffed at this explanation and asked, “What about Nelson Mandela? He had a tough life but look at all the good things he did!”

We humans are held to such high standards when it comes to dealing with family challenges and adversity. Nowhere is this truer than for our mothers and the impossible standards our society sets for them.

Today’s news carried a story about a mother, who like my own mother and me has failed to meet the Nelson Mandela standard. Overwhelmed with dealing with her 11 year old special-needs daughter, Catrina Fant had locked her out of the house, called police and asked them to take her away before she hurt her. According to police, the temperature was 90 degrees outside when they arrived to find Fant’s daughter sitting on the porch crying. When police argued that her child should remain at home, Fant began screaming, “F@@@k her, I don’t care about her, you need to take her away!”

The Fant family is African American and lives in a decent but poor neighborhood.

According to the report, Fant, 35 and a single mom, has three other children in her home and has called social services on several occasions asking the agency to remove the child from her home. Rather than remove her daughter the Hamilton County Social Services Agency offered her services that she refused according to Cincinnati police.

Social workers have now removed all the children from the woman’s home. Fant has been charged with child endangerment and ordered not to have any contact with her children.

As the mother of two special-needs children, this scenario is not so unthinkable to me. On several occasions I’ve paused before turning into my driveway and fantasized about simply driving off into the sunset until my credit card limit is exceeded.

My autistic teen is especially given to loud meltdowns that my neighbors know well. I can only imagine how our family drama sounds from the street as we try to reason with her and sometimes give in to voicing our own frustrations. I’ve said hurtful, regrettable things to my children. Sometimes I’ve had to leave the house and cool down at the local coffee shop.

My husband and I have felt as though we were at the ends of emotional and physical limitations, many,

many times. I was not born with a particular affinity for working with special-needs children and honestly I don't know why the Creator gave them to me. If I had been given the option, I wonder if I would have chosen this life. Of course, living with them is often rewarding and fun but it is incredibly hard and sometimes I feel frustrated and resentful.

If I am totally honest, I have to say that I understand Catrina Fant..

The differences between Catrina Fant and me are mostly related to economic status. I have financial resources, I live in a nice, white suburb with a good infrastructure, I have gotten help to address the impact of my own childhood trauma on my life and I have the support of an involved, committed partner. Without these blessings, I often wonder how I would fare. Reading about Fant makes me think, "There for the grace of God go I."

....No one has asked the most important question about this woman and her family, 'What happened to you and how can we help?' versus 'What is wrong with you?' [Read the entire article](#)

*"Not all scars show. Not all wounds heal. Sometimes you can't see, the pain someone feels." Lisa French*

25] [Indian Country Today Media Network.com](#) - Mary Annette Pember – more of her powerful articles

[Sexual Abuse to Prison Pipeline Report: A Native Perspective](#) - ICTMN.com

['Punched in the Gut': Uncovering the Horrors of Boarding Schools](#) – ICTMN.com

[Trauma May Be Woven Into DNA of Native Americans](#) - ICTMN.com

[Lakota Fight Suicide Spirit with Crowdfunding](#) – ICTMN.com

*"Love is something we can never describe in words. But we all can feel it and express it towards our loved ones." Unknown*

26] [He Was Grieving Over The Death Of His Best Friend, Until An Old Man Told Him THIS.](#) Bobby Popovic

From the depths of old internet comments comes another incredible gem of a story. One user wrote the following heartfelt plea online:

**"My friend just died. I don't know what to do."**

The rest of the post has been deleted, only the title remains. However, the helpful responses live on, and one of them was absolutely incredible. The reply by this self-titled "old guy" might just change the way you approach life and death.

I'm old. What that means is that I've survived [so far] and a lot of people I've known and loved did not.

I've lost friends, best friends, acquaintances, co-workers, grandparents, mom, relatives, teachers,

mentors, students, neighbors, and a host of other folks. I have no children, and I can't imagine the pain it must be to lose a child. But here's my two cents...

**I wish I could say you get used to people dying.** But I never did. I don't want to. It tears a hole through me whenever somebody I love dies, no matter the circumstances. But I don't want it to "not matter". I don't want it to be something that just passes. My scars are a testament to the love and the relationship that I had for and with that person. And if the scar is deep, so was the love. So be it.

**Scars are a testament to life.** Scars are a testament that I can love deeply and live deeply and be cut, or even gouged, and that I can heal and continue to live and continue to love. And the scar tissue is stronger than the original flesh ever was. Scars are a testament to life. Scars are only ugly to people who can't see.

As for grief, you'll find it comes in waves. When the ship is first wrecked, you're drowning, with wreckage all around you. Everything floating around you reminds you of the beauty and the magnificence of the ship that was, and is no more. And all you can do is float. You find some piece of the wreckage and you hang on for a while. Maybe it's some physical thing. Maybe it's a happy memory or a photograph. Maybe it's a person who is also floating. For a while, all you can do is float. Stay alive.

In the beginning, the waves are 100 feet tall and crash over you without mercy. They come 10 seconds apart and don't even give you time to catch your breath. All you can do is hang on and float. After a while, maybe weeks, maybe months, you'll find the waves are still 100 feet tall, but they come further apart. When they come, they still crash all over you and wipe you out. But in between, you can breathe, you can function. You never know what's going to trigger the grief. It might be a song, a picture, a street intersection, the smell of a cup of coffee. It can be just about anything...and the wave comes crashing. But in between waves, there is life.

Somewhere down the line, and it's different for everybody, you find that the waves are only 80 feet tall. Or 50 feet tall. And while they still come, they come further apart. You can see them coming. An anniversary, a birthday, or Christmas, or landing at O'Hare. You can see it coming, for the most part, and prepare yourself. And when it washes over you, you know that somehow you will, again, come out the other side. Soaking wet, sputtering, still hanging on to some tiny piece of the wreckage, but you'll come out.

Take it from an old guy. The waves never stop coming, and somehow you don't really want them to. But you learn that you'll survive them. And other waves will come. And you'll survive them too.

If you're lucky, you'll have lots of scars from lots of loves. And lots of shipwrecks.

*"Where words fail, music speaks." Hans Christian Andersen*

["SONGS FOR THE KEYS TO YOUR LIFE" ©](#) - Michael Skinner – a recent blog post of mine on how this song came about and why it was written. *Are you singing the Songs for the Keys to Your Life?* - I hope so..

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](mailto:mikeskinner@comcast.net)

*Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter. Martin Luther King, Jr.*

*A diagnosis is not a destiny*

[The Surviving Spirit](#) - Healing the Heart Through the Creative Arts, Education & Advocacy - Hope, Healing & Help for Trauma, Abuse & Mental Health

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