



*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 October 2015

Hi folks,

October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month, [Bullying Prevention Month](#) and [Domestic Violence Awareness](#), three important matters to address. I would like to direct you to some folks who advocate a little differently regarding Breast Cancer. I know many women survivors who support this type of awareness and do not want us to get lost in the pretty pink campaigns that are heavily promoted - [Breast Cancer Action](#) They also send out a newsletter that keeps us informed and on our toes, it's worth signing up for.

I'm not sure if there is a month for music awareness [March is Music Therapy Awareness], but there should be! Music and all of the creative arts are healing, they help to transform lives and yet, they are still undervalued and underfunded. I can speak personally for how it has transformed my life...it gave a young boy hope and a passion to pursue, gave me a career, a life and now I get to help others via my music...I feel blessed with that honor.

Recently I watched [Love and Mercy](#), a powerful film about Brian Wilson of the Beach Boys - his incredible music, the band [also incredible], parts of his life and the connection between child abuse and "mental illness". Deeply disturbing is how one can be re-abused and manipulated by others later in life. The exploitation and abuse by his 'therapist' is beyond appalling. Thankfully love and the caring of others triumphs in the end, but a terrible price has been paid upon Brian Wilson's psyche, body and soul. There is hope & love in this narrative of life, sadly, millions do not have that support. Let us try to change that and continue our efforts to raise awareness on trauma, abuse and the connection to mental health challenges. Where there is Hope & Help, there is Healing.

Very excited that we have two guest writers sharing some thoughts in this newsletter, Adam Chambers and Brooke West. If you have something to share, please contact me at [mikeskinner@comcast.net](mailto:mikeskinner@comcast.net)

Take care, Michael Skinner [MS]

[Love & Mercy](#) - From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia - The real life Wilson – who had little involvement with the film's development – called it “very factual.”

In the late 1960s, the Beach Boys' Brian Wilson stops touring, produces "Pet Sounds" and begins to lose his grip on reality. By the 1980s, Wilson (John Cusack), under the sway of a controlling therapist, finds a savior in Melinda Ledbetter.

*Please note, I did a lot of Googling on this movie and Brian – the movie does share how Melinda Ledbetter helps him, but a lot of work was done by his brother Carl Wilson as well in getting Brian free from the clutches of a truly diabolical psychologist. The good news, he and Melinda are still married and I got to see him perform several years ago in New York City. MS*

*“...When we bring things out into the light, they lose their power over us.” Al-Anon*

1] [Lynn Tolson, Fine Art America](#) – Artist, Author & Advocate

My mission as an artist is to offer inspiration or insight, evoke an emotion or memory, stir the spirit, and provide pleasure for the viewer.

I’ve attended art workshops facilitated by famed teachers in the Midwest and Rocky Mountains. What I’ve learned is that there are principles of design to follow. However, art is an evolving process with unexpected results. There is no formula; the same subject is never painted the same way twice.

Art is subject to interpretation. Your interpretation of art may be different than what the artist intended, and your interpretation may be different than the viewer standing next to you. I also discovered that the process of creating art brings intrinsic joy to the artist. Color and shape allow for inner exploration and personal expression.

My style is non-representational. I prefer to paint expressionistic, creating images that illustrate the infinite forms of nature. The artwork evolves through a series of decisions. I don’t attempt to achieve a literal translation but rather I try to communicate moods, feelings and ideas. I can’t paint the same subject the same way repeatedly, because my emotions evolve along with the painting at different times.

I am the author of [Beyond the Tears: A True Survivor’s Story](#), which is my memoir about overcoming abuse and adversity. As an advocate for victims of abuse, I rely on the creative process to balance the heavy topics with hope and healing through art.

Lynn also serves on the [Board of Directors of The Surviving Spirit](#) [*Thank you Lynn!*]

*“When anger rushes in through the door, wisdom flies out of the window.” David Wood*

2] **What My Victory over Obesity Means to Me as a Sex Abuse Survivor** – Adam Chambers

Adam works as the New Media Coordinator for Advocacy Unlimited, Inc., in Wethersfield, CT, where he focuses on using documentary film-making as a tool for advocacy and increasing public awareness regarding issues of social justice relevant to psychiatric survivors and all those who struggle with challenges to their mental health. He can be reached @ [freemindfreebody@riseup.net](mailto:freemindfreebody@riseup.net)

[Advocacy Unlimited, Inc.](#) - Comprehensive Recovery and Advocacy Education for People with or in Recovery from Mental Health and/or Addiction Issues; Holistic Healing and Wellness; Human Rights

Some days are special because you wake up with the recognition that there has been a remarkable and

positive, even fundamental, change in your life. Yesterday was one of those days. After two and a half years of an intense and incredibly difficult weight loss journey, I chose to post this "Before" picture of me on social media, coupled with my below "After" picture [taken during the middle of my most recent 50-mile ultra marathon through the Green Mountains of Vermont!], and a short blog about the significance of this transformation for me. I chose to do this for a specific reason. I wanted to celebrate the victory I have had over obesity in the last few years, because I believe that sharing this may help others.

For me, being obese was directly linked to the low self-esteem, warped body image, and sexual identity confusion I had as a result of childhood sexual trauma. I was very thin as a young person, but in my early 20's started to purposefully attempt to gain as much weight as possible, because subconsciously I felt as though if I could become a "big, tough guy" I would feel safer, and no one would be able to hurt me. I felt very alone in my attempt to process all I had been through, and, like many, I had internalized all the stigmatization and taboos that exist around sexual abuse, which made it very difficult for me to discuss these things, even with people I trusted.

Research has shown that this same phenomenon happens to many men and women who have been sexually abused. This attempt to transform myself into a "big, tough guy" was successful. I gained 160 pounds and through my 30's weighed approximately 325 pounds. I developed several health problems during this period. It took until I was 40 years old to reach a point in my life where I had worked through all of the garbage I needed to, in order to become brave enough to risk letting down my protective barrier of my weight, and developing a vision that I could become healthy again. In January 2013, I set out to begin losing the weight. I have worked extremely hard at doing this, radically altering my nutrition and lifestyle in order to accomplish my goals. I started out with baby steps, committing to first walking for 15 minutes a day, then jogging for 5 minutes at a time, then increasing that goal by 1 minute at a time, until now, 2 1/2 years later, I have become an ultra-marathon runner, having completed my first 50k race [last October], my first 50 mile race [this May], and now finishing my training for my first 100 mile race, scheduled for this Sept. 11th. Altogether, I have lost approximately 160 pounds.

But it is not even about the weight, and I want to emphasize that. Everyone has a different body type, and weight that they feel healthy and comfortable at. We are not all meant to be skinny, and the world would be very boring if we were. For me, though, losing the weight became an important goal because it represented reclaiming the person I had been, who was taken from me. It was a taking back of power and control over my own life, both physically and psychologically. Many have had that control taken from them. For some, regaining that control may also mean losing weight; for others, it may mean something completely different.

I am so grateful that I feel better, physically and mentally, than ever. It is taken an incredible amount of work, but it is work that I enjoy. I enjoy it because I see the results, and the results encourage me to keep challenging myself further. Running, nutrition, creative expression, nourishing relationships with family and friends, and other holistic healing modalities such as yoga [I'm a novice, but really enjoy it!], have become my wellness tools now. These are the things that I've found work for me - but they may be completely different things for someone else, we are all individuals.

So the message I want to send out to the world today is that there is always hope that you can regain that control and reclaim your true self, whatever that may be and whatever the specifics of that may

mean in your individual situation. It has taken me 2 1/2 years to become brave enough to share this picture with the world. I give you permission to send it further out into the world and share it with others if you feel it may help or inspire even one other person. There are many of us out there. There is always the possibility of hope, although sometimes finding that hope may feel like trying to discover the single remaining flower buried in the snow of an early snowstorm. But that flower is there, and it is beautiful. Regardless of what is temporarily covering it up... Recovery is possible!

Adam Chambers



Adam Chambers May 16, 2015 [running his first 50-mile ultra marathon]



Adam Chambers, January, 2013 [early in the weight loss process]

*"Relationships are the immune system of society." Yasmin Ishaq*

3] [10 Reasons Why Nature is the Best Medicine](#) – YouTube Video 3:40 minutes [ *Stunning images, soothing music & a great message.* MS]

## **10 Reasons Why Nature is the Best Medicine**

1. The Closer to Nature, the Healthier You'll Be - Recent studies have shown that the closer you live to nature or green spaces in general the happier you'll be.
2. Nature Changes Your Brain -- For the Better - When you take a walk in nature, electrochemical changes occur in your brain, producing calming and beneficial results.
3. Sunny Skies Give You Vitamin D...Vitamin D is crucial to humans, helping to prevent disease and infection and improving bone health. Sun rays provide plenty of vitamin D, so being outdoors during a sunny day can greatly improve your health.
4. ...And a Good Night's Sleep - While it may sound counterproductive, being out in the sun also helps you sleep.

Sunlight, especially in the morning, helps regulate your internal biological clock, making it much easier for you to get your needed rest when bed time rolls around.

5. The Outdoors Can Help You Kiss Your Stress Goodbye - Researchers are finding that being out in nature greatly reduces people's stress levels.

Simply taking in outdoor sights and sounds is relaxing to the body and mind, helping to decrease worry and anxiety.

6. Nature has Astounding Healing Properties - Nature has been shown to directly improve people's physical health, including patients who are recovering from a disease or illness.

Patients who are exposed to the outdoors tend to recover more quickly, use less pain medication, and have shorter hospital stays.

Now, how astounding is that?

7. Being Outside is Good for Your Mental Health - Nature can also help curb depression, ADHD, and other psychiatric problems and illnesses.

The relaxing and calming properties of nature greatly contribute to these results.

8. More Outdoor Activity Makes for a Fitter, Healthier You - Being out in nature often involves some form of physical activity, whether it be strolling through the park, biking through the mountains, or an exciting river raft ride.

This activity both improves physical fitness and can help decrease the likelihood of obesity.

9. Nature Heightens the Senses and Memory - Spending time outdoors can also strengthen your senses

and memory.

When in nature, you're exposed to plenty of sights, smells, sounds, and touches and have ample amounts of new things to take in.

These experiences help enhance all your senses, and being outdoors has also been proven to improve short term memory.

10. Happiness -- Pure and Simple - Let's face it, being in nature just makes people happier in general.

The great outdoors changes brain chemistry in a positive way, improves mood, decreases stress, provides opportunities for fun, and is simply downright beautiful.

All this ends up making for a happier and, thus, healthier you.

Check out more - [Earth Porm - Keep Calm and Porm On](#) [Facebook page](#)

*“Our prime purpose in this life is to help others. And if you can't help them, at least don't hurt them.”  
Dalai Lama*

4] [Brooke West](#) - Therapeutic and Restorative Yoga and Meditation

Brooke West is a Certified Ananda Yoga® Therapist and meditation instructor in private practice on the central coast of California. She is a researcher, activist and peer advocate, designing therapeutic Yoga programs for governmental agencies. She tailors trauma- and recovery-informed Restorative Yoga, meditation and ayurveda as complementary therapies for physical, mental and emotional health issues. She is co-founder of The Central Coast Yoga Festival in Morro Bay, California; is a presenter at international conferences; and blogs for the award-winning International Bipolar Foundation. She grows an incredible, rainbow-colored garden when she isn't working on writing her book.

*“Between stimulus and response, there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and freedom.” Viktor E. Frankl*

Yoga Nidra is a practice that is precise, rhythmic and systematic. Nidra is gentle and commanding.

I first heard the statement “Everyone who lives with mental illness is a trauma-survivor.” at [The International Association of Yoga Therapists Symposium](#) on Yoga Therapy and Research in 2013. I could identify.

I am a certified Yoga therapist in the [Ananda Yoga®](#) tradition. I manage my own symptoms of post-traumatic stress, grief, and the complex emotional dysregulation that comes with bipolar disorder. Meditation, medication, ayurveda, the Eight-Limbed principles of Patanjali's Ashtanga Yoga and living a Yogic lifestyle all contribute to my well-being. My network of friends and community, including my students and private clients, my therapist and other mentors, encourage me to live well and advocate for Yoga therapy for mental health. Because of my access to Yoga and my holistic approach to wellness, I am a success story-in-progress.

I weave Restorative, trauma-informed Yoga, Nidra and meditation into my personal practice and

teaching. I fight for justice, creating therapeutic Yoga programs for people like me, at-risk populations with invisible wounds, while advocating for teachers to be paid a living wage that reflects their value and training.

Yoga Nidra leaves little room for external surprises, which is why it works to heal trauma. An informed teacher creates a safe container for survivors like me [and you]. Nidra offers reliable and consistent landmarks within the body and five senses, reassuring the practitioner that memories of trauma can be tolerated.

Trauma-informed classes minimize retraumatization. The ability of instructors to adapt language, tone of voice, teaching style, environment, sequencing and integration for students with invisible trauma can be a deal-breaker for a new student. When a Yoga class is not tailored in an informed way, students with wounds and “diseases of disembodiment,” as Bo Forbes, author of *Yoga for Emotional Balance*, calls them, may simply never return for another class.

Trauma-informed Yoga therapists and teachers make really good instructors for vulnerable populations, especially when in recovery themselves.

Making Yoga accessible to vulnerable populations is the mission of [The Yoga Service Council](#), which supports pioneering Yoga therapy programs that have been created by peers-in-recovery. [Yoga of Recovery®](#) and [Y12SR®](#) were developed by women recovering from the forces of addiction. [The Overcome Anxiety Project®](#) is captained by Genevieve Yellin, who overcomes her anxiety with Yoga-based practices. [Eat, Breathe, Thrive](#) addresses eating disorders. Richard Miller’s [Integrative Restoration \(iRest\)](#) is being used for veterans recovering from PTSD.

The success of programs like these highlights the power of survivors to assist one another in consciousness-shifting, synergizing the best of knowledge, personal experience., research and innovation.

For veterans and the deployed in the Armed Forces, combat stress, post-traumatic stress and the stress of reintegration are direct, *primary traumas*. *Secondary traumas* are the invisible, emotional and psychic wounds of the compassionate witness. Dysfunction results from both the original trauma and secondary trauma. One can experience both.

Trauma affects us as a culture, directly and empathically. Yoga practices can save lives.

This year, I trained with [Warriors At Ease®](#), which certifies mind-body professionals to bring trauma-informed Yoga and meditation to veterans, their families and our communities.

Warriors At Ease cross-pollinates individual teachers, iRest concepts and [The Exalted Warrior Foundation](#) to hand-pick, train and deploy quality teachers to serve in military settings. Teachers are people who care; some are veterans themselves.

Because of the devastation wrought by post-traumatic stress in any setting, trauma-sensitive teachers are highly valuable.

Annie Okerlin, founder of The Exalted Warrior Foundation, creates Yoga programs administered within the U.S. Department of Defense and Veteran’s Administrations. “Every Yoga teacher needs trauma-informed awareness - for any type of trauma - so that there are people trained to help create the support that breaks the cycle of reliving the ordeal.” Annie, through her foundation, works with [Team Red White and Blue](#), connecting Yoga teachers and America’s veterans in recovery through physical and social activity. She explains that, for veterans especially, a Yoga mat can be a much-needed and consistent “Welcome Home.”

Why aren't there more trauma-informed teachers?

“Money,” according to Okerlin and Robin Carnes, co-founder of Warriors At Ease. “We need money to specifically train and pay our teachers; to teach them the finer points of military structuring and cultural sensitivity, abreactions, modifications for amputees and traumatic brain injury,” says Okerlin.

There are endless opportunities to pioneer Yoga-based, lifestyle-management programs: in intensive outpatient programs; Veteran's Treatment Courts; Drug and Alcohol, Mental and Behavioral Health systems at county, state and federal levels; in hospitals, transitional care and assisted living facilities; in psychiatric inpatient units. The need is endless.

Just and fair compensation for specifically trained Yoga and meditation teachers is necessary to sustain the Yoga therapy movement effectively.

My classical training as a Yoga therapist and my ongoing education, acquainted with pathfinding programs, advise my work and my personal healing journey. My experience as a trauma and illness-survivor is what makes me a successful Yoga therapist.

*“Be there for others, but never leave yourself behind.” Dodinsky*

### [Yoga For Beginners: Adopt Yoga For Healthy Mind, Body And Spirit](#)

In case you are searching for quality information on yoga for beginners, this site will provide you a step by step guide to yoga.

Are you taking care of your health? Does each new day bring joy and happiness in your life or do you feel helplessly drawn into the whirlpool of life without any control? In today's busy life, there are schedules to meet, phone calls to make, rushing for work, upbringing of kids etc. This leaves us with hardly any free time to devote on our health, relaxation, proper rest or sleep. There is lot of scope of improving your health even if you start with basic yoga for beginners. Yoga for beginners can include simple pranayama exercises and yoga poses which can be done by a person of any age.

**About the Author** - My name is Daljit Kaur and I belong to Panjab, a northern state of India.

Given a choice I would have preferred to be a doctor but I was destined to do post graduation in Chemistry. Thereafter, I studied to become a qualified teacher. My teaching career was subsequently cut short due to family commitments and my various health problems.

I have faced multiple health problems and I made up my mind to come out as a winner. My struggle to fight my health problems has given new direction to my life. I was able to channelise my health problems into opportunities for learning more about my health, and chart my own road to good health. This in turn has given me the opportunity, knowledge and compassion an opportunity to help others.

My passion with yoga and my resolve to share my experiences about my yoga practice has evolved over a period of time into this website.

The purpose of sharing my story with you is to motivate you to adopt yoga for better health. If you have any health issues, first step is acceptance of the present situation, then find coping strategies and come out as a winner. You can read more about my story here

**My Health Problems** - My first health problem started in April 1996 when I had to get operated for gall bladder stones. After that period there were multiple health problems; frequent joint pains, headaches, irritability, anxiety, low energy levels and tendency to get kidney stones.

**My Yoga Journey** - Thereafter, in Nov 03, my health deteriorated rapidly and I was bed ridden due to severe osteoporosis, ankylosing spondylitis and cervical spondylitis. Thanks to doctors at PGI Chandigarh (India), I was correctly diagnosed with Parathyroid Tumour and underwent surgery successfully. The meticulous and hard working doctors of PGI who take pride in professional excellence motivate me to this day.

I was advised to do regular exercise and keep my weight in check so as to avoid further health problems. Regular yoga practice has helped me to achieve good health and take care of my family.

I love doing yoga and prefer eating healthy and nutritious vegetarian diet. Yoga practice requires simple sattvik diet consisting mostly of seasonal fruits and vegetables. Yoga asanas and pranayama provides us with free and most effective method of staying fit physically and mentally.

Due to health reasons I had to say good bye to my teaching profession. But there are no regrets as I enjoy my daily yoga practice? [Learn more](#)

*“Thoughts are an important part of our inner wisdom. And they are powerful. A thought held long enough and repeated often enough becomes a belief. A belief then becomes our biology. Beliefs are energetic forces that create the physical basis for our individual lives and our health.” Dr. Christiane Northrup*

5] [Trans Lifeline](#) – US: 877- 565-8860 Canada: 877- 330-6366

Trans Lifeline is a 501(c)3 non-profit dedicated to the well being of transgender people. We run a hot-line staffed by transgender people for transgender people. Trans Lifeline volunteers are ready to respond to whatever support needs members of our community might have.

**Mission** - We are Trans Lifeline. We provide culturally competent services to Trans and gender nonconforming people in crisis; We work with stakeholders within and without the Trans community to end the plague of Trans suicide; We empower Trans people to help other Trans people in the darkest moments of their lives.

*“The answers you seek never come when the mind is busy, they come when the mind is still, when silence speaks loudest.” Unknown*

6] [I hear voices in my head, but I’m fine](#) – video 2:48 minutes The Guardian - Eleanor Longden started hearing voices when she was 18. She was drugged and hospitalized, then told she was schizophrenic. A psychiatrist even told her she would have been better off with cancer, because it would have been easier to cure. Most people assume mental illness is caused by a chemical imbalance in the brain. But, she argues, mental illness is not random, it is a response to traumas we have been through in the past

Learn more about [Eleanor Londen @ Intervoice](#)

[Intervoice: The International Hearing Voices Network](#) - Working across the world to spread positive

and hopeful messages about the experience of hearing voices. If you hear voices, know someone who does or want to find out more about this experience – then this site is for you.

*“Many voices can be unthreatening and even positive. It’s wrong to turn this into a shameful problem that people either feel they have to deny or to take medication to suppress.”* Professor Marius Romme, MD, PhD is President of Intervoice

*“How do we stop racism? Stop talking about it. I’m going to stop calling you a white man. And I’m going to ask you to stop calling me a black man.”* Morgan Freeman

7] [This Moving Company Helps Women Leave Abusive Homes At No Cost](#) -Good News Network  
*Like in a fairy tale, these noble Steeds have come to the rescue of women in distress.*

Getting out of an abusive relationship isn’t easy—but actually packing up and moving out is even more daunting.

Hundreds of women have Aaron and Evan Steed to thank for coming to the rescue. These owners of a California moving company have volunteered to complete the move for them, free of charge.

When they first started their business, Meathead Movers in 1997, the high school athletes were simply looking for a way to earn some extra cash. Back then, their fee was usually \$20 and a pizza.

As their business grew, the Steeds started getting occasional, frantic phone calls from women with little or no money who wanted to quickly move out before their abusers returned home.

The sympathetic movers always declined any compensation and rushed to the address to load their belongings.

One day, in 2000, a situation turned volatile when the abuser came home in the middle of the move. It was then that the company decided it had to ensure that the women and the moving crew were both safe, so they partnered with a local women’s shelter.

“What was good about that is, they could be vetting the requests for help, supporting the women with counseling, and making sure when we went in, the proper restraining orders were in place, or police were on hand if necessary,” Meathead’s CEO Aaron Steed told Good News Network.

Beth Raub, director of the local women’s shelter, said that one of their staff is always on-site the day of the move so they can “call law enforcement if things get dicey.”

Since those days in 2000, the company has expanded into Santa Barbara, Ventura, Orange, Los Angeles, and San Diego counties. Whenever they open a new office, within the first week, they head to a local women’s shelter and knock on their doors.

“It’s the special service we like to offer,” Aaron said on a phone call. “These moves became very personal to us, made all the employees so proud, and became part of our mission statement.” He also said the same services are offered to any victim of domestic violence - male or female. [Learn more](#)

[Good News, Inspiring, Positive Stories - Good News Network](#)

*“Happiness is when what you think, what you say, and what you do are in harmony.” Mahatma Gandhi*

**Good News Network** - [A Core Workout in Just Five Minutes a Day](#) – David Sandoval is the founder of Purium Health Products and author of The Green Foods Bible. How to Video @ site also

What if you could achieve an hour’s worth of workout results in just five minutes? It’s not easy, but it is possible. My five-minute core workout routine requires no machines, no weights, and no personal trainer. Rotating just two very easy-to-master exercises for five minutes five times a week will result in core strength that will emanate throughout your entire body. You’ll get tighter abs, defined buttocks, and a stronger upper body. Here’s how it works:

**Exercise 1: The Mountain Climb Crunch** - Start in plank or push-up position with your wrists directly under your shoulders. Lift one foot off the ground and bring your knee to your chest, contracting your stomach in the process. Then repeat with the other knee. Continue to alternate as fast as safely possible for 30 seconds.

**Exercise 2: Biker Racer Crunch** - Lie on your back and contract your abdominal muscles so your shoulders are slightly lifted off the ground. Place your hands behind your head and contract your abs so your right knee meets your left elbow, then switch to the other side. Keep alternating sides until you’ve completed as many of these crunches as possible in a 30 second window.

**The Routine** - Switch between the Mountain Climber Crunches and the Biker Racer Crunches, doing each for 30 seconds until you’ve reached a total of five minutes - that means each exercise five times.

If at first this routine is too difficult, start smaller. Begin with 10 or 20 second increments and work your way up over the next several weeks. Soon enough, you’ll have the strong, defined core you’ve always wanted.

*“The world we are experiencing today is the result of our collective consciousness, and if we want a new world, each of us must start taking responsibility for helping to create it.” Rosemary Fillmore Rhea*

8] [Black Dot Campaign Offers Domestic Abuse Victims A Silent Way To Ask For Help](#) – Huffington Post

A subtle campaign is enabling victims of domestic abuse to ask for help, without having to speak out.

The Black Dot Campaign encourages victims to draw a simple black dot on the palm of their hand as a silent plea to those who may be able to help them.

“This is a campaign to help the most vulnerable victims of domestic violence,” reads the campaign’s Facebook page.

“They simply draw a black dot on their hands and agencies, family, friends, community centers,

doctors, hospitals can recognize this person needs help but can not ask for it.”

The campaign was launched by a domestic violence survivor who says she experienced physical, emotional and sexual abuse. She says her experiences inspired her to launch the campaign, "as so many people suffer in silence because they cannot ask for help".

Danielle Tredgett is a former victim of domestic abuse. She wrote on the campaign's Facebook page that she wishes a similar campaign was around back then.

"I felt so alone with nobody to talk to," she writes. "Luckily I escaped but not many people do.”

While many people - like Tredgett - have praised the campaign, there have also been questions raised over the safety of it. Particularly in terms of what happens if the person committing the abuse realizes what the dot means.

Zoe Hammond writes: “How does this help? Won't the perpetrators of domestic violence also know what the black dot means - so if they see their victim with this on their hand won't that potentially make the situation worse?”

In response, the founder of the initiative posted on Facebook saying that “any idea of 'help' in these circumstances have risks”.

"That's why we continue to invent new ways to help," she writes. “The black dot is not the only way to access help but it could be the one that could help a particular person. Each domestic abuse case is completely different, each perpetrator behaves differently, with one thing in common: CONTROL.”

The page's founder adds that she agrees it “could” put people at risk, “but that person knows their perpetrator and what the triggers are and what is safe and not safe to do”.

“If a perpetrator becomes aware of what the black dot means, the consequences could be very dangerous,” she says.

“Many perpetrators monitor their victims extremely closely. We advise anyone who is feeling frightened of their partner to contact the National Domestic Violence Helpline or go to [www.womensaid.org.uk](http://www.womensaid.org.uk) for advice and support.”

Mark Brooks, chairman of [ManKind Initiative](#) adds that he welcomes the campaign, but would like to see it become more reflective of male abuse victims too.

“If the campaign is to run then it must be male-victim friendly as well,” he says. “The video we have seen on YouTube does not mention male victims and only shows female victims – that is not the reality of domestic abuse in Britain today.”

Meanwhile, Black Dot's founder says she's happy the campaign is opening up discussion surrounding domestic violence. [Read the entire article](#)

*“One of the best feelings in life is discovering that you are appreciated by someone regardless of how*

*unworthy someone else made you feel.” Unknown*

9] [Jails are no place for the mentally ill. I was lucky to get out.](#) - The Washington Post - Justin Volpe, Certified Recovery Peer Specialist living in Miami

*Housing people with serious mental illness in prison is dangerous, expensive and ineffective.*

Twelve years ago, after a long struggle with drug addiction and mental illness, I packed my bags and left my home in New Jersey, bound for Miami and determined to make a fresh start. My brother had convinced me it would be a chance to get clean, to restore my mental health.

But the move unraveled me. My illness and addiction caused me to lose job after job, and I was becoming delusional, hearing voices and seeing hallucinations. I sold my TV and computer because I believed they were sending satellite signals to control me. I thought people were following me, coming to break into my apartment at night. My paranoia kept me up for weeks, wandering the streets in bad neighborhoods, constantly looking over my shoulder. Because I didn't understand my illness, I never sought the treatment I needed. Looking back, I suppose I shouldn't have been shocked when I found myself staring into the lens of a booking camera, arrested on petty theft charges after the voices told me to steal.

I know I am responsible for the actions that landed me in jail, but I also know they were the result of a disease that spiraled out of control due to lack of proper treatment. That day was the first and only time I've been charged with a crime. I also know that my stint in the Miami-Dade County Jail was anything but rehabilitative. I was locked up on the jail's ninth floor — infamous as the “Forgotten Floor,” where the jail kept its inmates with serious mental illnesses. The conditions were so bad that I had trouble believing I was still in the United States. The lights were on day and night; it was always 60 degrees. You could smell the mold in the air. I'm still haunted by the screams of the inmates round-the-clock. I remember one guy begging for his life while I prayed the officers wouldn't take their wrath out on me. Amid the chaos of the jail, my mental health worsened, and the possibility of rejoining the outside world seemed further out of reach.

Today, I've been clean from drugs for eight years and from alcohol for three. For the past six years, I've been happily married, and my wife and I have a 4-year-old son. We recently bought a home, and I've found deeply meaningful work as a peer support specialist working with the 11th Judicial Circuit Criminal Mental Health Project in Miami-Dade — the jail diversion program that saved my life.

My story is the exception. I'm one of the lucky few offered support and treatment after a brush with the law. I went to jail in 2007, around the time that Miami-Dade County Judge Steven Leifman succeeded in encouraging more comprehensive coordination between law enforcement and behavioral health treatment centers. After 46 days in jail, the resident psychiatrist identified me as having a mental illness and transferred me to a hospital. Case workers there deemed me eligible for the program, which puts people who aren't considered a public safety threat into community-based treatment and offers mental health and drug addiction services. Without that program, I'm not sure where I would have ended up. I certainly wouldn't have had the chance to help more than 600 people through jail diversion and treatment after getting my own life on track.

Jails have become warehouses for those struggling with mental illness as well as drug addiction.

Serious mental illness now affects about one in six men and almost one-third of women in jails, rates four to six times higher than in the general population. For people with serious mental illnesses, stigma often keeps them from seeking treatment, which is how they wind up in the criminal justice system. There are currently 10 times more mentally ill people in jails and prisons than in state mental health institutions; the vast majority of these people are in jail for non-serious offenses. [Read the entire article](#)

*“You cannot dream yourself into a character; you must hammer and forge yourself one.”*  
*Henry David Thoreau*

10] [Brad Yates – Allowing Great Things](#) - Emotional Freedom Technique/tapping [EFT] - YouTube 8:11minutes

If you are new to tapping, please watch this video so you understand what it is about: [You Tube](#) 4:59 minutes

So that I can make these videos available, I need to state that you must take responsibility for your own well-being if you choose to tap along. While I'm confident that tapping along with this video can provide great benefits, I make no claims as to what, if any, benefits you will receive. While EFT has yielded impressive results in treating physical and psychological issues, not everyone will benefit in the same way. I am not a doctor, and the information presented here is not intended to replace appropriate treatment by a physician or mental health professional. EFT is still in the experimental stage and, while a growing number of PhD's and MD's are adopting it, we cannot claim that it is risk free. I am unaware of anyone experiencing negative side effects from using these videos, but different people require different care, and depending on a number of variables, it is possible you could uncover deeper issues within the process that this video is not able to address. It is recommended that you consult a qualified health practitioner prior to using this technique.

That being said, I hope you will enjoy this video and find it beneficial, and that you will share it with others.

This is certainly not intended to be a comprehensive handling of the subject -- I can only cover so much in 5-10 minutes...! Hopefully it will help you address the issue, and lead to more specific issues for you to personally address so you can experience the freedom to live the life you really desire and deserve.

Also - [How to do the EFT Tapping Basics](#) - Gary Craig -The Basic Recipe - PART I For Everyone

*“Talents are best nurtured in solitude. Character is best formed in the stormy billows of the world.”*  
*Johann Wolfgang Von Goethe”*

11] [Rosemary Kennedy Lobotomy: Her Reunion with Mother Rose](#) : People.com

***'What Have We Done to You, Rosie?'*** Distraught Rose Kennedy on the Lobotomized Daughter She Didn't See for 20 Years

*More than seven decades after JFK's troubled sister Rosemary was left disabled by a disastrous lobotomy, two new books reveal the heartbreaking details of a dynasty's darkest secret.*

Rose Kennedy always worried about her eldest daughter Rosemary, who was born mentally disabled in 1918. Rose and her husband Joe P. Kennedy consulted with specialists, enrolled Rosemary in schools where she would be cared for and nurtured and always made sure her eight siblings tried to include her. But after Rosemary's disastrous lobotomy in 1941 that left her with the mental capacity of a young child, Rose did not see her daughter for two decades.

It was not until 1961, after Joe had suffered a stroke that left him incapacitated, that Rose visited her daughter at Saint Coletta, a facility for the mentally impaired in Jefferson, Wisconsin. Rosemary lived there for over 60 years until her death in 2005.

In this week's PEOPLE, the authors of two upcoming books about Rosemary shed light on the mystery surrounding the fraught relationship between Rose and her eldest daughter.

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In [\*The Missing Kennedy\*](#), author Elizabeth Koehler-Pentacoff shares memories of visiting Rosemary at Saint Coletta, where her aunt, Sister Paulus, was one of her caretakers. She also describes the reunion between Rosemary and her mom that shocked the nuns.

The nuns tore her away from Rose. "The lobotomy," she writes, "had not erased the past twenty years from Rosemary's memory. She knew her mother had not been there when she needed her most."

In the years that followed, Rose visited her daughter and would often call Saint Coletta to ask about her health and even check on her weight. (Voluptuous in her youth, Rosemary loved to indulge, especially in dessert.)

Rosemary even visited her mother at her home in Hyannisport, but the pain was always evident.

In her new book [\*Rosemary: The Hidden Kennedy Daughter\*](#) author Kate Larson writes about the strain beneath the surface.

During one visit, Larson writes, when Rose was swimming in her pool with her secretary Barbara Gibson, Rosemary's aides encouraged her to swim with her mother.

"She refused," writes Larson. "Gibson watched as Rosemary looked 'straight ahead, like a child who has been punished.' Rose whispered 'Oh Rosie, what did we do to you?'"

[JFK's Sister's Lobotomy Was 'Tragic Choice,' New Book About Disabilities Reveals](#) – Huffington Post

There was no shortage of distinguished politicians, journalists and dignitaries traipsing through Tim Shriver’s Maryland home when he was growing up. But the person who inspired John F. Kennedy’s nephew the most wasn’t in the limelight.

Shriver was most moved by his lesser-known Aunt Rosemary. She was the “family secret” who spoke just a handful of words, but could swim a mean backstroke.

The activist opens up about his relationship with the Kennedy who didn’t fit the political family’s mold, but still managed to help shape the clan’s future, in his new book, [Fully Alive: Discovering What Matters Most](#).

Born in 1918, Rosemary Kennedy, the third of Joseph P. and Rose’s nine children, developed more slowly than her siblings, struggled in school, but still participated fully in family events and activities.

But, at 23, when Rosemary started displaying aggressive mood swings and grew increasingly difficult, her father secretly scheduled her a lobotomy, a relatively new procedure at the time that he was told would calm down his daughter, according to People.

The botched brain surgery left her only able to say a handful of words and incapable of taking care of herself.

"The struggle to help 'fix' her, ended up being a tragic choice," Shriver said.

Rosemary was sent to live in a Catholic institution in Wisconsin where her father never visited and she eventually died in 2005, at age 86. [Read the entire article](#)

*“Coming together is a beginning; keeping together is progress; working together is success.” Henry Ford*

12] ] [Information Technology](#) - National Empowerment Center

Information technology is a vast and quickly changing field. This page is designed to help you and peer-run programs gain a better understanding of how to use new and innovative technologies to empower and inform themselves, to give and receive support, share the message of wellness and recovery with the public, and to fund-raise.

**Expanding Your Social Media Presence** – Video posted at website

Featuring:

Jenee Darden, Web Content, and PR Specialist, PEERS

Shannon Eliot, Communications Manager PEERS

Sherman Park, Video Production Specialist, PEERS

Kelechi Ubozoh, Statewide Project Coordinator, PEERS

[Expanding Your Social Media Presence](#) (PDF, 3.5MB, 71 page)

## **Successful Crowdfunding: Tips, Tricks and Lessons Learned** - Video @ website

Featuring:

Oryx Cohen, National Empowerment Center

Leah Harris, National Empowerment Center

Dese'Rae Stage, Live Through This

[Successful Crowdfunding: Tips, Tricks and Lessons Learned](#) (PDF, 5.01MB, 41 pages)

[Successful Crowdfunding: Tips, Tricks and Lessons Learned](#) (PowerPoint, 4.76MB, 41 pages)

**NEW RESOURCE!** Webinar Archive Now Available:

## **Get Social! Using Social Media to Advance Your Mission, Raise Awareness, and Provide Peer Support** - Video @ website

Description - Facebook, Twitter, Blogging, Podcasting, YouTube, LinkedIn, Google Plus. In an ever-growing social media landscape, it is easy to feel lost and not know where to begin. Our presenters will help you find your place on the social media map and head out on your personal or organizational journey. Using real-life stories and anecdotes, each presenter will discuss how their organization developed a social media strategy, the tools they use and how they use them, and the benefits and challenges they have experienced along the way. This webinar is geared towards peers, peer-run organizations, mental health service providers, family members, policymakers, administrators, and all other stakeholders.

Originally held March 2, 2012. [Click here to download the PowerPoint presentation.](#)

## **Social Networking and Social Media: A Guide for People with Lived Experience of Mental Health Issues and Recovery**

An [interactive guide to the online and social media landscapes](#), with a variety of clickable links and resources. Developed by the National Empowerment Center.

## **Everything You Ever Wanted to Know about Social Media but Were Afraid to Ask**

Presentation by Judene Shelley and Leah Harris of the National Empowerment Center - Alternatives Conference 2011 - Orlando, FL

[PowerPoint Presentation](#) (4.15MB, 30 pages) [PDF version of PowerPoint](#) (1.06MB, 30 pages)

[The Future of Mental Health Social Media](#) By Corinna West

[Smash Solutions Online Social Media Course](#) - Smash Solutions presents a free six part course on social media. For more information and to register.

*"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*

13] [Another Woman Raped Me and Nobody Cared](#) - Everyday Feminism

**Woman-on-woman sexual assault is rarely discussed, and victims of it are often dismissed as liars or as parties to lesbian experimentation gone wrong, as happened in my case.**

In December 2013, I was raped at a small, all-women sleepover party in a very upscale neighborhood of a major city – the type of place we’re all conditioned to believe is safe.

The party was organized through a private women’s friendship group on Facebook, and since everyone there knew each other personally, I figured it was a safe opportunity for me to go drink, gossip, and let my hair down for the night after a busy week of studying.

What followed was anything but the low-key night of harmless fun I envisioned.

There were seven of us at the sleepover. One woman showed particular interest in me, and started asking me questions about my love life. I thought nothing of it – people are interested in others’ relationships all the time, right?

I told her my marriage was on the rocks and I was upset that I hadn’t had sex in quite a while. She looked into my eyes, and I thought I noticed a hint of longing in her eyes as she said, “But, you’re so sexy. You deserve to have sex.”

I brushed it off, thinking she was trying to comfort me during a shitty time in my life, but my stomach flip-flopped uncomfortably.

I have been sexually assaulted by both a man and a woman, and my experiences were equally terrifying, yet I received much less support after a woman assaulted me. No one could even register my experience as important, let alone react.

It is my dearest hope that this changes in the future, lest we make it easy for predatory people to fly under the radar. I am still afraid to this day that she preys on other women at parties completely undetected, due to our preconceptions about femininity. [Read the entire article](#)

*“Not all scars show. Not all wounds heal. Sometimes you can't see, the pain someone feels.” Ritu Ghatourey*

14] [“Man Therapy” Uses Humor To Target Serious Mental Health Issues For Bros](#) – Good News Network & Watch video @ site

Dr. Rich Mahogany, a fictional therapist with a mental health message for men only, uses ‘bro’ humor to make fun of professional advice, like Will Ferrell makes fun of news people in Anchorman. But, through a similar deep, authoritative voice, comes an attempt to tackle serious issues like stress, anger, depression, addiction and suicide, using videos and a website known as “Man Therapy.”

The sometimes crude humor cuts through the stigma of mental illness to address the pressures of

masculinity. Being the strong, silent type—never sharing emotions until they’ve reached a boiling point—can take a dangerous toll on mental health. ‘Dr. Mahogany’ prods men to “get off their keisters” and try exercises and tips to help improve their well-being.

The site was developed in 2012, originally designed to reach men in Colorado, a state with one of the highest suicide rates in the country. Its appeal has since stretched far beyond Colorado; in the past three years, Man Therapy has attracted three quarters of a million views.

Suicide is the tenth leading cause of death for adults in the U.S. and men are most at risk—accounting for 78% of fatalities in 2013, according to the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention.

The Man Therapy team of mental health experts is especially focused on reaching a specific group, what they call “double-jeopardy men,” working guys with the most risk factors who are the least likely to seek help. They use language that can resonate with these men who might otherwise not want to think about their mental wellbeing.

[ManTherapy.org](http://ManTherapy.org) is a nonprofit collaboration between the Colorado Office of Suicide Prevention, The Carson J. Spencer Foundation and the advertising agency, Cactus.

The website will soon come out with a new version that can be customized, allowing users to match resources with individual needs.

Offering, as Dr. Rich Mahogany would say, “*Therapy the way a man would do it.*”

[Man therapy Case Study 2](#) - YouTube 2:48 minutes

*“Don't allow your wounds to turn you into a person you are not.” Unknown*

15] [Announcing the Virtual Drop-In](#) - Crisis Respite By [Sarah Knutson](#)

We're now up & running! You can connect with us every day of the week. Our ultimate goal is to offer a 24/7 'community on-call' feels like human family and advances human rights. We're on our way to offering a rich array of drop-in spaces for people to connect around shared values, needs and interests, including the following:

**To Just Drop In:**

- Call-In Toll Free 855-661-1243 (no pin)
- Alt phone (not toll free): 331-205-7196 - works pretty well if first number fails
- Web-In: [uberconference.com/peerlyhuman](http://uberconference.com/peerlyhuman) [works best with a headset, can create a lot of background noise]
- International call-in: <https://www.uberconference.com/international> [has local numbers for most countries]

**To Access Respite/ Community On-Call:**

Options 1:

- Join the Facebook Group (ask Sarah to add you - contact details below)

- Once there, put out a post or message other members that you need support.

Option 2:

- Drop-In to the Respite as above. See if anyone is there.
- If not, wait a few minutes – The site will let volunteers know someone is there. If anyone can respond, they will

Option 3:

- Call or message Sarah directly. She'll do her best, but also has to sleep and eat.

**For Added Privacy:**

- Please use the \*67 feature to block caller ID.
- For instructions on how to do this:  
<http://www.wikihow.com/Make-an-Anonymous-Call>

**How you can help:**

Host a topic/ space / workshop / training [voice, text or video]:

- There's a lot more we'd like to host, including your idea.
- If you need ideas, here's some stuff people are starting to discuss: Icarus Groups, Coming Off Psych Meds, Artists, Writers, Psych Rights, Book Studies, Consciousness-Raising, Humans Anonymous, Spirituality, Dating, Virtual Trainings and Conferences.

**Community On Call**

- Maybe you just want to offer support. Maybe you have specific times you're available. Maybe you'd rather just wait & see what's needed. Maybe you like to offer some kinds of support but not others.
- You can create your own description of what you want to offer, sign up for specific times, or just announce to the community that you're available for support.
- You can also join our group on Linked In and create or update your profile to describe what you want to offer

**Need help to get started?**

- We'll happily walk you through and offer support til you find your stride.
- Just get in touch with Sarah below.

**More Info/ To Join Group:**

Questions/ Support/ Troubleshooting/ Tech Issues

Sarah Knutson

- PM to Sarah, <https://www.facebook.com/skknut>
- Cell: 802-279-3876
- Email: [skknut@gmail.com](mailto:skknut@gmail.com)
- We happy to provide tech support, and we'll also sit with you or offer some coaching to get your concept started.

*“We only become what we are by the radical and deep-seated refusal of that which others have made of us.” Jean-Paul Sartre*

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

[The Surviving Spirit Speakers' Bureau](#)

[The Surviving Spirit Facebook Page](#)

[mike.skinner@survivingspirit.com](mailto: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**