



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 November 2015

Hi Folks,

Welcome to November...here in New Hampshire it's been a busy time of raking and wondering why I'm so sore the next day. Most of the leaves have fallen and the trees are bare, but there is still a beauty to their magnificence. I will never tire of nature and what it has to offer, even when the snow is flying hard and heavy. I believe it is nature's way of making us take a break from life. Heck, school kids love their snow days, so why can't we as adults?

Michelle Maren is our guest writer for this month; her life's journey is truly a sharing of courage, perseverance and resiliency. Grateful and honored that she has shared with us. She is another shining example of the many unsung heroes of everyday life, we pass them everyday and if we had some time to sit and talk, not only would we be inspired, but think of what we would learn. I am so grateful that this newsletter has been able to bring forth a tiny fraction of the thousands of stories out there that need to be heard.

November is a time that honors many different causes and events, including, National Novel Writing, Native American Indian Heritage, Epilepsy Awareness & Transgender Awareness. All issues are important that address health and people, but I would like to focus a bit on the Native American piece for this month.

I have always studied history and have never understood the systemic destruction of people and their culture. I know greed has a part, but so does fear and discrimination of those that are different. The dehumanizing of people makes it so easy for so many to turn their backs on the wanton cruelty and horrors perpetrated throughout the centuries.

There have been many variations of George Santayana's thoughts, "*Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it*", including, Winston Churchill's, "*Those that fail to learn from history are doomed to repeat it.*" Dehumanizing and treating whole groups of people as chattel, slaves, or something less than human has caused the destruction of whole groups of people and their ways of life. Adding insult to injury, there are those who have profited handsomely from all of this.

So this month, resources are shared addressing and honoring Native American Indian Heritage and also a few stories of the other not-so nice parts of history. "*For your own good*", "*what's best for you*", "*keep others safe*" and other like minded beliefs have been used to justify the taking of children away from their parents in indigenous cultures and the imprisoning of Japanese Americans in World War

Two. These are only a small slice of the abuse and destruction of people and their way of life. Sadly, racism, still has a place in this country and elsewhere and that continues to spread its poison and destruction.

Another example of the cruelty and destruction of people, is the simple fact that far too many have been marginalized and dehumanized should they have the simple misfortune to have the label of “*mentally ill*” placed upon them. All too often the question of, “*what happened to you*” is ignored and the practice of, “*what's wrong with you*” is the go-to way to 'treat & help' people. Ha!!!

I know all too well the misfortune of what happens when the mindset of “*what's wrong with you*” has been employed. If I had not been so horribly dehumanized when seeking help for the trauma and depression I was experiencing, I would not be here today as an advocate, I would have gladly gone along my merry way as a musician.

So where am I going with all of this? Very simple, I wish to draw people's attention to a bill making its way through Congress, Bill # 2646, otherwise known as the “Murphy Bill”. If this passes, this will send us back into the Stone Age of mistreatment. Nothing in this bill utilizes a trauma-informed policy, nor does it have the input of those with the lived experience. Personally, I have several reasons why I fear this bill, one, follow the money that helps support the bill and two, I always worry about those who try to control others and tell them they know *what's best for them*. I've known too many abusers in my life who have practiced this mindset. It wasn't that long ago that Native Americans were forcibly removed from their ancestral lands and placed upon reservations, because, *it was good for them*. I certainly don't want Congressman Murphy's, '*helping hand*' in my life.

I would like to draw your attention to some excellent pieces written in opposition to the “Murphy Bill”, their eloquence and knowledge of the details can help us to be better informed. So please take some time to read the thoughts from these respected advocates for human beings.

[Treatment Survivors Speak Out Against the Murphy Bill](#) - Sarah Knutson

[Change is a Choice: Reflections on the Markup of the Helping Families in Mental Health Crisis Act](#) - Leah Harris

[Danger Ahead if HR 2646 \(the "Murphy Bill"\) Passes!](#) - Susan Rogers

[Mental Health Bill Caters to Big Pharma and Would Expand Coercive Treatments](#) - Oryx Cohen

[Saving Congressman Murphy from Fraudulent Information](#) - Dennis Embry, PhD

[Medication Mechanization: Microchip Sensors In Abilify to Increase Medication Compliance](#) - Michael Cornwall, PhD

[The most dangerous part of the Murphy Bill no one has ever heard of](#) - Larry Drain

Thank you & take Care, Michael Skinner [MS]

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“This day offers me a chance to make a new start at living. How can I make the best use of it? Courage To Change

- 1] [Michelle Maren – Wings of Freedom](#) & New Documentary

My name is Michelle Maren. In 2008, I met acclaimed filmmaker Michel Negroponte and asked him to make a film about my life. He agreed. An Autobiography of Michelle Maren will make its Canadian and US premieres in November. It chronicles my experiences with childhood abuse, working in the sex industry and mental illness.

My clinically paranoid mother was verbally, emotionally and physically abusive. She constantly reminded me that I was a burden. My father abandoned me when I was a little girl. He had told me I was a mistake. A stupid mistake.

A male family member molested me. As did two pediatricians.

At 17, I started living on my own in New York City. With no family, no friends, no money and no high school diploma, my opportunities for employment were extremely limited. It did not take long before I found myself working as a go-go dancer. Then I posed in men’s magazines and worked as an escort. Eventually I appeared in porn films, most notably Gerard Damiano’s Throat: 12 Years After, the sequel to his infamous Deep Throat.

I worked in the sex industry for eight years before I decided I wanted out. One of my fellow escorts had died of AIDS.

The majority of sex workers come from backgrounds of abuse, neglect, abandonment or all of the

above. As a result, mental illness abounds in the sex industry.

I was no different. From the age of 8 onward, I experienced severe clinical depression, anxiety and eating disorders. In high school I was hospitalized for the first time and put on Haldol. It turned me into a zombie.

Living on my own, I resisted getting professional help for many years. I didn't realize that I had an illness. I just thought I was a failure. No matter what I tried and how hard I tried, I couldn't succeed at anything for any length of time.

Finally, when I was 35, I pursued mental health care. With every new psychiatrist, came a new medication and a new diagnosis. Over the years I have been diagnosed with: depression, anxiety disorders, schizophrenia (undiagnosed type), paranoid schizophrenia, schizoaffective disorder (depressed type), bipolar disorder, borderline personality disorder, obsessive compulsive disorder, insomnia, PTSD (from childhood abuse and working in the sex industry), eating disorders, and the list goes on...

After many suicide attempts and hospitalizations, I decided to become proactive in my own mental health recovery. I realized that as a mental health consumer, the psychiatric professionals are under my employ. I fired the ones who were not helping me and tenaciously sought out those who would. I researched new medications and told my psychiatrist which I wanted to try. At some point I came upon the right combination of meds that work best for me, with the least side effects.

My mental health recovery is holistic in nature. My mind, body, spirit, relationships and environment all play important roles in my wellness plan.

My spiritual beliefs are my foundation. Having grown up without love and care, it is wonderful to know that I will always be loved and cared for by my God. I am comforted by the knowledge that I am never alone.

For ten years of my adult life I was clinically obese. I have maintained a healthy weight for quite some time now through a healthy diet and regular exercise.

In the past, I gravitated toward people who were emotionally abusive because that was how I was conditioned. Now I avoid those who have a negative influence on my life and surround myself with people who are compassionate and encouraging.

Self-respect is an important factor in maintaining wholeness and inner peace, so I practice daily self-care activities daily. In addition, keeping my home environment clean and organized contributes to my sustaining focused thoughts.

For daily motivation, I read books on wellness, recovery, wholeness and positive thinking.

Telling my story has set me free from the silence of shame. After keeping my past a secret for so many years, I feel I am now victorious over childhood abuse, the sex industry and yes, even mental illness. An Autobiography of Michelle Maren has afforded me the opportunity to help others, and reaching out is the most positive thing I do as part of my healing journey.

Today the message I offer is one of hope, for mental health recovery is real; it is possible; it is ours.

[The US premiere of An Autobiography of Michelle Maren](#) - New York. City, dates & screen times

[Rendezvous with Madness Film Festival](#) - Toronto, Canada

[Michelle Maren Facebook Page](#)

“The most beautiful people we have known are those who have known defeat, known suffering, known struggle, known loss, and have found their way out of the depths. These persons have an appreciation, a sensitivity, and an understanding of life that fills them with compassion, gentleness, and a deep loving concern. Beautiful people do not just happen.” Elisabeth Kübler-Ross

2] [Native American Heritage Month 2015](#) - What started at the turn of the century as an effort to gain a day of recognition for the significant contributions the first Americans made to the establishment and growth of the U.S., has resulted in a whole month being designated for that purpose.

One of the very proponents of an American Indian Day was Dr. Arthur C. Parker, a Seneca Indian, who was the director of the Museum of Arts and Science in Rochester, N.Y. He persuaded the Boy Scouts of America to set aside a day for the "First Americans" and for three years they adopted such a day. In 1915, the annual Congress of the American Indian Association meeting in Lawrence, Kans., formally approved a plan concerning American Indian Day. It directed its president, Rev. Sherman Coolidge, an Arapahoe, to call upon the country to observe such a day. Coolidge issued a proclamation on Sept. 28, 1915, which declared the second Saturday of each May as an American Indian Day and contained the first formal appeal for recognition of Indians as citizens.

The year before this proclamation was issued, Red Fox James, a Blackfoot Indian, rode horseback from state to state seeking approval for a day to honor Indians. On December 14, 1915, he presented the endorsements of 24 state governments at the White House. There is no record, however, of such a national day being proclaimed.

The first American Indian Day in a state was declared on the second Saturday in May 1916 by the governor of New York. Several states celebrate the fourth Friday in September. In Illinois, for example, legislators enacted such a day in 1919. Presently, several states have designated Columbus Day as Native American Day, but it continues to be a day we observe without any recognition as a national legal holiday.

In 1990 President George H. W. Bush approved a joint resolution designating November 1990 "National American Indian Heritage Month." Similar proclamations, under variants on the name [including "Native American Heritage Month" and "National American Indian and Alaska Native Heritage Month"] have been issued each year since 1994.

[Willing to Serve: American Indians](#) [Stories from the Veterans History Project of the Library of Congress] - American Indians have eagerly served a government which did not always keep its word to their ancestors. All of the Native Americans featured here volunteered to serve in conflicts from World War II to Iraq. Few encountered any overt prejudice while in uniform, though Navajo Code Talkers

were sometimes mistaken by their own men for Japanese soldiers. But as one code talker recalled, Navajos had a chance to prove wrong the bigots back home; the military prized them for speaking their own language. For all American Indian veterans, the honor of defending their country overrode all other considerations.

[The National Congress of American Indians](#) [NCAI], founded in 1944, is the oldest, largest and most representative American Indian and Alaska Native organization serving the broad interests of tribal governments and communities.

[Native American Heritage Month](#) [NCAI] - The month is a time to celebrate rich and diverse cultures, traditions, and histories and to acknowledge the important contributions of Native people. Heritage Month is also an opportune time to educate the general public about tribes, to raise a general awareness about the unique challenges Native people have faced both historically and in the present, and the ways in which tribal citizens have worked to conquer these challenges.

“Of all tyrannies, a tyranny sincerely exercised for the good of its victims may be the most oppressive.”
C.S. Lewis

3] [Indigenous children removed from homes in the 1960s begin to heal](#) - Toronto Star

For three decades across Canada, thousands of aboriginal children were taken from their homes and adopted.

The scent of tobacco and sage fills the air as members of Canada’s aboriginal communities gather around a fire on the shores of the Rideau River.

Each takes a turn fanning medicinal smoke towards their bodies in a cleansing smudging ritual. Then, one by one, the 40 or so attendees of this Indigenous Adoptee Gathering introduce themselves to the group. Some are from Ontario, others from Manitoba or the Yukon. Some are Cree, others Métis or Ojibway.

Most are members of a stolen generation.

Beginning in the mid-1960s — and for several decades after — thousands of indigenous children across Canada were removed from their homes and typically placed with white middle-class families in Canada and abroad.

Patrick Johnston, author of the 1983 report *Native Children and the Child Welfare System*, dubbed it the Sixties Scoop.

Those children are now adults, sharing their stories of emotional, physical and sexual abuse, mental illness and a sense of isolation from being torn between Euro-Canadian and indigenous culture. “It’s been a long healing journey for a lot of us to get to the point where we’re OK to just be an adoptee, and then find others like us,” said Colleen Cardinal, an adoptee and co-organizer of the August gathering in Kemptonville, Ont. “It’s taken us our whole lives to get to this point.”

“There was no publicity for years and years about the brutalization of our families and children by the

larger Canadian society,” one member of the indigenous community told the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry launched in 1988 by Manitoba’s provincial government.

“Kidnapping was called placement in foster homes. Exporting aboriginal children to the U.S. was called preparing Indian children for the future. Parents who were heartbroken by the destruction of their families were written off as incompetent people.”

Manitoba’s government established a review committee on “Indian and Métis Adoptions and Placements” in the 1980s, headed by Associate Chief Family Court Judge Edwin Kimelman, and imposed a halt on out-of-province placements of indigenous children.

After reviewing the files of every indigenous Manitoban child adopted by an out-of-province family, Kimelman wrote in a 1984 report that “cultural genocide” had been taking place in a “systematic, routine manner.”

While not every placement of an indigenous child in the Canadian adoption system was a result of the Sixties Scoop, the number of children removed and placed into foster care or adoptive families likely numbered in the tens of thousands.

Perry Bellegarde, national chief of the Assembly of First Nations, said the Sixties Scoop is a “shameful reality” whose negative effects on First Nations children and their families continue.

“This is no more evident than the fact that there are more First Nations children in foster care today than at the height of the residential school era. In some provinces, such as Manitoba, almost 90 per cent of the children in foster care are aboriginal,” he noted.

The AFN has filed a human rights complaint on this matter against the federal government, but Bellegarde said the decision has been delayed another two months.

“We will continue to fight for fairness and justice for First Nations children and families,” he added.

[Read the entire article](#) & please scroll all the way down to the bottom of the article to hear from five survivors of this nightmare, *MS - Sharing their stories* - Aboriginal adoptees from the Sixties Scoop share their stories of abuse, mental illness and a sense of cultural isolation.

[Sharing Stories of the Sixties Scoop](#) – YouTube 2:29 minutes

Aboriginal and Northern Affairs Minister Eric Robison hosted an event in the Rotunda of the Manitoba Legislature, honoring survivors of the ’60s Scoop before Premier Selinger delivered a formal apology in the House. The event included a performance by The Spirit Sands Singers and documentary filmmaker Coleen Rajotte who shared stories of survivors like herself.

[60s Scoop Clip From Rajotte Documentary](#) – YouTube 1:48 minutes

20,000 First Nation, Metis and Inuit children were adopted out to non-Aboriginal homes in the 60s, 70s and early 80s. Marlene and her two brothers were taken from Northern Manitoba and adopted to a family in New Orleans. This is her adoptive mother parading them on a local cable show...

“I survived because the fire inside me burned brighter than the fire around me.” J. Graham

[Coleen Rajotte - Confronting The Past - The Sixties Scoop](#) [Scoopster's] - Confronting the Past is an in-depth, three-part series examining the history of the “sixties scoop” - aboriginal adoption in Canada.

Synopsis: The impacts of adoption are explored through the eyes of adoptees and their families. We meet the people who worked in Child Welfare Agencies in the 1960’s and explore why so many children were placed outside of Canada.

Quote from an interview with an adoptee, sent to the Southern United States in the early 1980’s:

“I knew I was little [4 years old] but I remember the day I was taken away. I knew my life wasn’t going to be the same... getting in the back seat and not really understanding....

“I will always remember that day. I always feel lost or I feel like... I can see everyone else’s family and how they connect and I know how I don’t have that”.

“For here we are not afraid to follow truth wherever it may lead.” Thomas Jefferson

4] [Video: 'Allegiance'](#) recounts story of Japanese-American internment - Watch PBS News Hour Online 3:31 minutes

The musical "Allegiance," which recounts a family's struggle to endure the Japanese-American internment in the 1940s, opens on Broadway on Nov. 8. A rare foray onto the New York stage, the show was inspired by one of its stars, George Takei, who discusses the importance of telling the story.

[George Takei Life](#) of Star Trek star makes musical - BBC News – 2:48 minutes

This weekend, an uncomfortable chapter of American history will debut as a Broadway musical - the internment of more than 100,000 Japanese-Americans in remote camps after the bombing of Pearl Harbor.

The musical, Allegiance, is based on the personal story of one of its stars, George Takei, who found fame as an original cast member of TV series Star Trek.

He spent four years of his boyhood confined to camps in Arkansas and California.

“Poverty is not a fate, it is a condition; it is not a misfortune, it is an injustice.” Gustavo Gutierrez

5] [Homelessness, Racism and Social Justice](#) - Jeff Olivet - CEO of the Center for Social Innovation

Homelessness is not a social issue. It is not a research question to be studied. And it is certainly not a type of person: someone who ends up on the streets through a series of bad choices or personal flaws. Instead, homelessness mirrors everything that is broken in our society. It reflects our biases, our meanness, our lack of compassion and our views of each other as fellow human beings.

When we speak of homelessness, our words - along with our programs, funding streams, and academic

research--often focus appropriately on housing, health care and services. All are essential for ending homelessness. Yet, homelessness is about more than this. It is also about poverty, oppression, ostracism, inequality, and racial injustice.

When we massively reduce affordable housing, homelessness results. When millions of people are crushed by medical bills because they have been denied coverage, homelessness results. When our education system gives some children the best opportunities and leaves other languishing in illiteracy and crumbling schools, homelessness results. When access to mental health and substance use treatment is non-existent for all but those with the means to pay, homelessness results.

When racial discrimination stubbornly persists in housing and employment, homelessness results. When black men and boys continue to be incarcerated in massive numbers, homelessness results.

Let me say a word about my background. I am a white male. I have benefited from every ounce of white, male privilege our country offers. Am I the right person to speak with any authority about racism and oppression? Probably not. And yet, if white men remain silent, we will never fully address racism in our society.

Within the context of our country's deep, complicated, and painful racial history, homelessness has emerged on the national landscape. Homelessness is inextricably linked to poverty and racism. Twenty years ago Kim Hopper wrote, "We should reintegrate discussions of homelessness with those of persistent poverty. And in these discussions, the issue of race is unavoidable." His advice still holds.

Here are the facts about racism and homelessness: African Americans are more likely to become homeless than people of all other racial groups, except possibly Native Americans. One study of shelter utilization in New York City and Philadelphia found that African Americans were 16 times more likely to end up in shelters than their white counterparts. Even more staggering, the study showed that black children under the age of five were 29 times more likely than White children to be in homeless shelters. Furthermore, George Carter found that black men remain homeless longer than white men - with a 3 year average duration of homelessness for black men compared to 2.4 years for white men.

High rates of African American homelessness have often been dismissed as the result of large numbers of blacks living in deep poverty. Poverty is certainly a major determinant of who becomes homeless. Yet, even when we control for poverty, we find that poor African Americans experience homelessness at significantly higher rates than poor whites or poor Hispanics.

Poverty rates alone do not explain the dramatic over-representation of African Americans among people who are homeless.

Now we must broaden the conversation about homelessness to include racism. If we are unable to do this, we will never face ourselves, and we will never solve homelessness. [Read the entire article](#)

“Always show kindness and love to others. Your words might be filling the empty places in someone's heart.” Mandy Hale

6] [Samaritan Inns](#) – Combating Homelessness & Addictions. Rebuilding Lives

Our Mission: Samaritan Inns' mission is to provide structured housing and recovery services in an environment of support and accountability that give homeless or at risk individuals who suffer from drug and alcohol addictions the opportunity to rebuild their lives.

Our History: Samaritan Inns began in 1985 with one transitional home in the heart of Washington, DC, with a capacity to house 9 men desiring to overcome homelessness and addictions. Samaritan Inns' founders, David Erickson and Killian Noe, felt called to respond to the increase in homelessness they observed in our Nation's capital. Very soon, they discovered that serving the homeless meant more than providing shelter and food, but addressing a prevalent need for addictions services.

Over time, Samaritan Inns procured and completely renovated eight former crack houses across Washington, DC. Every year, these buildings are home to approximately 500 men and women as part of Samaritan Inns' unique Recovery Continuum that equips these individuals to reclaim their relationships, careers, and lives.

Today, Samaritan Inns' dedicated staff and volunteers continue to foster an environment of personal responsibility and loving respect for every man and woman who passes through Samaritan Inns' doors. Individuals arrive broken and emerge whole persons, capable parents, and contributing members of society.

*“Healing doesn't mean the damage never existed. It means the damage no longer controls our lives.”
Unknown*

7] [Silver Strands](#) - Arts & Health - Silver Strands, an interdisciplinary, collaborative project that evolved from a series of drama workshops in a residential mental health setting in West Cork. The project took place in 2015 and was supported by West Cork Mental Health Services.

Facilitator Alison Glennie collaborated with sound designer Fintan McKahey in documenting the project which resulted in the short film, *Silver Strands*. 9:55 minutes long

Participants - Male and female residents aged 50 - 80 from Perrott House, a community mental health setting in Skibbereen, West Cork, Ireland.

[Arts & Health](#) - A national website providing a focal point and resource for the field of arts and health in Ireland via resource documents, project case studies, a directory of contacts, perspectives on a range of issues and current news

“Revolutions begin when people defined as problems achieve the power to redefine the problem.” John McKnight

8] [TOIVO by Advocacy Unlimited](#) – YouTube 11:49 minutes – Promotional film for TOIVO by Advocacy Unlimited produced by Digital Eyes Film.

Powerful thoughts and sharing from several voices with lived experiences, Healing does happen, MS

For more information please visit [Toivo Center](#) - Cultivate Mind, Body, Spirit

Toivo by Advocacy Unlimited is an initiative that includes statewide classes, workshops and a mind/body focused wellness center where people can engage in expert facilitated yoga, meditation, fitness and strength training, creative writing, expressive art, walk/run groups, nutrition workshops, drum circles and much more!

Toivo represents a celebration of human experience in all of its forms and a belief in the unfathomable power of looking within for direction. We believe that no one should be denied the benefits of yoga, meditation or any of our offerings based on socioeconomic standing, psychiatric history and/or experiences with addiction.

“The great lesson is that the sacred is in the ordinary, that it is to be found in one's daily life, in one's neighbors, friends and family, in one's backyard.” Abraham Maslow

9] [Digging in the Dirt - Farm-Based Therapy](#) - Something Good in the World - Barbara Sarbin

“What's done to children, they will do to society.” Karl Menninger

My latest joke as a farm-based educator, which is not actually a joke, is that I tell everyone what I do is farm-based education, but that what I know inwardly is that it should be called farm-based healing. I have watched children from traumatized situations come into the farm in a completely shut down state, shields up, nerves raw, eyes downcast, hoods over heads, and within minutes, I see them transform. They laugh, they chat, and they smile, all while digging in the dirt, arranging the flowers, cradling worms in their palms. It's nothing I do, all I do is lead them into the garden and show them what to do, the rest happens naturally, because I believe it is how we are meant to be.

Today I entered a shelter for abused teenagers who have been removed from their homes for their own safety, and refugee children from Honduras, El Salvador and Guatemala. We all introduced ourselves, and the refugees are practicing their English, saying their names, ages, and countries of origin. This is how I discover that the 7-year-old girl in the room made the journey to the US with her 11 year old brother, also in the room. We are about to plant flowers together.

When I come into a room where the children are being kept safe, I am used to a lack of response. I am all full of my cheerful enthusiasm for the work we are about to do, explaining today how it is that bulbs don't need watering or weeding, just will appear like magic in the spring and bring inspiration to the students who will see them. I explain to them, this is a service, it's not for them, it's for those yet to come. These are teenagers mostly, so there's a “Why should I have to do this?” feeling in the room, but I tell them there is only the fact that a garden is forever, that it is sometimes good to do things for other people. They accept this and follow me outdoors to plant.

I have often seen that children do not know how to dig in the dirt. I sometimes have to help them, take their hand and dig it like a shovel in the soil, so they get the idea. The shelter children especially want gloves and shovels when we start, and their hoods are over their heads. But I see how within the hour, they are intensively planting hundreds of bulbs, no longer caring that they will not be there to see the tulips when they emerge, only focused on making sure they dig down 4 inches so it will grow. Now they just care about the fact that the root side goes down and the pointy end goes up, otherwise the flower will not be able to grow.

These are children who really need services given to them; they probably don't really need to be concerned about giving to others. Do they? Somehow the act of putting one's hands in the soil and finding a worm and considering what to do with it, removing rocks that are in the way, making a bed for the flowers and tucking them in gently, something about this is analogous, and causes well-being. The same thing is true of harvesting, choosing flowers, putting them together in a bouquet just so, putting them in a jar of water. I see that the entire act of planting, weeding, watering, mulching, harvesting just makes humans feel good. Is that enough, just to feel better?

Recently, someone sent me a study called "[Green Care: A Conceptual Framework](#)" and I perused it very carefully, agreeing with every point:

- Contact with nature is important to human beings.
- The importance of this is often overlooked in modern living conditions.
- People can find solace from being in natural places, being in contact with nature and from looking after plants and animals.
- In addition to this solace, contact with nature has positive effects on well-being, with physical, psychological and spiritual benefits.
- Existing or new therapeutic programs could be improved by incorporating these 'green' elements.
- The planning, commissioning and delivery of all health services would be enhanced by consideration of potential 'green' factors.

After reading through the 120 pages of this detailed research, I hope that findings such as these will help more people realize the powerful effects of "green care," so that more nature-based programs can be created and supported.

I consider myself incredibly fortunate and blessed to work with children outdoors every day, and especially to guide those from shelters into local farms or their own schoolyards to weed and plant and harvest. It is enough for me; small though it may be, and I think it is enough for them, to share that hour or two in the sunshine and open air, to feel free, and to make a difference to others who they may never meet.

"Find new meaning in every joy and sorrow - see another world where the end is another beginning."
Rumi

[Something Good in the World](#) - *Small steps towards a big difference*

The mission of Something Good in the World is to provide a safe and enhancing environment wherein children may be promoted to achieve their highest potential in learning and development, and to prepare them toward becoming responsible human beings ready to take on the challenges of life.

We are committed to upholding a genuine value for humanity, and are steadfast in our dedication towards creating a new and better template for education in the 21st century, that integrates nature, the environment, and the practice of sustainable living. [Learn more](#)

"In general, the more dysfunctional the family the more inappropriate their response to disclosure. Never expect a sane response from an insane system." *Renee Fredrickson*

10] [Art Speaks Out Loud](#) - Ericha Scott, PhD

I am an artist who uses art with my clients inside the practice of psychotherapy. I have been in the field for 30 years, and I would no longer have such a tremendous passion for my work, if I had not used art, all forms of art, as my co-therapist. Thirty years ago my supervisor said to me, “Oh, I don’t know what you should do, why not use art therapy?” I am still slightly embarrassed to admit that I had to ask him, “What is art therapy?” Now, after five more years of college, numerous credentials, recognition, and a few publications in peer review journals, I am still asking that that question.

I use art for a myriad of reasons. There are times, I am just a Sunday painter or photographer. In the long ago past I taught college level photography for Broward Community College and in France for The Cleveland Institute of Art, as an assistant to the photographer Jean-Pierre Cannelle. I have made my own cameras and photo paper, and my photographs have been exhibited in a museum and several galleries. Other times, art is my lifeline, a way to express the inexpressible like the death of my beloved husband from a bone marrow transplant, or my grief about violence in the world. Sometimes I think I am painting as if a Sunday painter, when the rocks below the surface of the ocean water reveal themselves in a way that feels ominous, and later I find, that in a pre-sentient fashion this is a perfect reflection of what was happening that day.

All of that said, art is my medicine, my comfort, my go-to for insight and meaning. Art facilitates my deepest and most accurate intuitions.

For the purpose of this web site, I use the term “art” loosely. The creative arts in psychotherapy includes processes such as painting, drawing, collage, sculpting, mask making, drumming, music, toning, dance, movement, psychodrama, monologues, journal writing, poetry, script writing, and more.

Creative art is able to open doors where there have been blocks, and it does so in a very gentle but powerful fashion. Art helps us bypass our verbal and cognitive defenses to arrive more quickly at the core of the self. It is also able to help us memorialize success.

[Dr. Ericha Scott Speaks About Creative Arts Therapy](#) – YouTube 9:33 minutes - experiences with healing trauma, addiction, physical and mental illness with art therapy.

“You will face many defeats in your life, but never let yourself be defeated.” Maya Angelou

11] [The Military Series Kindle ebook is out! Vets Healing Vets](#) by Guy Macpherson - The West Coast Trauma Project

I am happy to announce that I’ve just published my first Kindle ebook: *The Military Series: Vets Healing Vets*. It’s a compilation of a small selection of the inspiring and passionate military veterans turned therapists who work with individuals suffering from trauma.

“The human mind always makes progress, but it is a progress in spirals.” Madame de Stael

12] [Masters of Love](#) - The Atlantic

Science says lasting relationships come down to - you guessed it - kindness and generosity.

Every day in June, the most popular wedding month of the year, about 13,000 American couples will say “I do,” committing to a lifelong relationship that will be full of friendship, joy, and love that will carry them forward to their final days on this earth.

Except, of course, it doesn’t work out that way for most people. The majority of marriages fail, either ending in divorce and separation or devolving into bitterness and dysfunction. Of all the people who get married, only three in ten remain in healthy, happy marriages, as psychologist Ty Tashiro points out in his book [*The Science of Happily Ever After*](#), which was published earlier this year.

Social scientists first started studying marriages by observing them in action in the 1970s in response to a crisis: Married couples were divorcing at unprecedented rates. Worried about the impact these divorces would have on the children of the broken marriages, psychologists decided to cast their scientific net on couples, bringing them into the lab to observe them and determine what the ingredients of a healthy, lasting relationship were. Was each unhappy family unhappy in its own way, as Tolstoy claimed, or did the miserable marriages all share something toxic in common?

Psychologist John Gottman was one of those researchers. For the past four decades, he has studied thousands of couples in a quest to figure out what makes relationships work. I recently had the chance to interview Gottman and his wife Julie, also a psychologist, in New York City. Together, the renowned experts on marital stability run The Gottman Institute, which is devoted to helping couples build and maintain loving, healthy relationships based on scientific studies.

From the data they gathered, Gottman separated the couples into two major groups: the masters and the disasters. The masters were still happily together after six years. The disasters had either broken up or were chronically unhappy in their marriages. When the researchers analyzed the data they gathered on the couples, they saw clear differences between the masters and disasters. The disasters looked calm during the interviews, but their physiology, measured by the electrodes, told a different story. Their heart rates were quick, their sweat glands were active, and their blood flow was fast. Following thousands of couples longitudinally, Gottman found that the more physiologically active the couples were in the lab, the quicker their relationships deteriorated over time.

But what does physiology have to do with anything? The problem was that the disasters showed all the signs of arousal - ***of being in fight-or-flight mode - in their relationships***. Having a conversation sitting next to their spouse was, to their bodies, like facing off with a saber-toothed tiger. Even when they were talking about pleasant or mundane facets of their relationships, they were prepared to attack and be attacked.

By observing these types of interactions, Gottman can predict with up to 94 percent certainty whether couples - straight or gay, rich or poor, childless or not - will be broken up, together and unhappy, or together and happy several years later. Much of it comes down to the spirit couples bring to the relationship. Do they bring kindness and generosity; or contempt, criticism, and hostility?

“There’s a habit of mind that the masters have,” Gottman explained in an interview, “which is this: they are scanning social environment for things they can appreciate and say thank you for. They are building this culture of respect and appreciation very purposefully. Disasters are scanning the social environment for partners’ mistakes.”

“It’s not just scanning environment,” chimed in Julie Gottman. “It’s scanning the partner for what the partner is doing right or scanning him for what he’s doing wrong and criticizing versus respecting him and expressing appreciation.”

Contempt, they have found, is the number one factor that tears couples apart. People who are focused on criticizing their partners miss a whopping 50 percent of positive things their partners are doing and they see negativity when it’s not there. People who give their partner the cold shoulder—deliberately ignoring the partner or responding minimally—damage the relationship by making their partner feel worthless and invisible, as if they’re not there, not valued. And people who treat their partners with contempt and criticize them not only kill the love in the relationship, but they also [kill their partner's ability to fight off viruses and cancers](#). Being mean is the death knell of relationships.

Kindness, on the other hand, glues couples together....

The hardest time to practice kindness is, of course, during a fight—but this is also the most important time to be kind. Letting contempt and aggression spiral out of control during a conflict can inflict irrevocable damage on a relationship.

“Kindness doesn’t mean that we don’t express our anger,” Julie Gottman explained, “but the kindness informs how we choose to express the anger. You can throw spears at your partner. Or you can explain why you’re hurt and angry, and that’s the kinder path.” [Read the entire article](#) [long read, but worth it]

“I find the great thing in this world is not so much where we stand, as in what direction we are moving.” Oliver Wendell Holmes

13] [Temple University Collaborative](#) - Community Inclusion of Individuals with Psychiatric Disabilities

RePublication - Helping People Connect to the Religious Congregations and Spiritual Groups of Their Choice: The Role of Peer Specialists

Current research indicates that many people with mental health conditions would like to be more involved with the local congregations of their choice, and the Temple Collaborative on Community Inclusion has recently re-issued Helping People Connect to provide resources to peer specialists who want to help the people with whom they work benefit from the faith and the fellowship that religious and spiritual groups can provide. Many people with mental health conditions are reluctant to re-connect with religious groups, and peer specialists are often reluctant themselves to address these issues: Helping People to Connect reviews these issues, offers recommendations, and provides resources to help peer specialists assist people with this aspect of their recovery journey.

You can find a copy of Helping People Connect Temple University Collaborative on Community Inclusion website (<http://tucollaborative.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Final-Religion-Monograph.pdf>), as well as another document that discusses the roles religious congregations themselves can play in welcoming people with mental health conditions into the fullness of congregational life (<http://tucollaborative.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/Developing-Welcoming-Congregations.pdf>).

The TU Collaborative will also be hosting a webinar on this topic December 9th at 1PM. [Please register here](#)

The Temple Collaborative now invites you into a national conversation on the topic asking:

- What have been your experiences - as a peer or peer specialist - in connecting to mainstream religious groups?
- What strategies have you developed to help other peers successfully become a part of religious congregations?
- What are the roles the peer specialists can and should - or cannot and should not-play in this sensitive arena?

For more information on training and consultation around these issues and the webinar, contact Paige O'Sullivan at posullivan@temple.edu (or call 267.322.0413) for more information.

“To terrify children with the image of hell, to consider women an inferior creation - is that good for the world?” Christopher Hitchens

14] [Post Traumatic Stress Disorder & Noise Sensitivity & Hyperacusis](#) Healing From Complex Trauma – Lily Hope Lucario *A journey to healing from complex trauma.*

There is a confirmed link between PTSD and noise sensitivity and hyperacusis.

And I don't mean the loud sounds, startle reflex types of sound.

I mean the real PTSD stressors, like tapping, high pitched sounds, competing sounds, the vacuum cleaner, the lawn mower, kids bouncing balls.....

On bad days – I can literally feel like I want to scream!!!!!!!!!!!!

It is literally pain in my head.

It's a not a commonly known one, but I have deep insight into my PTSD symptoms and why – so I researched it.

[What Is Hyperacusis?](#) Hyperacusis is a condition that arises from a problem in the way the brain's central auditory processing center perceives noise. It can often lead to pain and discomfort. Individuals with hyperacusis have difficulty tolerating sounds which do not seem loud to others, such as the noise from running faucet water, riding in a car, walking on leaves, dishwasher, fan on the refrigerator, shuffling papers. Although all sounds may be perceived as too loud, high frequency sounds may be particularly troublesome.

As one might suspect, the quality of life for individuals with hyperacusis can be greatly compromised. For those with a severe intolerance to sound, it is difficult and sometimes impossible to function in an every day environment with all its ambient noise. Hyperacusis can contribute to social isolation, phonophobia (fear of normal sounds), and depression. [Learn more](#)

[About me](#) - I am a survivor of multiple, severe, complex trauma and abuse.

In Jan 2013, I set up a community page on Facebook. This gained over 10,000 in a year and became the largest non organisation related Complex PTSD Facebook page.

I received 1000's of comments & messages, all stating my gift for expressing my journey, my emotions, my feelings, my highs and lows and my understanding of complex trauma and that expression resonates with so many people.

It became very clear of the need for survivors to relate to someone – another survivor – who can express, voice and understand the whole journey, in a honest, forthright, deep, whole, complete way.

‘No-one’ can understand the impact of severe complex trauma, more than another survivor.

At the age of 40, my healing journey began, when following a near breakdown in 2012, I was forced to acknowledge and deal with my past, after many years of avoiding, minimizing and denying the severity of the abuse, due to fear and complete lack of support.

Complex trauma and abuse in childhood, profoundly affects and causes life changing, core level damage and requires specific therapy.

It is my hope this blog helps many on the same journey to healing as I am.

“Remember, you have been criticizing yourself for years and it hasn't worked. Try approving of yourself and see what happens.” Louise L. Hay

15] [Stress and the Social Self: How Relationships Affect Our Immune System](#) - Brain Pickings By Maria Popova

Relationships, Adrienne Rich argued in her magnificent [meditation on love, refine our truths](#). But they also, it turns out, refine our immune systems. That's what pioneering immunologist Esther Sternberg examines in [The Balance Within: The Science Connecting Health and Emotions](#) - a revelatory inquiry into how emotional stress affects our susceptibility to burnout and disease.

As just about every socialized human being can attest, interpersonal relationships play a significant role in our experience of stress - either contributing to it and or alleviating it. And the way we connect - something psychologist Barbara Fredrickson has termed “positivity resonance” - is deeply patterned through our earliest experiences of bonding, which train our limbic pathways. Sternberg traces the cognitive origin of these formative patterns:

Somewhere in our brains we carry a map of our relationships. It is our mother's lap, our best friend's holding hand, our lover's embrace - all these we carry within ourselves when we are alone. Just knowing that these are there to hold us if we fall gives us a sense of peace. “Cradled,” “rooted,” “connected” are words we use to describe the feeling that comes of this knowledge; social psychologists call this sense embeddedness. The opposite is perhaps a more familiar term - we call it loneliness.

Thus a person, sitting by herself in a room, may appear to others to be quite alone; but that person, if embedded, will have a world of relationships mapped inside her mind - a map that will lead to those who can be called on for nurture and support in time of need. But others, the Gatsbys among us, might be among a crowd of dozens and yet feel very much alone. Many pieces of great literature have in fact tapped into this sense of disconnectedness. Our sense that powerful forces beyond our bodies link us to others is so ingrained that we use phrases such as “times that bind,” “family dyes,” and “bonding,” to describe those intangible connections. And the emotions they evoke are among the greatest forces that affect our hormonal, our nerve chemical, and our immune responses - and through these, our health and our resistance to disease.

The social world can activate the stress response, or it can tone it down. The effects of these personal connections can be more soothing than an hour of meditation. They can also be as stressful, and more long-lived, as running at top speed for twenty minutes on a treadmill. In fact, of all the sensory signals that impinge on us from moment to moment throughout the day, it is the ones connected in some way to another person that can trigger our emotions most intensely. If emotions are really meant to move us, it is these bonds toward which they push or from which they pull. Whole industries are based on the power of such social bonds: romance novels, movies, cosmetics, fashion, advertising, popular songs. In one way or another, the whole of our popular culture strives toward sealing or healing these social connections. *“And heal we must, for the social self is central to our neurobiological experience of stress:..”* [Read the entire article](#)

“We can count on so few people to go that hard way with us.”

“...part of my recovery is respecting my need and my right to let go and relax.” In All Our Affairs

16] [The Essential Guide to Peer-to-Peer Fund-raising](#) - The critical strategies and tactics you need to build a successful peer-to-peer fund-raising program are just a click away - download your free copy

This e-book distills a decade’s worth of lessons and insights from the Peer-to-Peer Professional Forum, the field’s preeminent source of information about and for peer-to-peer fund-raising.

Download now to learn how to:

- Create the campaign that’s right for your organization
- Recruit and retain fundraisers
- Build and support fundraising teams
- Encourage your participants to raise more money
- Stage a world-class event

This resource is perfect for new hires, charities that want to host their first campaign, and seasoned professionals who are looking for new tips to improve their existing programs.

“We may not have it all together, but together we have it all.” Unknown

17] [“A Sickness of Silence”](#) - Recurring Panel Discussion with Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse – Frederick Lane

Earlier this fall, I had the pleasure of appearing on [a podcast hosted by Cheri Roberts](#). The show, called

“Challenging the Rhetoric,” is an interesting weekly show in which Roberts leads “an engaging analysis of the week’s current news and events.”

Recently, Roberts has created a spin-off program called “[A Sickness of Silence](#),” a special ongoing series in which Roberts and childhood friend Kim Lakin lead a roundtable discussion on the challenging and disturbing topic of child sexual abuse. [Roberts and Lakin](#) are both themselves survivors of child sexual abuse and are committed to promoting an open and effective conversation about this difficult but important topic.

Last night [November 5] was the premier episode of the Sickness of Silence round-table discussion, and I had the honor of joining a number of interesting guests on the show. You can [listen to the podcast](#) [or download it] from the Blog Talk Radio Web site.

The other members of the panel included:

- Hosts Cheri Roberts and Kim Lakin;
- Sue Shugarts, the show’s social media manager and researcher;
- [Michael Skinner](#), a New Hampshire-based musician and child sexual abuse survivor;
- Joy Bruckner, child sex abuse survivor;
- Christopher M. Anderson, a child sexual abuse survivor and Executive Director of [MaleSurvivor](#), an organization devoted to helping boys and men overcome sexual victimization; and
- Dr. Sarah D. Goode, an Honorary Research Fellow at the University of Winchester and author of [Paedophiles in Society: Reflecting on Sexuality, Abuse and Hope](#)

It was a powerful and highly informative conversation, and I am looking forward to the next edition of the round-table on December 3, 2015 at 5pm Pacific/8pm Eastern.

[Challenging the Rhetoric Special Series - A Sickness of Silence PT 1](#) 11/05 by Cheri Roberts Parents Podcasts – Archived show

The culture of silence lives on in every generation molding each like the one that came before it. Silence enables abuse, but our words have always held the power to stop it. It is our inability to listen to and share uncomfortable truths that have allowed families to maintain their semblance of normalcy at - not for, the sake of the child.

Join SOS childhood sexual abuse survivors, Cheri Roberts & Kim Lakin, LIVE on Challenging the Rhetoric for a special ongoing series, “A Sickness of Silence”. These 2-hour round-table discussions will feature both male and female victims, leading experts and even the pedophiles themselves.

Each show is designed to help break the cycle and secrets of unwholesome family traditions.

SOS is not about shaming, blaming or naming ... SOS is about sharing solutions that work and working together in order to save a child.

Every show is immediately archived after the live broadcast for listening and sharing convenience. We ask that you do not keep our secret and instead please share our links widely.

“One of my primary responsibilities is to take care of myself. I will find a small way to do something for my mind, body, and spirit today.” Courage to Change - Al-Anon

18] [X-Victim: A real life project for victims of child abuse.](#) - James Thomson james@thomsons.net

A real life project of practical support & inspiration for victims of child abuse.

Have you survived childhood sexual abuse but now live a great life ? What Advice Would You Give To Current Victims ?

“As an x-victim of child sexual abuse myself, I know personally what a powerfully positive impact it can be to know that someone else has not only ‘been there’ before you, but has ‘made it’.

The purpose of this project is to make available a broad range of these experiences and key learning's to people who are still ‘on the way’ to healing and reclaiming their lives.

I’ve made a short 90 second video and landing page that describe this project more fully, including issues like confidentiality, and ability to participate or simply receive a free copy of the book at completion.”

Video posted at website and @ [You Tube](#) 1:21 minutes - X-Victim: Your Experience Can Support & Inspire Others

The Project - To encourage & empower current victims of abuse that reclaiming a happy & successful life is achievable and worth fighting for.

How - By creating a book of true life experiences, lessons and practical advice from X-victims of child sexual abuse; people who have not only survived, but now live an empowered, joy-filled life.

The process is positive, flexible, safe and confidential - It begins with a relaxed and confidential conversation (normally via Skype) where you can ask any questions you want about me and the project. I will also learn about you and your experiences, and together we will discover if this project is right for you.

You must be an Adult who has had the necessary time and professional support to have fully healed from being sexually abused as a child. [Learn more](#) [Facebook Page](#)

Please note, I did participate, James is an easy-going & caring man. MS

“When someone really hears you without passing judgment on you, without taking responsibility for you, without trying to mold you, it feels damn good....

When I have been listened to and when I have been heard, I am able to perceive my world in a new way and to go on. It is astonishing how elements which seem insoluble become soluble when someone listens.” Carl Rogers

Take care, Michael, Mary, Becky, Cynthia, Lynn & Mary Ann

PS. Please share this with your friends & if you have received this in error, please let me know – mikeskinner@comcast.net

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

A diagnosis is not a destiny

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

[The Surviving Spirit Speakers' Bureau](#)

[The Surviving Spirit Facebook Page](#)

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