



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 April 2018

Hi Folks,

It has been a year, since I sent out the last Surviving Spirit Newsletter and I am truly sorry for that. I will share the reasons why, this happened, and I will try my best to make a long story, short.

I had all of the information needed to send out the April 2017 issue, but some personal matters and work related stress put that on hold. I had taken a job with a Community Mental Health Center here in NH, as a peer support specialist for a Mobile Crisis Team. I truly loved the work and enjoyed working with all of the other staff members in our efforts to help those in crisis. In a long conversation with the head supervisor of this team, I had made it clear that I work from a trauma-informed AND trauma practicing mindset. He assured me that this is what the Mental Health Center wanted to do and they welcomed my years of experience to help shape the Center's efforts in moving forward.

“Go to where the silence is and say something.” Amy Goodman

Sadly, it didn't take long to see, that there were still some Neanderthals working in this 'system', who referred to folks in crisis as, “whack jobs”, “crazy”, etc. And there were several employees who spoke disparagingly of those with the unfortunate label of Borderline Personality Disorder. I don't like labels and I truly despise this label as it is so darn negative. But the simple fact that some staff members, clinicians and peer support specialists, went out of their way to avoid working with these folks, caused me all kinds of sadness, anger and confusion. I did make the 'powers-that-be', aware of this, but it did not take long, to realize that my efforts to speak of the abuse and neglect that was going on, was not welcomed. Instead, I became the problem for the two supervisors, who worked from the stance of the Three Monkeys, *See no evil, Speak no evil and Hear no evil.*

I am proud of my work as an advocate for those impacted by trauma, abuse and mental health challenges, work I have been doing since 1993. But, I was truly blindsided by what was taking place at my place of employment. I know now, I was being emotionally challenged [triggered] from this work environment and it brought back the feelings associated with the mistreatment I had experienced when I was part of a mental health center that treated me like a child and an idiot.

Please know, the majority of the staff [my fellow employees] at this Mental Health Center were caring, compassionate and hard-working.

So, the above mentioned concerns caused a delay in sending the newsletter and then the rest of the

story took place.

I sustained a concussion at work and was left with post-concussion symptoms of depression, confusion, anger, irritability, double-vision, balance problems and anxiety issues...and it exacerbated my post traumatic stress and depression. I could not watch TV, work at a computer, I was tired all the time and had horrible headaches and I had to wear prism glasses. Sound and lights became a problem as well and I had to leave the band I was drumming with, this was a bummer.

Slowly, but surely, the head injury symptoms were starting to improve at a glacier's pace and then comes the rest of the story.

In November I was taken by ambulance to a hospital for fainting and heart concerns. I spent several days there, all kinds of tests, put on medications and told I was dealing with Atrial Fibrillation and some other concerns that took more tests and procedures to find out that I have a hole in my heart and a vein that should not be there. I have had this since birth and now it needs to be fixed, so April 16th finds me having open-heart surgery to fix all of the above mentioned heart concerns.

The simple fact that I am able to type this up, shows, there has been improvement with the concussion and I know the heart matters will also be a thing of the past. As I said, a long story that I did try to keep simple and short.

Take care, Michael

Depression Linked to Increased Risk of Developing Atrial Fibrillation - Psych Congress - <https://www.psychcongress.com/news/depression-linked-increased-risk-developing-atrial-fibrillation>

Depression Linked to Increased Atrial Fibrillation Risk - DAIC - <https://www.dicardiology.com/content/depression-linked-increased-atrial-fibrillation-risk>

Depression may be linked to increased risk of atrial fibrillation - <https://www.news-medical.net/news/20180323/Depression-may-be-linked-to-increased-risk-of-atrial-fibrillation.aspx>

"What happens when people open their hearts?" "They get better." Haruki Murakami

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*“It is your ability as a creative person to envision positive change that will make a difference.”
Patricia Johanson*

1] Sexual Assault Awareness Month Overview [SAAM] 2018, | National Sexual Violence Resource Center (NSVRC) - <https://www.nsvrc.org/sexual-assault-awareness-month-overview-2018>

This year, SAAM is celebrating its 17th anniversary with the theme “Embrace Your Voice” to inform individuals on how they can use their words to promote safety, respect, and equality to stop sexual violence before it happens.

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[PDF File](#)
[TXT File](#)

“Never apologize for showing feelings. When you do so, you apologize for the truth.” Benjamin Disraeli

2] New PSA from 1in6 and NO MORE for Sexual Assault Awareness Month

[Please note, the 2nd link brings yo to a You Tube video, 5:45 minutes, powerful testimony and awareness. *Michael*]

Dear Friends,

We're thrilled to announce the [release](#) of our new PSA in partnership with NO MORE: [Survivors of Sexual Trauma Reveal an Important Truth](#). Funded in part by the NFL, the PSA sheds light on the reality that at least one in six men are survivors of sexual abuse or assault through a creative and unexpected twist.

We hope you will share it with your networks and on social media! Here is a sample tweet (feel free to make it your own):

For #SexualAssaultAwarenessMonth, @1in6org and @NOMORE have released a PSA featuring survivors of sexual abuse and assault revealing an important truth. Watch and share to spread awareness! <https://youtu.be/2p06x-yumc0> #SAAM #1in6

Warm regards,
The 1in6 Team

“Give what you have. To someone it may be better than you dare to think.” Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

3] Trauma Informed Oregon's TIC Healthcare Standards/Guidelines @ ACEsConnection - <http://www.acesconnection.com/blog/trauma-informed-oregon-s-tic-healthcare-standards-guidelines>

4] ACEsConnection - <http://www.acesconnection.com/> A Community-of-Practice Social Network - *Join the movement to prevent ACE's, heal trauma & build resilience.*

Adverse Childhood Experiences[ACEs] - <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/acestudy/index.html>

"We learned about honesty and integrity - that the truth matters... that you don't take shortcuts or play by your own set of rules... and success doesn't count unless you earn it fair and square." Michelle Obama

5] ACEs Too High News - <https://acestoohigh.com/>

About - ACESTooHigh is a news site that reports on research about adverse childhood experiences, including developments in epidemiology, neurobiology, and the biomedical and epigenetic consequences of toxic stress. We also cover how people, organizations, agencies and communities are implementing practices based on the research. This includes developments in education, juvenile justice, criminal justice, public health, medicine, mental health, social services, and cities, counties and states.

"Those who have a 'why' to live, can bear with almost any 'how'." Viktor E. Frankl

6] National Child Abuse Prevention Month 2018 - <https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/preventing/preventionmonth/>

Strong, nurturing communities that are supportive of families can get involved and play a role in preventing child abuse and neglect and promoting child and family well-being.

I think humans might be like butterflies; people die every day without many other people knowing about them, seeing their colors, hearing their stories... and when humans are broken, they're like broken butterfly wings; suddenly there are so many beauties that are seen in different ways, so many thoughts and visions and possibilities that form, which couldn't form when the person wasn't broken! So it is not a very sad thing to be broken, after all! It's during the times of being broken, that you have all the opportunities to become things unforgettable! Just like the broken butterfly wing that I found, which has given me so many thoughts, in so many ways, has shown me so many words, and imaginations! But butterflies need to know, that it doesn't matter at all if the whole world saw their colors or not! But what matters is that they flew, they glided, they hovered, they saw, they felt, and they knew! And they loved the ones whom they flew with! And that is an existence worthwhile!" JoyBell C.

7] TED-Ed How Stress Affects the Brain - How chronic stress can affect the brain's size, structure, and how it functions: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WuyPuH9ojCE> Video 4:15 minutes

Stress isn't always a bad thing; it can be handy for a burst of extra energy and focus, like when you're playing a competitive sport or have to speak in public. But when it's continuous, it actually begins to change your brain. Madhumita Murgia shows how chronic stress can affect brain size, its structure, and

how it functions, right down to the level of your genes. Lesson by Madhumita Murgia, animation by Andrew Zimbelman.

"Courage is resistance to fear, mastery of fear - not absence of fear." Mark Twain

8] 26 Habits You Develop As An Adult When You Have Experienced Childhood Emotional Abuse – Awareness Act - <http://awarenessact.com/26-habits-you-develop-as-an-adult-when-you-have-experiences-childhood-emotional-abuse/>

When growing up, the raising that we receive has much to do with our coping skills as an adult. And I have noticed that I, and other victims of emotional abuse, have certain behaviors that separate us from the rest.

If you, or someone you know was a victim of abuse, then you may want to read through these. Just being able to understand where another person is coming from, or understanding yourself better, can make all the difference.

"There are short-cuts to happiness, and dancing is one of them." Vicki Baum

9] The 10 best bipolar blogs - <https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/319136.php>

Bipolar disorder is typically a long-term condition. Bipolar blogs, written by people living with the disorder, often provide advice, tips, and self-help techniques on how to take an active part in your recovery and limit the impact of the condition on your everyday life. We have selected the best bipolar blogs.

"There are short-cuts to happiness, and dancing is one of them." Vicki Baum

10] Meet the Punk Activist Who's Changing the Psychiatric System From the Inside - <http://narrative.ly/meet-the-punk-activist-whos-changing-the-psychiatric-system-from-the-inside/>

Sascha DuBrul is not your typical clinician: he's been institutionalized multiple times and is best known as the bassist of Choking Victim. But upending the way delusional patients are treated is the most punk thing he's ever done.

"Love isn't finding a perfect person. It's seeing an imperfect person perfectly." Sam Keen

11] Parent's Corner: The Courage of Parenting with a History of Trauma by Gretchen Schmelzer - <http://gretchenschmelzer.com/blog-1/2015/8/11/parents-corner-the-courage-of-parenting-with-a-history-of-trauma>

This is for all of you parents who lived through difficult childhoods, difficult years--through trauma (however you would define it), through neglect, through war—especially, but not necessarily, as children. This is for all of you who had to do whatever you needed to do to survive and now you are out on the other side. You made it with a lot of grit and effort. Your life is calm. It is good. And you are working hard as a parent to raise your children, whether they are toddlers, teens or young adults.

Additional resources:

Please stop saying parenting is hard for everyone & read Parenting with PTSD instead @ ACEsConnection by Christine Cissy White - <http://www.acesconnection.com/blog/please-stop-saying-parenting-is-hard-for-everyone-and-read-parenting-with-ptsd-instead>

Parenting with PTSD Support Page - Did you know that we now have an [online support group page](#) on Facebook? This is a place to share your thoughts, feelings and concerns as a parent who is a survivor of childhood abuse, and receive some pretty fantastic non-judgmental support from other amazing parents like you. We have had some incredible conversations these last few weeks.

“Out beyond ideas of wrongdoing and right-doing, there is a field. I'll meet you there.” Rumi

12] New Documentary Reveals Link Between Poverty and Mental Health, Humanizes Victims - Long Beach Post - <https://lbpost.com/life/health/new-documentary-reveals-link-between-poverty-and-mental-health-humanizes-victims/>

In an effort to highlight the effects of poverty on mental health and humanize the victims of the poverty cycle, The Art Theatre in Long Beach will screen the debut of the documentary The Bridge: Pathways to a Trauma-Informed Community on Wednesday, April 26, free to the public.

Produced by The Guidance Center, a local agency that provides mental health resources to children, and Emmy Award-winning filmmaker Matthew Murray, the film focuses on how a trauma-informed community can help break the intergenerational cycle of poverty.

The Bridge: Pathways to a Trauma-Informed Community Trailer on Vimeo - <https://vimeo.com/210842029>

Through interviews with community leaders and former Guidance Center clients filmed in Long Beach and on Catalina Island, The Bridge: Pathways to a Trauma-Informed Community highlights the effects of poverty on mental health, and how cultivating a trauma-informed community is part of the wider solution for breaking the intergenerational cycle of poverty.

“Owning our story can be hard but not nearly as difficult as spending our lives running from it. Embracing our vulnerabilities is risky but not nearly as dangerous as giving up on love and belonging and joy-the experiences that make us the most vulnerable. Only when we are brave enough to explore the darkness will we discover the infinite power of our light.” Brené Brown

13] Survive, Heal, Thrive - <https://survivehealthrive.org/> - Have you survived child sexual abuse AND been able to now live a great life? Videos, commentary and more....

What advice would you share now?

THE PROJECT

To demonstrate how it is possible to reclaim a happy, successful and self-empowered life after child abuse.

HOW

By documenting our true life accounts of a specific learning, process, turning point, realization or other experience that supported us in returning to genuine joy and happiness.

PURPOSE

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

- *I get to share a few words of hope in an audio clip at the site, also have a part in the upcoming book. Michael*
- *We All Deserve to Thrive In Life - Michael - YouTube - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vbfPjcroTvQ>*

“I'm for truth, no matter who tells it. I'm for justice, no matter who it's for or against.” Malcolm X

14] The Neuroscience of Singing - <https://upliftconnect.com/neuroscience-of-singing/> - Singing Together Brings Heartbeats Into Harmony

The neuroscience of singing shows that when we sing our neurotransmitters connect in new and different ways. It fires up the right temporal lobe of our brain, releasing endorphins that make us smarter, healthier, happier and more creative. When we sing with other people this effect is amplified.

The science is in. Singing is really, really good for you and the most recent research suggests that group singing is the most exhilarating and transformative of all.

The good feelings we get from singing in a group are a kind of evolutionary reward for coming together cooperatively.

The research suggests that creating music together evolved as a tool of social living. Groups and tribes sang and danced together to build loyalty, transmit vital information and ward off enemies.

“Whoever is careless with the truth in small matters cannot be trusted with important matters.” Albert Einstein

“It has been my experience that the one that families call the 'crazy one' is often the sane one. This is particularly true in very dysfunctional families where ideas of healthy functioning are turned upside down. In these families, members often repress their authentic feelings and turn against anyone who reminds them of their unresolved issues and patterns.

As a result, the Truth-speakers, the ones who refuse to contain their feelings, those who challenge and humanize the toxic status quo, are often scapegoated and vilified, made to feel crazy by those who lack the courage and insight to see beyond the family's madness. If you have been labeled the 'crazy one', take heart. You are truly not alone. Most great creators and paradigm shifters were met with fiery resistance by those afraid to grow. Whatever you do, do not allow your voice to fade away in the face of their messaging. Your Voice, your vision, your ways of being, live at the heart of your unique Soul's Journey and are the key to collective transformation. No one has the right to bury them under a bushel

of shame. No one! And remember- what is crazy to an unconscious person is often brilliantly sane to one who is Awakened. Without you, we are lost. Blessed be the 'crazy' ones!"
Author: Jeff Brown from "Soulshaping"

Thank you and Take care, Michael

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

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