



*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 July 2018

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- 1] [8 Lifestyle Habits May Counter The Health Effects Of Early Life Stress](#) – Forbes

In recent years, there’s been a lot of scientific interest in how our early life experiences - and traumas - effect changes in our bodies, brains, and psyches. And these can last for decades. In fact, early childhood experiences can significantly raise the risk for serious health and mental health issues over the course of our lives. Three studies out this week explore this phenomenon, and all point to the idea that it’s the inflammation caused by early stress that may be behind the connection. Luckily, one of the studies finds that practicing certain lifestyle habits may go a long way in countering it.

This first study, from Loma Linda University, looked at centenarians and seniors, many of whom were “well on their way to becoming centenarians,” in the Loma Linda, CA community. This area is one of the five “blue zones” - areas around the world where people live extraordinarily long lives - outlined in the book of the same title by Dan Buettner.

The authors interviewed community members about their early life experiences, and found that they were more often than not peppered with adverse childhood experiences (ACEs). These included all kinds of events, giving rise to both acute and chronic stress - extreme family financial stress, food deprivation, child abuse, community violence, parental mental health issues, homelessness, parental addiction, and family separations. Many grew up during the Depression and World War II, and their

families' economic stresses affected food security, access to healthcare, and access to education.

But the participants also engaged in a number of behaviors throughout life that seemed to help counter the effects of stress and support longevity. A central habit was that people made and maintained strong social connections, which previous research has also shown to be one of the central predictors [if not the central predictor] of well-being and longevity. Other behaviors linked to lifespan were living a "kinetic life," meaning that an individual was outdoors and active, often from morning till evening; charitable acts and altruism; spiritual practices, like prayer; a day of rest or "resetting" that often included social connection and/or family excursions; significant engagement with nature; eating simple "real" foods; and having intrinsic drive and a hopeful outlook.

[These behaviors are well-studied and well known to affect us on multiple levels. The authors suggest that an important element is the chronic inflammation that's caused by stress:](#)

*"If you have been brutally broken but still have the courage to be gentle to others, then you deserve a love deeper than the ocean itself." Nikita Gill*

## 2] [The seven essential behaviors of highly creative people](#) – Quartz

IT TAKES WORK - Become the creative you've always wanted to be by embracing these seven habits

The most commonly held belief about creativity is that it's elusive, esoteric and unique only to the anointed few.

The ancient Greeks believed that creativity was a divine attendant spirit that came to human beings from some distant and unknowable source, for distant and unknowable reasons. They called these spirits daemons. The Romans had a similar idea as well, but called the spirit a genius.

Centuries later, not much has changed. The only difference is that we no longer attribute creativity to divine spirits, but to special individuals. We think that it's only Beethoven, Picasso and Mozart who have creative genius.

Except that's not true.

Today, we deconstruct and analyze even the most elusive of processes. We come to understand that there are specific behaviors and mindsets which anyone can use to reach a desired result.

[Here are the seven behaviors of highly creative people.](#)

*"The mind grows by what it feeds on." Josiah G. Holland*

*"We cannot drop out of human involvement without endangering our spiritual health." Unknown*

## 3] [Common Drugs May Be Contributing to Depression](#) - The New York Times

Could common prescription medications be contributing to depression and rising suicide rates?

Over one-third of Americans take at least one prescription drug that lists depression as a potential side effect, a new study reports, and users of such drugs have higher rates of depression than those who don't take such drugs.

Many patients are taking more than one drug that has depression as a side effect, and the study found that the risk of depression increased with each additional such drug taken at the same time.

About 200 prescription drugs can cause depression, and the list includes common medications like proton pump inhibitors (P.P.I.s) used to treat acid reflux, beta-blockers used to treat high blood pressure, birth control pills and emergency contraceptives, anticonvulsants like gabapentin, corticosteroids like prednisone and even prescription-strength ibuprofen. Some of these drugs are also sold over-the-counter in pharmacies.

For some drugs, like beta-blockers and interferon, the side effect of depression is well known, but the authors of the study were surprised at how many drugs were on the list.

& [Depression Is Possible Side Effect Of Many Common Drugs](#) : Shots - Health News : NPR – audio clip 3:30 minutes & text

*“Each day, each new moment can be an opportunity to clear the air and start again, fresh and free.” In All Our Affairs*

4] [Reweaving loss into memory: our responsibility as survivors](#) - Amy Oestreicher - TEDx – YouTube 18:51 minutes

As a thirteen-year-old, Amy Oestreicher decided to throw a surprise birthday party for her grandmother, Hannah Stochel. Neighbors and relatives gathered about the kitchen table, but when Hannah arrived, she burst into tears, explaining that her friends were not there to join in - they had all died during the war. Shocked and unsettled, Oestreicher eventually spent years recovering the hidden threads of her grandmother's life. As a Holocaust survivor, her grandmother was forever haunted by loss, yet she still found the strength to celebrate when times were good. That was the lesson Oestreicher needed to learn to survive trauma in her own life. Each of us, ultimately, has so much to learn from the lives of those we've lost, but it is up to us - to learn their stories, and tell their stories, reweaving loss into lasting memory. Sharing the lessons learned from trauma through her writing, original music, mixed media art and performance, Amy Oestreicher is a PTSD specialist, artist, author, writer for the Huffington Post, global speaker, health advocate, survivor, award-winning actress, and playwright. As the creator of “Gutless & Grateful,” her BroadwayWorld - nominated one-woman autobiographical musical, she's toured theaters nationwide and is part of a program combining mental health advocacy, sexual assault awareness and Broadway Theater for college campuses and international conferences. To celebrate her own “beautiful detour,” Amy created the #LoveMyDetour campaign to help others cope in the face of unexpected events. She has contributed to over 70 notable publications, and her story has appeared on NBC's TODAY, CBS, Cosmopolitan, among others.

[Amy Oestreicher](#) - Celebrating life's beautiful detours through creative arts programming, leadership development and mental health education and empowerment

*“When the whole world is silent, even one voice becomes powerful.” Malala Yousafzai*

5] [P.E.E.R. Resource Network](#) - People Empowered by Experience & Resilience

**Who we are** - PRN is a project of WV Community Supports, Inc. Our founders actively participated with policy makers to develop P.E.E.R. led programs in WV in 2011. PRN leadership has been influential in securing resources for program funding and development of peer support, advocacy, education, recovery centers, transitional housing and community supports.

**Our Mission** - We will provide innovative solutions while facilitating access to resources for people and their communities. We strive to promote the potency of personal experience for the individuals' vocation, lifestyle and livelihood by actively engaging person-centered ideals while focusing upon unique perspectives led by lived experience.

*“Life is not a journey to the grave with intentions of arriving safely in a pretty, well-preserved body, but rather to skid broadside, thoroughly used up and totally worn out and loudly proclaiming.... WOW!!!! What a ride.” George Bernard Shaw*

6] [American Journal of Preventive Medicine - The Behavioral Health Workforce](#): Planning, Practice, and Preparation -| ScienceDirect.com

Abstract: The growth of the peer workforce in behavioral health services is bringing opportunities to organizations and institutions that serve people living with mental and substance use disorders and their families. Peer workers are defined as people in recovery from mental illness or substance use disorders or both that possess specific peer support competencies. Similar roles are identified for families of people in recovery. Peer support has been implemented in a vast range of behavioral health services, including in the relatively new use of peer support in criminal justice and emergency service environments. Behavioral health services are striving to integrate peer workers into their workforce to augment existing service delivery, in part because peer support has demonstrated effectiveness in helping people with behavioral health conditions to connect to, engage in, and be active participants in treatment and recovery support services across all levels of care. This article describes the experiences that organizations and their workforce, including peer workers, encounter as they integrate peer support services into the array of behavioral health services. Specific attention is given to the similarities and differences of services provided by peers in mental health settings and substance use settings, and implications for future directions. The article also addresses the role of peer workers in integrated behavioral and physical health-care services.

*“Depression is rage spread thin.” George Santayanna*

*“Nothing about us without us.” Unknown*

7] [Nothing About Us Without Us: Disability Oppression and Empowerment](#): James I. Charlton

James Charlton has produced a ringing indictment of disability oppression, which, he says, is rooted in degradation, dependency, and powerlessness and is experienced in some form by five hundred million persons throughout the world who have physical, sensory, cognitive, or developmental disabilities. *Nothing About Us Without Us* is the first book in the literature on disability to provide a theoretical overview of disability oppression that shows its similarities to, and differences from, racism, sexism, and colonialism. Charlton's analysis is illuminated by interviews he conducted over a ten-year period

with disability rights activists throughout the Third World, Europe, and the United States.

Charlton finds an antidote for dependency and powerlessness in the resistance to disability oppression that is emerging worldwide. His interviews contain striking stories of self-reliance and empowerment evoking the new consciousness of disability rights activists. As a latecomer among the world's liberation movements, the disability rights movement will gain visibility and momentum from Charlton's elucidation of its history and its political philosophy of self-determination, which is captured in the title of his book.

*Nothing About Us Without Us* expresses the conviction of people with disabilities that they know what is best for them. Charlton's combination of personal involvement and theoretical awareness assures greater understanding of the disability rights movement.

*"Cautious, careful people, always casting about to preserve their reputations can never effect a reform."* Susan B. Anthony

*"Knowing what must be done does away with fear."* Rosa Parks

8] [What happens in the brain during a spiritual experience?](#) - Medical News Today

The question as to what happens in the brain when we have a spiritual experience has been explored numerous times, with varying results, and it continues to fascinate researchers and non-specialists alike. A new study aims to reveal more.

For decades, researchers who are intrigued by the importance of spirituality in people's lives have conducted studies investigating what happens in the human brain when people feel deeply spiritually connected.

Due to the fact that the concept of "spirituality" can be understood in so many different ways across cultures and individuals - and that whatever someone may term a "spiritual experience" can stimulate the brain in very complex ways - it has been hard to pinpoint a brain mechanism for spirituality.

Nevertheless, researchers have persevered despite the challenges. So, studies on Carmelite nuns and dedicated Mormon practitioners have suggested that multiple brain regions are involved in processing experiences of union with a higher being.

Also, a commonality suggested by a few studies was that individuals engaging in long-term spiritual practice had decreased activity in the right parietal lobe, which has been tied to self-oriented focus.

In other words, spiritual experiences seemed to increase, as it were, selflessness in the brain.

Spirituality against depression?

Prof. Lisa Miller, the editor of the *Oxford University Press Handbook of Psychology & Spirituality*, has conducted a series of studies on what happens in, or to, the brains of people with intense spiritual lives.

Her research has indicated that people with habitual spiritual practices show cortical thickening in the

prefrontal cortex. Intriguingly, she says that individuals who live with chronic depression experience cortical thinning in the same brain region.

This has led her to argue that spirituality and depression are likely "two sides of the same coin."

[Spirituality may 'buffer the effects of stress'](#)

*"Music is the mediator between the spiritual and the sensual life." Ludwig van Beethoven*

*"Don't let someone get comfortable with disrespecting you." Unknown*

9] [Physical symptoms and side effects of anxiety](#) – Medical News Today

Anxiety can impact physical and mental health. There are short - and long-term effects on both the mind and body.

While many people know about the effects of anxiety on mental health, fewer people are aware of the physical side effects, which can include digestive issues and an increased risk of infection. Anxiety can also change the function of the cardiovascular, urinary, and respiratory systems.

In this article, we discuss the most common physical symptoms and side effects of anxiety.

***Anxiety can have a significant effect on the body, and long-term anxiety increases the risk of developing chronic physical conditions.***

*"Being deeply loved by someone gives you strength, while loving someone deeply gives you courage."*  
*Lao Tzu*

10] [How Adverse Childhood Experiences Affect Adult Illness](#) – You Tube 2:56 minutes

Donna Jackson Nakazawa, author of 'Childhood Disrupted' discusses how Adverse Childhood Experiences [ACEs] affect adult illness such as heart disease, autoimmune disease and cancer.

& [Childhood Disrupted - How Your Biography Becomes Your Biology And How You Can Heal](#)

A groundbreaking book showing the link between Adverse Childhood Experiences [ACEs] and adult illnesses such as heart disease, autoimmune disease, and cancer - Childhood Disrupted also explains how to cope with these emotional traumas and even heal from them.

Your biography becomes your biology. The emotional trauma we suffer as children not only shapes our emotional lives as adults, it also affects our physical health, longevity, and overall well-being. Scientists now know on a bio-chemical level exactly how parents' chronic fights, divorce, death in the family, being bullied or hazed, and growing up with a hypercritical, alcoholic, or mentally ill parent can leave permanent, physical "fingerprints" on our brains.

When we as children encounter sudden or chronic adversity, excessive stress hormones cause powerful changes in the body, altering our body chemistry. The developing immune system and brain react to this chemical barrage by permanently resetting our stress response to "high," which in turn can have a

devastating impact on our mental and physical health.

Donna Jackson Nakazawa shares stories from people who have recognized and overcome their adverse experiences, shows why some children are more immune to stress than others, and explains why women are at particular risk. Groundbreaking in its research, inspiring in its clarity, *Childhood Disrupted* explains how you can reset your biology - and help your loved ones find ways to heal.

*“You gain strength, courage, and confidence by every experience in which you really stop to look fear in the face. You are able to say to yourself, 'I lived through this horror. I can take the next thing that comes along.'” Eleanor Roosevelt*

11] [Michael Skinner @ Survivor Knights Event](#), Philadelphia, PA – live performance of “Songs for the Keys to Your Life” - YouTube 3:08 minutes

"Songs for the Keys to Your Life", from the 'Waitin' for a Train CD, performed at the Survivor Knights event, in Philadelphia, PA; a great cause, great people & a great time.

“SONGS FOR THE KEYS TO YOUR LIFE” © Michael Skinner Music

#### VERSE I

Slaving away, worked your fingers to the bone  
The grindstone is all that you see  
Once made of gold, now turned so cold  
Your hands have forgotten your dreams  
Do you even know, do you even care  
When did you drop the keys?  
The keys to your dreams, the music to your soul  
Remember how you once sang to me

#### CHORUS

Songs for the keys to your life  
Songs for the keys to your life  
Songs for the keys to your life  
Have you sung the song for the keys to your life?

#### VERSE II

Wasting away, what's there to say  
Of all of the things that you loved  
Now all I see, is broken inside  
Is the love of only your wealth.  
Is that now the dream, manipulations and schemes?  
You've climbed your way to the top  
You look around, what do you see?  
A wasteland of all that you loved

#### CHORUS

*“No one saves us but ourselves. No one can and no one may. We ourselves must walk the path.”*  
Buddha

*“Unity is strength... when there is teamwork and collaboration, wonderful things can be achieved.”*  
Mattie Stepanek

12] [Online Bullying: These Are The Comments LGBTQ People Deal With Daily](#) – Huffington Post

Riyadh Khalaf was 16 when he set up his YouTube channel as a creative outlet and “safe space” away from the real-life bullies he faced every day at school. But far from the sanctuary he sought, the 27-year-old said he started to receive daily attacks from anonymous users almost straight away.

“I didn't understand how someone who didn't know me could hate me so much, and for something I couldn't control - my sexuality, how I spoke, how I moved,” he told HuffPost.

Riyadh is just one of the people to appear in “Bully”, a new short film by director and campaigner Jake Graf. The film sees high-profile members of the international LGBT+ community read out hurtful messages they've received online, in order to raise awareness of the impact of cyberbullying.

As a trans man, Jake feels it's important that people be made aware of the hugely negative and dangerous impact cyberbullying can have. “Even after my recent wedding, my wife Hannah and I were trolled by people saying we shouldn't be allowed to marry, that we were just freaks, that we were both mentally ill. This was all after the happiest day of our lives,” he told HuffPost.

He hopes the film will make people rethink before posting hate online. To the bullies, he says: “Maybe just take a moment to consider how you would feel if someone said them to you, and write something kind instead.”

South African TV presenter now based in the U.K. Sade Giliberti, who appears in the film, said she often receives nasty comments on social media related to her sexuality.

“There's always an instant feeling of hurt, and wondering what you ever did wrong to that person. But I've realized that people who hide behind avatars and troll people's profiles have deeper issues, and retaliate to make themselves feel better,” she said.

‘[Bully](#)’, short film tackling cyber bullying within the LGBT community on Vimeo 2:53 minutes

'Bully' is the new short film from Jake Graf featuring some of the most prominent, visible and vocal members of the international LGBT community. Starring singer and model Jaimie Wilson, presenter and Youtube inspiration Riyadh Khalaf, 'gender capitalist' Rain Dove, Fiona Dawson, director of award winning documentary 'Trans Military', presenter and actor Sade Giliberti and actor and activist Devin Lowe, the film aims to tackle head on the blight of cyber bullying across the LGBT spectrum.

*“No matter what kind of challenges or difficulties or painful situations you go through in your life, we all have something deep within us that we can reach down and find the inner strength to get through them.”* Alana Stewart

***Take care, Michael***

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

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

*A diagnosis is not a destiny*

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

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