



*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 2018

Hi Folks,

Welcome to November and here in New Hampshire, snow and a fair amount of it, along with several days of sub-freezing weather has come early...The bright side to this, perhaps it will take care of the tick population that has been devastating the moose and deer. Not to mention, that it has a way of keeping one out of the woods and fields for walking...one of my favorite things to do.

The onset of the cold and the changing of the seasons has another benefit for looking into the woods as the trees are now bare. This morning I was rewarded with seeing my 'friend'...a coyote traipsing along the river bank behind the home. I enjoy spending my time vegging out with my daily ritual of staring off into the forest. Spending time in the woods as a child, kept me safe and allowed for moments of peace and a time to be away from the horrors of my home life...the forests, the fields, the mountains, rivers and streams are still one of my go-to things for my healing and peace of mind. I believe we all have places, spaces and thoughts that tell us what we need to do for healing...the trick, not allowing society and other 'well-wishers' to get in our head space and negate what we know to be true.

Some thoughts about, “getting over it” and “move on, it's in the past”, etc...I have worked hard on my healing and finding serenity. And I do not dwell on the past hurts and losses in my life...they creep in from time to time and I have learned to sit with the sadness or the anger and let it leave on its own accord. I no longer fight it...that said, I am having a hard time with the physical ailments and medical issues that have been pestering me for the past several years. All of which, have a basis from my childhood abuse...there is sadness and anger and realizing that despite my best efforts at being healthy, things were set into motion a long time ago that had a impact upon my mind, body and spirit. The trauma has its way of leaving many of us with medical conditions that only serve as a reminder to what once happened in our lives....so how does one, “forget about it”, when the daily pain is a constant reminder. Please know, not complaining, just being aware of what it is...

The recent loss of a friend who was several years younger than me, has prompted a lot of musing on trauma and our health and dying too damn early....I used to think I would live to be a hundred years old, now I only strive to have a quality of live for the years remaining.

A question, has anyone ever been told they need a anterior cervical disc fusion and if so, what other options did you find other than surgery?

To help honor the passing of a friend, I thought to share with you, one of her favorite poems [thoughts]

from Veronica A. Shoffstall

Thank you folks, Michael Skinner

*“After a while  
you learn the subtle difference between holding a hand and chaining a soul  
and you learn love doesn't mean leaning and company doesn't always mean security.  
And you begin to learn that kisses aren't contracts and presents aren't always promises  
and you begin to accept your defeats with your head up and and your eyes ahead with the grace of a  
woman, not the grief of a child.  
And you learn to build all your roads on today because tomorrow's ground is too uncertain for plans  
and futures have a way of falling down in mid-flight.  
After a while you learn that even sunshine burns if you get too much  
So you plant your own garden and decorate your own soul instead of waiting for someone to bring you  
flowers  
And you learn that you really can endure, that you really are strong and you really do have worth and  
you learn and you learn  
with every good-bye you learn.” Author: Veronica A. Shoffstall*

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*“Change, like healing, takes time.” Veronica Roth*

*“As my sufferings mounted I soon realized that there were two ways in which I could respond to my situation -- either to react with bitterness or seek to transform the suffering into a creative force. I decided to follow the latter course.” Martin Luther King Jr.*

1] [Spouse Secondary PTSD and Seeking Professional Support](#) – This Life, This Moment by Lea

*Hi, I'm Lea, I help PTSD partners break down the barriers of their PTSD relationship by teaching them how to shift their mindset and use small achievable steps so they don't have to walk on eggshells any longer.*

When I saw my psychologist today, I'd never heard of spouse secondary PTSD.

Isn't it funny that my husband is the one with clinically diagnosed PTSD and yet I'm the one getting therapy?

No. It's not funny at all. I've cried enough private tears over the past five years to know that there is absolutely nothing funny with any of this.

I've only seen this psychologist twice. My previous counselor, who sadly is on extended leave due to family bereavement, was good for chatting with and venting my frustrations to. But my new counselor is a psychologist – a big step up. She's specially trained to work with PTSD sufferers and their families. She actually understands a lot of the things I tell her about our life.

She actually gets it.

My first session was a shock, to be honest. After an hour of hard-hitting questions, I came away feeling wiped out like I'd just done an equivalent of an IME \*\*\* [Independent Medical Examination]. It takes a lot for me to cry, but she had me on the verge more than a few times during that session.

And the questions she laid out for me, and all my automated responses, stayed with me for the rest of the week. However my truths were starting to become a little clearer. Four weeks later, I was apprehensive about going back...

But back I went. And I'm glad I did. I have come away feeling just that tinier bit lighter, with some new insights and some new strategies to think about.

However a few words and phrases my psychologist mentioned in passing are pressing on me, and I'm worried they'll turn cancerous being harboured in my overanxious mind.

From our conversations, she's gleaned that my husband has “complex PTSD”. His PTSD is to be considered “severe”. In terms of his harmful relationship with alcohol, he is still very much in the “pre-contemplation” stage when considering stages of change. And in terms of active treatment of his PTSD, we discussed the term “resistant”.

Shit. Here I was naively assuming, despite his latest PTSD relapse two months ago, he was somewhat “okay” – that is, okay in the scheme of what okay actually means under the shadow of

PTSD. Words like “complex” and “severe” don’t sit so well with me. Not at all. “*Resistant*” means my life as I know it won’t be changing any time soon.

And finally, “pre-contemplation” may sound less threatening, but in the reality of my world, that translates as having to accept my husband drinking regularly and often, in what’s known as “self-medicating”. Wonderful.

Who understands this world? When my husband drinks, I lose my husband.

I lose my husband, and I gain a monster.

*\*\*\* Independent Medical Examination. Something my husband has had to endure multiple times while jumping through the hoops of work cover and a temporary disability pension. Put simply, an IME is the easiest way to dredge up every horror he has ever lived through, in little more than an hour, without any psychological support or follow-up, guaranteeing a severe and immediate setback in his PTSD and exaggerated misery for our family. The term “counter-productive” barely tickles the tip of the iceberg when considering the role of IMEs in cases of PTSD.*

### [The Definitive Guide to PTSD Relationships That Thrive](#)

It’s surely by no accident that you’ve arrived at this page about PTSD relationships.

***THIS LIFE THIS MOMENT*** was born from a PTSD relationship and now supports all those on a similar journey.

At some stage, PTSD has found you, or your partner, or another special person in your life, and now you seem to have way more questions than you do answers. Troubling thoughts that pester you by day and worries that keep you awake by night.

Navigating a PTSD relationship can be challenging. We’re here to help you unlock the issues that you may be struggling with and show you how PTSD relationships can thrive.

**DON’T HAVE TIME TO READ THE FULL GUIDE RIGHT NOW? HOW ABOUT A COPY TO-GO?**

Subscribe to our popular newsletter to receive regular tips about PTSD relationships and you’ll receive a bonus PDF copy of the full article. That way you can read it in your own time AND become part of the BEST supportive community for PTSD partners!

*“Our lives are transformed as we actively take part in fully living our lives with all the fear and heartbreak which become the keys to our healing and transformation when we live our lives compassionately.” Thomas Moore*

*“The ax forgets, the tree remembers.” African proverb*

2] [Can a heart treatment lower depression and anxiety?](#) By [Maria Cohut](#) - Medical News Today

Many people who have atrial fibrillation experience symptoms of mood disorders, such as anxiety and depression. Do particular treatments for this condition help resolve such symptoms? A new study suggests they might.

Atrial fibrillation (A-fib) is a common condition characterized by an irregular heart rhythm. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), about 2.7–6.1 million people in the United States have A-fib.

Studies show that about a third of people with this heart condition also have symptoms of depression and anxiety.

Starting from this evidence, researchers from Australia decided to look into how various treatments for A-fib might influence a person's levels of psychological distress.

The results of the study - the senior author of which is Jonathan Kalman, of the Royal Melbourne Hospital - were published earlier this week in the [\*Journal of the American Heart Association\*](#).

### **Which treatment improves mental health?**

The researchers worked with a cohort of 78 participants who had received some form of treatment for A-fib. The team monitored the participants' levels of depression and anxiety and evaluated and took into consideration their personality traits.

Of the total number of participants, 20 had received ablations, a type of procedure through which the heart tissue that produces the irregular heartbeat is removed or destroyed.

The remaining 58 participants chose to take drugs to regulate heart rate and prevent the formation of blood clots.

At the beginning of the study, 35 percent of the participants said that they lived with symptoms of severe anxiety and psychological distress. A further 20 percent reported suicidal ideation.

**After a year from the beginning of the study, those who opted for an ablation tended to report lower levels of depression and anxiety compared with those who took drugs as therapy.**

More of the people who had received ablations also reported no longer having suicidal thoughts. Specifically, the number of individuals with suicidal ideation fell from six to one among those participants.

Kalman believes that the new findings "[demonstrate] that effective treatment of atrial fibrillation markedly reduces psychological distress."

"This psychological impact," he adds, "is not well appreciated by many heart specialists and is important to take into consideration" - particularly when deciding on the most appropriate treatment for A-fib.

## Psychological distress and chronic conditions

The participants' personality types appeared to have a bearing on whether or not they experienced psychological distress and suicidal ideation.

Individuals who displayed a type D personality were more at risk of anxiety and depression. This personality type is characterized by a predisposition to stress, anger, and pessimism, which has also been tied to poorer outcomes when experiencing a heart condition.

Thirty-five of the total number of participants had type D personalities. Dr. Dimpi Patel, a researcher specializing in the mind-heart link - who is based at the New Hanover Regional Medical Center in Wilmington, NC - explains that the association between heart conditions and psychological distress is important, albeit understudied.

"Patients need to be aware," notes Dr. Patel, "that physical ailments can and do have psychological manifestations, and both must be acknowledged and managed to ensure a good quality of life and perhaps even prevent worse outcomes."

While the new research offers fresh evidence that heart and mind health are closely interlinked, Dr. Patel explains that this association is likely to occur in many more conditions than just A-fib.

***"It is important to note that psychological distress, depression, anxiety and, at times, suicidal ideation are not exclusive to atrial fibrillation, but to many chronic diseases such as diabetes, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, and congestive heart failure."***

"Physicians have an obligation," she adds, "to broaden their approach in managing any chronic illness to include emphasis on the psychological well-being of their patient. To me, it is simply practicing good and compassionate medicine."

*"Your pain is the breaking of the shell that encloses your understanding." Kahlil Gibran*

*"Arrieros somos y en el camino andamos." Mexican proverb*

[*We are all mule drivers in the fields. We are all human beings making our way through life. Don't criticize or judge others. We are all subject to problems and failings.*]

3] [Tuning Out The Noise: How To Get Clarity In Life](#) - Darius Foroux

Do you ever feel like you're completely lost in a world that keeps on racing? The world moves fast. One moment you're excited about a new opportunity, and the other moment you feel totally hopeless for no particular reason.

And if that's not bad enough, there's so much noise in the world that we lose sight of what we're doing. It's not uncommon to think, "Wait, what was I supposed to do on this planet?"

Look, we all get distracted. The world's a weird place. And people ask me about how we can get clarity all the time. One reader recently sent me this email:

*“Love to hear you talk about how to get clarity and minimize distractions and noise around us. What techniques do you employ to find that focus?”*

It’s a good question that got me thinking. And if I look at how I get clarity in my life, there’s only one technique I use.

**I remove everything that doesn’t contribute anything meaningful to my life.**

I do that for 3 reasons:

1. **As you grow older, you accumulate all sorts of “things.”** Even if you’re not a hoarder or someone who wants it all, your life will expand as the years go by. You will have more friends, more stuff, more ideas, more goals, more wishes, more expectations. If you don’t watch it, all those “more’s” will clutter your vision. You will have so many things in your life that you don’t know what’s important. To battle that, you must see yourself as a sculptor.

As your life expands, you keep on carving out the non-essential things. Until you die, keep removing everything that doesn’t contribute to your goals. Most of us only clean house when big things happen: Moving to a new house, getting a baby, the loss of a loved one. Instead, keep removing everything you don’t need - on a daily basis.

2. **When something distracts you, don’t waste your effort trying to manage it.** Instead, do yourself a favor and get rid of it completely. For example, if social media apps on your phone distract you, remove them from your phone. Don’t bother setting time limits, no one is so strong to resist the urge. And if you want to lose weight, stop buying junk food. Don’t allow snacks in your house.
3. **You only have so much time and energy.** One of my favorite books is *The One Thing* by Gary Keller. The main message is that we can achieve anything if we only focus on one thing at a time. It’s time to get rid of the project that’s on your to-do list for 3 years. It’s time to say goodbye to the friends you’re not that close with. If something doesn’t give you energy, remove it.

*“I want to give this elimination strategy a try to get more clarity. How can I apply it?”*

Here are 3 practical tips that you can apply right now.

1. **Set one goal you want to achieve in the next month.** I love setting goals because it gives you clarity like nothing else. If you’re currently not sure what you want to do, set one goal for this month. Ask yourself: “What’s something I want to achieve and can do within a month?” Pick something that’s important to you. Something you wanted to do for a long time. But make sure it’s small enough that you can start working on TODAY.
2. **Use a productivity system** ([read about my system here](#)). When you start removing everything that’s not meaningful from your life, you will feel relieved. You will get clarity once you only focus on achieving one goal. But how do you even achieve a goal? The answer is to have a productivity system. Without it, we still end up wasting a lot of our time. Getting clarity is only the first step, but after that, you must find a way to get it done.

3. **Keep a journal.** Every day, take some time to reflect on your life. Ask yourself questions like: “Do I know where I’m going? Am I going there? What is distracting me? What’s not contributing anything to my life?” Doing that will help you to get your thoughts in order.

One of the things I must stress is that finding focus is a process. Actually, it’s more like a battle. Every day you struggle to tune out all the noise in the world. There will never be a moment in your life where you will achieve focus and KEEP it forever.

If you want clarity in your life, you have to fight for it. Every day, you reflect on your activities and remove the clutter. Some days that process takes 10 minutes, other days it might take 60.

But no matter what you do, take time for yourself to think about where you are going. And then, start moving towards that direction.

[Articles by Darius Foroux](#) - *Practical personal development that doesn't suck*

*“There are two ways of spreading light; to be the candle or the mirror that reflects it.” Edith Wharton*

*“Though no one can go back and make a brand new start, anyone can start from now and make a brand new end.” As We Understood*

4] [The best way to learn is drawing, even if you're no artist](#) By Anne Quito – Quartzzy

“I just can’t draw.” It’s a refrain most adults say when confronted with a blank piece of paper. Something happens in our teenage years that makes most of us shy away from drawing, fretting that our draftsmanship skills aren’t up to par, and leaving it to the “artists” among us.

But we’ve been thinking about drawing all wrong, says the design historian D.B. Dowd. In his illuminating new book, titled [Stick Figures: Drawing as a Human Practice](#), Dowd argues that putting a pencil to paper shouldn’t be about making art at all.

“We have misfiled the significance of drawing because we see it as a professional skill instead of a personal capacity,” he writes. “This essential confusion has stunted our understanding of drawing and kept it from being seen as a tool for learning above all else.”

Put another way: Drawing shouldn’t be about performance, but about process. It’s not just for the “artists,” or even the weekend hobbyists. Think of it as a way of observing the world and learning, something that can be done anytime, like taking notes, jotting down a thought, or sending a text.

Mistaking drawing for art is embedded in our institutions, says Dowd, a professor of art and American culture at the Washington University in St. Louis. For centuries, schools have lumped drawing with painting and confined it in an “aesthetic cage,” he says.

Our anxiety around drawing starts around puberty, when we begin self-critiquing our abilities to render a perfect likeness, Dowd says. “The self-consciousness associated with ‘good’ drawing, or a naive form of realism, is mostly to blame,” he explains to Quartz. “If you take a step back, and define drawing as

symbolic mark-making, it's obvious that all human beings draw. Diagrams, maps, doodles, smiley faces: These are all drawings!"

### **Drawing helps us think better**

At its core, drawing is a problem-solving tool. Scientists are often avid doodlers, like the Fields-Medal-winning mathematician Maryam Mirzakhani, for instance. "The process of drawing something helps you somehow to stay connected," she explained in a 2014 interview. "I am a slow thinker, and have to spend a lot of time before I can clean up my ideas and make progress."

Even if you're not tackling hyperbolic geometry, drawing is useful for our daily affairs from giving directions, taking meeting notes, outlining an presentation, or making grocery lists. It fosters close observation, analytical thinking, patience, even humility.

### **An alternative to Google-based learning**

Digital technology coddles us by giving us shortcuts to "instant knowledge," but drawing breaks our collective instinct to Google everything, argues Dowd. He cautions against relying too much on easy paths to learning:

When we ask for something from Google Image Search - say "airplane" - we get contemporary definitions of same, which in that case yields thousands of pictures of commercial airliners. That's a narrow result from a general inquiry, and one version of how aggregation keeps us from seeing a wider world. Drawing works in exactly the opposite way: close observation of almost any particular engages the senses and heightens experience, making the world seem bigger, not smaller.

There is a physical dimension to this, too. Our brains got bigger when our thumbs moved into an opposable position vis-a-vis our fingers. Our hands, fixed on the ends of our arms, brought us news of the world, and we evolved rapidly to take advantage. Our manual capacities are critical to our understanding of the world. Isn't it weird, and a wicked paradox, that the digital has eroded the manual?

Dowd, who has been critical of the graphic design industry's over-reliance on digital illustration tools like Adobe Illustrator or Photoshop, argues that drawing isn't necessarily anti-tech: "I have no beef with technology per se - after all, pencil and paper is a technology. But drawing offers simplicity and directness compared to other information gathering procedures."

### **Drawing makes us better humans**

There's another fundamental reason for using drawing as a learning tool: It can bring out our better qualities as people. "If practiced in the service of inquiry and understanding, drawing does enforce modesty," says Dowd. "You quickly discover how little you know."

The observation that's necessary for drawing is also enriching. "Drawing makes us slow down, be patient, pay attention," he says. "Observation itself is respectful, above all else."

In the closing chapter of *Stick Figures*, Dowd argues that drawing can even make us better citizens, in

the sense that it trains us to wrestle with evidence and challenge assumptions. “It might seem sort of nutty, but I do think that drawing can be a form of citizenship,” he says. “Observation, inquiry, and steady effort are good for us.”

This form of individual sense-making is a practice that’s ever more vital at a time when we’re inundated with falsehoods and bad faith, says Dowd: “When we look hard and listen carefully, how are we not led back to questions of justice, of what is right?”

Perhaps drawing pads should be standard issue in government offices and boardrooms.

*“It is the privilege of wisdom to listen.” O. W. Holmes*

*“Be kinder to yourself. And then let your kindness spread and flood the world.” Pema Chodron*

**5] Wanted: People who have experienced psychological trauma** - Kathryn Chalmers @ [The Centre for Mental Health, Melbourne University](#) [kchalmers1@unimelb.edu.au](mailto:kchalmers1@unimelb.edu.au)

This research project is looking at how someone (a family member, friend, neighbor, concerned community member or a paid carer without specialist qualifications) can help a person who is experiencing extreme distress following a potentially traumatic event.

We are looking for consumers and professionals to participate in our surveys. Everyone’s opinions count equally.

Participants will rate statements about how to help a person experiencing extreme distress following a potentially traumatic event according to whether they should be included in guidelines for the public.

Time commitments: You will be asked to do about 3 online surveys over a period of approximately 4-6 months. No travel or meetings required!

Expertise: To participate you must

have experienced extreme distress following a potentially traumatic event

AND

- be a member of a consumers’ group or an advocacy organization

To participate you must live or work in one of the following countries:

\*Australia \*Canada \*Denmark \*England \*Finland \*Ireland \*The Netherlands  
\*New Zealand \*Northern Ireland \*Scotland \*Sweden \*The United States

When? This will start in the month, to be advised.

If you are interested in participating, or for further information, please contact Kathryn Chalmers at The Centre for Mental Health @ Melbourne University: [kchalmers1@unimelb.edu.au](mailto:kchalmers1@unimelb.edu.au)

*“Fear less, hope more, eat less, chew more, whine less, breathe more, talk less, say more, hate less, love more, and good things will be yours.” Swedish Proverb*

*“In the moment of crisis, the wise build bridges and the foolish build dams.” Nigerian proverb*

6] [10 ways to honor veterans beyond Veterans Day](#) By Christopher Dawson @ CNN

Every year on November 11, Americans honor the 19.6 million active and former US service members who have gone to war.

Veterans Day is marked by parades, speeches and solemn ceremonies offering a nation's appreciation. Here are ways to go beyond saying "thanks for your service" and truly make a difference in a veteran's life -- on this day and throughout the year.

**Volunteer** - This [online tool](#) identifies volunteer opportunities at local VA offices. You can also join the Volunteer Transportation Network to help veterans get to appointments at VA medical facilities. You can also find ways to help veterans and their families on [VolunteerMatch](#).

**Send a care package or a letter** - [Operation Gratitude](#) has sent more than 2 million individually addressed care package to the military community. The packages go to current military members as well as veterans, wounded warriors and their caregivers. As more American troops return to civilian life, the Operation Gratitude veterans program has been growing. It also has a [letter writing campaign](#) encouraging everyone to write handwritten letters of gratitude to veterans.

**Support veterans suffering from PTSD** - Coping with post-traumatic stress disorder can put stress on not just veterans but also their families and friends. More than a third of all Iraq and Afghanistan veterans have or will experience PTSD. And veterans of past wars are still dealing with the ghosts of their time in the service.

If you know a veteran who might be dealing with PTSD, you can connect them with helpful resources. The VA offers the [PTSD Coach Online](#) to help veterans learn to manage symptoms, come up with ways to cope and find professional help. [The National Center for PTSD](#) provides a Veterans Crisis Line by phone at 1-800-273-8255, by text at 838255 and by online chat at this link: [Confidential Veterans Chat](#).

**Sponsor a service dog** - Service dogs can help veterans living with PTSD and other disabilities regain control, independence and mobility. [Freedom Service Dogs of America](#) match highly specialized service dogs with service members needing assistance in their transition back to civilian life.

[Puppies Behind Bars](#) is a program in which prisoners train companion dogs for veterans with PTSD. Donors can sponsor a dog and receive updates on the dog's training and life with its veteran.

**Donate travel points** - The Fisher House operates the [Hero Miles Program](#), using donated frequent flier miles to bring family members to the bedside of injured service members. Hotel points can also be donated to provide hotel rooms for families of the veterans when a Fisher House is not available. The [Fisher House Foundation](#) has a network of homes on the grounds of military and VA hospitals around the country. These homes help family members be close during the hospitalization of a loved one for a combat injury, illness or disease.

**Help veterans on the streets** -

A phone call can also make difference in the life of a veteran who is homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. Call 877-4AID-VET, or 877-424-3838, to connect with help at the VA. This service is

available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

[The Department of Veterans Affairs' Stand Down](#) program is designed to help homeless veterans "combat" life on the streets. Stand Downs are usually one- to three-day events that provide food, shelter, clothing and health screenings to homeless and unemployed veterans. To find a Stand Down program in your community, contact your local VA hospital.

**Build a home for severely injured vets** - Severely injured veterans often come home needing a place to live that better accommodates their physical disabilities. [Building Homes for Heroes](#) builds specially modified homes for veterans that help them live independently. These homes are provided at no cost to the veterans. The organization also provides financial planning services.

**Honor the greatest generation** - [The Honor Flight Network](#) helps veterans of the "greatest generation" make a free pilgrimage to the World War II Memorial on the National Mall in Washington. You can volunteer to escort these men and women on the flight to see this memorial. Honor Flight also helps terminally ill veterans who served in any conflict visit memorials to those wars in Washington as well.

**Share their stories** - So many veterans' stories have been left untold, but the Library of Congress is collecting the tales from veterans of every war through the [Veterans History Project](#). If you are related to a veteran or know one who has a story to tell, the Library of Congress wants to hear it. Help veterans share their stories before it's too late.

**Let them know they matter** - By telling a veteran how much you appreciate their service, you are letting them know their decision to serve our country makes a difference. It's a simple gesture, but it can make an impact. And so many veterans have never heard the words "thank you." If you know a veteran or see someone in a military uniform, say something. It may make his or her day and yours. *Bethany Hines contributed to this report.*

*"A man who uses force is afraid of reasoning." Kenyan proverb*

*"What you help a child to love can be more important than what you help him to learn." African prover*

7] [American Indian Perspectives on Thanksgiving](#) - National Museum of the American Indian

*"We are all thankful to our Mother, the Earth, for she gives us all that we need for life."*  
Haudenosaunee Thanksgiving Address

Each November educators across the country teach their students about the First Thanksgiving, a quintessentially American holiday. They try to give students an accurate picture of what happened in Plymouth in 1621 and explain how that event fits into American history. Unfortunately, many teaching materials give an incomplete, if not inaccurate, portrayal of the first Thanksgiving, particularly of the event's Native American participants.

Most texts and supplementary materials portray Native Americans at the gathering as supporting players. They are depicted as nameless, faceless, generic "Indians" who merely shared a meal with the intrepid Pilgrims. The real story is much deeper, richer, and more nuanced. The Indians in attendance,

the Wampanoag, played a lead role in this historic encounter, and they had been essential to the survival of the colonists during the newcomers' first year. The Wampanoag were a people with a sophisticated society who had occupied the region for thousands of years. They had their own government, their own religious and philosophical beliefs, their own knowledge system, and their own culture. They were also a people for whom giving thanks was a part of daily life.

Like the Wampanoag, thousands of Native American nations and communities across the continent had their own histories and cultures. Native peoples were and continue to be an integral part of the American story. It is our hope that this poster will encourage you to teach about Thanksgiving in a new way - one that recognizes the country's original people and gives real meaning to November as American Indian Heritage Month.

In this poster, we take a look at just a few Native communities through the prism of three main themes that are central to understanding both American Indians and the deeper meaning of the Thanksgiving holiday. The themes are:

**Environment:** traditional knowledge about and understandings of the natural world.

**Community:** the role that group identity plays in Native cultures.

**Encounters:** how interactions between cultures have affected those cultures. [Learn more](#)

*“Upon suffering beyond suffering: the Red Nation shall rise again and it shall be a blessing for a sick world. A world filled with broken promises, selfishness and separations. A world longing for light again. I see a time of Seven Generations when all colors of mankind will gather under the Sacred Tree of Life and the whole Earth will become one circle again. In that day, there will be those among the Lakota who will carry knowledge and understanding of unity among all living things and the young white ones will come to those of my people and ask for this wisdom. I salute the light within your eyes where the whole Universe dwells. For when you are at that centre within you and I am that place within me, we shall be one.” Crazy Horse, Oglala Sioux*

[National Native American Heritage Month](#) - The Library of Congress, National Archives and Records Administration, National Endowment for the Humanities, National Gallery of Art, National Park Service, Smithsonian Institution and United States Holocaust Memorial Museum join in paying tribute to the rich ancestry and traditions of Native Americans.

American Indian images, names, and stories infuse American history and contemporary life. Pervasive, powerful, at times demeaning, the images, names, and stories reveal the deep connection between Americans and American Indians as well as how Indians have been embedded in unexpected ways in the history, pop culture, and identity of the United States. [Explore the online exhibition »](#)

*“A warrior who had more than he needed would make a feast. He went around and invited the old and needy.” Black Elk, Oglala Lakota*

*“Peace will come to the hearts of men when they realize their oneness with the universe, it is everywhere.” Black Elk, Oglala Lakota*

8] [Do American Indians celebrate Thanksgiving?](#) - Smithsonian Voices - National Museum of the American Indian

The Thanksgiving myth has done so much damage and harm to the cultural self-esteem of generations of Indian people, including myself, by perpetuating negative and harmful images to both young Indian and non-Indian minds. There are so many things wrong with the happy celebration that takes place in elementary schools and its association to American Indian culture; compromised integrity, stereotyping, and cultural misappropriation are three examples.

Tolerance of mockery by teachers is a great concern to Native parents. Much harm has been done to generations of Indian people by perpetuating negative and harmful images in young minds. Presenting Thanksgiving to children as primarily a happy time trivializes our shared history and teaches a half-truth. And while I agree that elementary-school children who celebrate the first Thanksgiving in their classrooms are too young to hear the truth, educators need to share Thanksgiving facts in all American schools sometime before high school graduation. [Learn more](#)

*“Can we talk of integration until there is integration of hearts and minds? Unless you have this, you only have a physical presence, and the walls between us are as high as the mountain range.” Dan George, Tsleil-Wauthth*

*“You must speak straight so that your words may go as sunlight to our hearts.” Cochise, Apache*

9] [Why Can't Christine Blasey Ford Remember How She Got Home?](#) By Jim Hopper @ Scientific American

Time-dependent effects of stress on the hippocampus and memory - and why they matter

On Monday October 1, Republican senators released “[Analysis of Dr. Christine Blasey Ford’s Allegations](#),” a memo written by Rachel Mitchell, the prosecutor they hired to question Christine Blasey Ford and review other evidence. Ms. Mitchell’s “analysis” includes descriptions of Ford’s memories as not “consistent,” lacking “key details,” and uncorroborated by people she said were at the “party.”

In the final two weeks of September, many Americans learned from the media (e.g., [USA Today](#), [Rolling Stone](#), [Vox](#), [NBC News](#), [NPR](#)) the distinction that memory researchers make between “central” and “peripheral” details, terms that reflect the commonsense understanding that we remember things that had significance to us and got our attention.

Many people have also learned that stress and trauma greatly enhance the differential storage of central over peripheral details, and that the central details of traumatic experiences can get burned into our brains for the rest of our lives. But most people already knew that too, even if they hadn’t stopped to think about it.

These past few weeks, I’ve tried to help with that learning, by talking with reporters and sharing the expert testimony on trauma and memory that I could have provided to senators and the country, which

was [published](#) by *Scientific American* and on my blog with *Psychology Today*, [Sexual Assault and the Brain](#). There I explain central versus peripheral details, that stress amplifies their differential encoding and storage, and how sexual assault survivors- like traumatized soldiers and police - may protect themselves by clinging for years to superficial descriptions of events, which keep the most disturbing details out of their minds.

Now, with the full Senate vote pending, I would like share some very important scientific knowledge about stress and memory that, with [two exceptions](#), has not been shared by the media.

Even among scientists who study memory, many are not yet aware of this knowledge, and it's certainly not intuitively recognized by the rest of us. But it is critical to understanding a large gap commonly found in the memories of those who have suffered trauma, including, apparently, Ford.

## TIME-DEPENDENT EFFECTS OF STRESS ON MEMORY: THE BASICS

The effects of stress on memory formation are *time-dependent*.

When the brain detects an attack or stress suddenly kicks in, the hippocampus, which plays central roles in encoding information into short-term memory and storing it as long-term memories, rapidly enters a super-encoding mode. In that phase of stress-induced memory functioning, central details are encoded strongly and peripheral details weakly if at all.

After about five to 20 minutes in that state, the hippocampus enters a minimal-encoding mode, in which the encoding and especially the storage of details - even central ones - are severely limited or not happening at all.

Knowledge of the time-dependent effects of stress on memory, especially the existence of that minimal-encoding phase of hippocampal functioning, is essential for evaluating the memories and credibility of people who have experienced trauma - including military personnel, police officers, and sexual assault survivors like Ford.

Unfortunately, that knowledge is still not widely known, and it certainly didn't inform Mitchell's "analysis" of Ford's memories of that fateful night.

## WHY THIS KNOWLEDGE CAN BE HELPFUL

There are several related reasons why it's helpful to know that the effects of stress on memory formation are time-dependent.

It's helpful because knowing how stress affects memory over time - including by inevitably leading to large gaps - helps us to understand and support people who've been sexually assaulted.

[Read the entire article](#)

[Jim Hopper, Ph.D.](#) Clinical psychologist and independent consultant, Teaching Associate in Psychology, Harvard Medical School, and nationally recognized expert on psychological trauma.

*"The portal of healing and creativity always takes us into the realm of the spirit." Angeles Arrien*

*“Normal is not something to aspire to, it’s something to get away from.” Jodie Foster*

10] [New York State Coalition Against Sexual Assault](#) *Working For A World Without Violence*

Please join us for our upcoming webinar:

Culturally Relevant Evaluation of Sexual Violence Prevention Initiatives: Lessons Learned from the Visioning B.E.A.R. Circle Intertribal Coalition Inc.

December 19, 2018 10:00 AM - 11:30 AM EST [Register Here](#)

This webinar will explore evaluating culturally relevant prevention efforts by presenting work conducted to evaluate an indigenous violence prevention curriculum. Strong Oak Lefebvre will discuss the curriculum, which was authored by members of the Visioning B.E.A.R (Balance, Equality, and Respect) Circle Intertribal Coalition Inc., and relies upon native methods, wisdom, and teachings to reduce gender-based violence. Exploratory efforts to pilot and to test the curriculum will be discussed, including methods utilized, pitfalls experienced, and lessons learned. The challenges inherent in cross-cultural and culturally relevant violence prevention and curriculum evaluation will be addressed.

**Presenter:** Strong Oak Lefebvre, LICSW is the Executive Director and co-founder of the Visioning B.E.A.R. Circle Intertribal Coalition INC. They are an American Indian of Maliseet and Mi’kmaq descent and co-author of the Walking in Balance with All Our Relations curriculum. Strong Oak has a Masters in Social Service Administration from Case Western Reserve University School of Social Work; served on the Advisory Council for the National Sexual Resource Center from June, 2010 to June, 2016; and is currently a Peer Cohort, representing VBCIC, with the Just Beginnings Collaborative.

*“Indians love their friends and kindred, and treat them with kindness.” Cornplanter, Seneca*

*“Love is something you and I must have. We must have it because our spirit feeds upon it. We must have it because without it we become weak and faint. Without it our courage fails. Without love, we can no longer look confidently at the world. We turn inward.. And little by little we destroy ourselves. With it, we are creative. With it, we march tirelessly. With it, and with it alone, we are able to sacrifice for others.” Dan George, Tsleil-Wauthth*

***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*

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