



*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 February 2019**

Hey Folks,

Welcome to the New Year, 2019, Wow!!

Here's the scoop on why the long delay since the last newsletter was sent...back in November, I asked if anyone had experiences with a, anterior cervical disc fusion. In layman's terms, a neurosurgeon wanted to remove a disc in my neck and fuse the others...the pain from the shrinking of the disc and the nerves being impinged was not a delightful experience. Nor was the torn rotator cuff and tendinitis going on in my right shoulder...lots of pain that was draining me mentally, physically and spiritually.

Long story short, several other tests, seeing other doctors for nonsurgical thoughts and here I am today, just 'resting' my shoulder, etc...giving it a break from playing guitar, drumming, swimming, exercising, etc. I will be having periodic checkups with the neurosurgeon and my neurologist to make sure I am okay, I do not want to do neck surgery, same for my shoulder. That's it in a nutshell.

Thank you to all who reached out to me to see what was going. I'm back!!!

So here's the February newsletter...*take care folks, Michael*

A few observations for February:

[Association for the Study of African American Life and History](#) [ASALH] - The Founders of Black History Month

ASALH's 2019 theme Black Migrations emphasizes the movement of people of African descent to new destinations and subsequently to new social realities. While inclusive of earlier centuries, this theme focuses especially on the twentieth century through today. Beginning in the early decades of the twentieth century, African American migration patterns included relocation from southern farms to southern cities; from the South to the Northeast, Midwest, and West; from the Caribbean to US cities as well as to migrant labor farms; and the emigration of noted African Americans to Africa and to European cities, such as Paris and London, after the end of World War I and World War II. Such migrations resulted in a more diverse and stratified interracial and intra-racial urban population amid a changing social milieu, such as the rise of the Garvey movement in New York, Detroit, and New Orleans; the emergence of both black industrial workers and black entrepreneurs; the growing number

and variety of urban churches and new religions; new music forms like ragtime, blues, and jazz; white backlash as in the Red Summer of 1919; the blossoming of visual and literary arts, as in New York, Washington, D.C., Chicago, and Paris in the 1910s and 1920s. The theme Black Migrations equally lends itself to the exploration of the century's later decades from spatial and social perspectives, with attention to "new" African Americans because of the burgeoning African and Caribbean population in the US; Northern African Americans' return to the South; racial suburbanization; inner-city hyperghettoization; health and environment; civil rights and protest activism; electoral politics; mass incarceration; and dynamic cultural production.

[National Freedom Day](#) celebrates freedom from slavery, and recognizes that America is a symbol of freedom.

National Freedom Day was established in 1948 to remind us that America stands for, and is a symbol of freedom for all people. The roots of this special day come directly from the end of slavery and the signing of the 13th amendment outlawing slavery.

Major Richard Robert Wright Sr., a former slave, created National Freedom Day. He believed that there should be a day when freedom for all Americans is celebrated. President Lincoln signed the 13th Amendment outlawing slavery on February 1, 1865. So, February 1st was chosen to celebrate National Freedom Day.

On June 30, 1948, President Harry Truman signed a the bill proclaiming February 1st as National Freedom Day.

& on a lighter note, one my favorite pastimes - International Eat Ice Cream for Breakfast Day, First Saturday in February.

*Heck, why not ice cream for supper!!*

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*“I think it’s brave that you get up in the morning even if your soul is weary and your bones ache for a rest*

*I think it’s brave that you keep on living, even if you don’t know how to anymore*

*I think it’s brave that you push away the waves rolling in every day and you decide to fight*

*I know there are days when you feel like giving up, but I think it’s brave that you never do”.*  
*Lana Rafaela*

1] [This Is How You Survive by Lana Rafaela Cindric](#) – Goodreads Author

*Bad news: No one is coming to save you.*

*Good news: You can save yourself.*

*This Is How You Survive* is a poetry collection of moments and a happy book before anything else.

With poems such as "I Think It's Brave" and "You Can Save Yourself," *This Is How You Survive* represents the circular journey of life. It does not shy away from grief and healing, or joy and anger.

It simply accepts them as they are.

*"If you are looking for something to read that will inspire you to buy combat boots and the reddest lipstick you can find; that will make you want to grab your keys and drive off in search of adventure without a destination in mind; that will remind you that no matter how many people have tried to break you, you're still alive and kicking - this is the book for you."* - Amazon Review

*“Words are singularly the most powerful force available to humanity. We can choose to use this force constructively with words of encouragement, or destructively using words of despair. Words have energy and power with the ability to help, to heal, to hinder, to hurt, to harm, to humiliate and to humble.”* Yehuda Berg

2] [The best thing you can do for your health: sleep well](#) - The Guardian - By Matthew Walker

[Why We Sleep: The New Science of Sleep and Dreams](#) by Matthew Walker is out now in paperback, published by Penguin Books

A New York Times bestseller and international sensation, this “stimulating and important book” (Financial Times) from the director of UC Berkeley’s Center for Human Sleep Science is a fascinating dive into the purpose and power of slumber. As the Guardian said, Walker explains “how a good night's shut-eye can make us cleverer, more attractive, slimmer, happier, healthier, and ward off cancer.”

*'A consistent seven to nine-hour sleep each night is the most effective thing we can do to reset our brain and body health'*

Do you think you got enough sleep this past week? Can you remember the last time you woke up without an alarm clock, feeling refreshed, not needing caffeine? If the answer to any of these questions is “no,” you are not alone. Two-thirds of adults throughout all developed nations fail to obtain the recommended eight hours of nightly sleep.

Indeed, surveys by the [UK Sleep Council](#) and [YouGov](#) reveal that one out of every three people you pass on the streets of Britain regularly suffer from poor sleep. I doubt you are surprised by these facts, but you may be surprised by the consequences.

Insufficient sleep is now one of the most significant lifestyle factors influencing whether or not you will develop Alzheimer’s disease. During sleep, a remarkable sewage system in the brain, called the glymphatic system, kicks into high gear. As you enter deep sleep, this sanitation system cleanses the brain of a sticky, toxic protein linked to Alzheimer’s, known as beta amyloid. Without sufficient sleep, you fail to get that power cleanse. With each passing night of insufficient sleep, that Alzheimer’s disease risk escalates, like compounding interest on a loan.

Parenthetically, and unscientifically, I have always found it curious that Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan – two leaders who were very vocal, if not proud, about sleeping only four to five hours a night – both went on to develop the ruthless disease of Alzheimer’s. The current US president, Donald Trump – also a vociferous proclaimer of sleeping just a few hours each night – may want to take note.

Perhaps you have also noticed a desire to eat more when you’re tired? This is no coincidence. Too little sleep swells concentrations of a hormone that makes you feel hungry while suppressing a companion hormone that otherwise signals food satisfaction. Despite being full, you will still want to eat more. It’s a recipe linked to weight gain in sleep-deficient adults and children alike.

Worse, should you try to diet but don’t get enough sleep while doing so, it is futile, since up to 70% of the weight you lose will come from lean body mass, not fat. Turn these facts around and you realise that plentiful sleep is powerful tool for controlling your appetite, your weight and keeping your body trim.

***Sleep is perhaps the greatest legal performance-enhancing 'drug' that few people are taking advantage of***

Related is the association between plentiful slumber and athletic performance. Sleep is perhaps the greatest legal performance-enhancing “drug” that few people are taking advantage of. Obtain less than eight hours of sleep a night, and especially less than six hours a night, and the following happens: time to physical exhaustion drops by 10 to 30%, as does aerobic output; limb extension force and vertical jump height are reduced; peak and sustained muscle strength decrease. Add to this the cardiac, metabolic and respiratory effects: higher rates of lactic acid buildup and reductions in blood oxygen saturation with converse increases in carbon dioxide, due in part to a reduction in the amount of air that the lungs can expire in a sleep-deficient state. And then there is injury risk. Relative to sleeping nine hours a night, sleeping five to six hours a night will increase your chances of injury across a season by more than 200%.

Routinely sleeping less than six hours a night also compromises your immune system, significantly increasing your risk of cancer. So much so, that recently the World Health Organization classified any form of night-time shiftwork as a probable carcinogen.

Inadequate sleep for just one week disrupts blood sugar levels so profoundly you would be classified as pre-diabetic

Inadequate sleep – even moderate reductions of two to three hours for just one week – disrupts blood sugar levels so profoundly that you would be classified as pre-diabetic. Short sleeping increases the likelihood of your coronary arteries becoming blocked and brittle, setting you on a path towards cardiovascular disease, stroke and congestive heart failure.

Strikingly, all it takes is one hour of lost sleep, as demonstrated by a global experiment performed on 1.6 billion people across more than 60 countries twice a year, otherwise known as daylight saving times. In the spring, when we lose one hour of sleep, there is a 24% increase in heart attacks the following day. In the autumn, we gain an hour of sleep opportunity, and there is a 21% reduction in heart attacks. Most of us think little of losing an hour of sleep, yet it is anything but trivial.

Sleep disruption has further been associated with all major psychiatric conditions, including depression, anxiety and suicidality. Indeed, in my research over the past 20 years, we have not been able to find a single major psychiatric condition in which sleep is normal. Science is thus proving the prophetic wisdom of Charlotte Brontë, who stated that “a ruffled mind makes a restless pillow”.

Add the above physical and mental health consequences up, and a scientifically validated link becomes easier to accept: the shorter your sleep, the shorter your life. Recent findings demonstrate that individuals who routinely sleep five hours a night have a 65% increased risk of dying at any moment in time, relative to those getting seven to nine hours a night. The elastic band of sleep deprivation can stretch only so far before it snaps.

It is therefore no coincidence that countries where sleep time has declined most dramatically over the past century, such as the US, the UK, Japan and South Korea, and several countries in western Europe, are also those suffering the greatest increase in rates of the aforementioned physical diseases and mental disorders.

Studies show that after 22 hours without sleep, human performance is impaired to the same level as that

of someone who is legally drunk

Scientists such as myself have even started lobbying doctors to start “prescribing” a good night’s sleep (though certainly not sleeping pills). As medical advice goes, it’s perhaps the most painless and enjoyable to follow. The irony here is that, in medical practice, inadequate sleep leads to inadequate healthcare. Junior doctors working a 30-hour-plus shift will make 460% more diagnostic mistakes than when well rested. These same tired physicians will commit 36% more serious medical errors, compared with those working 16 hours or less. Seasoned physicians can suffer the same compromise of medical skills. A senior attending surgeon who has slept only six hours or less the previous night is 170% more likely to inflict a serious surgical error on a patient, relative to when they have slept adequately. It is worth noting evidence from scientific studies showing that after 22 hours without sleep, human performance is impaired to the same level as that of someone who is legally drunk.

Young doctors themselves can become part of the compromised health-care equation caused by long hours. After a 30-hour continuous shift, trainee doctors are 73% more likely to accidentally stab themselves with a hypodermic needle or cut themselves with a scalpel, risking a blood-borne infectious disease, compared with their careful actions when adequately rested. And when a doctor finishes a long overnight shift and drives home, their chances of being involved in a car crash are increased by 168% because of insufficient sleep. Sleep should therefore be considered a life-support system; a universal national healthcare plan still waiting to be fully embraced by medicine, and society at large.

I believe it is therefore time for us, as individuals and as nations, to reclaim our right to a full night of sleep, without embarrassment or the terrible stigma of laziness. I fully understand that this prescription of which I write requires a shift in our cultural, professional, and global appreciation of sleep.

Governments and health institutes must themselves become a voice that educates society about sleep. Healthcare systems have launched wonderfully effective public-health campaigns concerning influenza, the need for physical activity, and optimal diet and nutrition. However, I cannot recall any government launching a national public health campaign centred on the essential importance of sleep as both disease prevention and treatment. I hope this will change, and I would be delighted to help any and all such efforts.

Put simply: sleep – a consistent seven- to nine-hour opportunity each night – is the single most effective thing we can do to reset our brain and body health each day, and the reason I revere and adore sleep (scientifically and personally).

Matthew Walker: "[Why We Sleep: The New Science of Sleep and Dreams](#)" - Talks at Google - YouTube

*“It's okay. It's okay. It's okay.*

*It's okay to be lost.*

*It's okay to be uncertain.*

*It's okay if you don't feel like smiling today.*

*It's okay to take time to figure out how to breathe.*

*It's okay to need silence and solitude to put yourself back together.*

*It's okay to step back and sort yourself out.*

*It's not selfish of you.*

*It's brave.  
It's loving.  
It's necessary.  
It's life saving.*

*Be gentle with yourself.” [Dele Olanubi](#)*

3] [The Lighthouse](#) - *Be a light in the dark. Shine brightly for those who have lost their way in the storm. Use your story to help another person continue their own. You are loved. You are significant. You belong here. Be blessed!*

Hi! I am Acoustic Imagery (Dele). A 20-something year old woman trying to find, discover, create, explore, and enjoy my happiness. Writing has always been my outlet and my comfort...

I hope you are inspired, encouraged, comforted, motivated, and uplifted in a positive way from what you see and read. My wish is that it gives you hope. My hope is that you pay it forward and join [The Hope Notes Project](#)

If you enjoy what you read and see please spread the word! Thank you!!!

P.S. Love yourself! Believe in your dreams! Always smile! Never lose hope! Laugh everyday! Be happy! Most of all YOU ARE BEAUTIFUL BEYOND WORDS AND LOVELY BEYOND MEASURE!!!

Be blessed and not stressed!!!

First, please read [Be A Light In The Dark](#), if you haven't already. Thank you!

If you have, let's talk about The Hope Notes Project. It's an idea that came to me as a way to spread some hope in an easy to do way. I've always believed that if a person has hope they can and will overcome anything and everything life throws at them. Hope is such a powerful inner force because it gives us the strength and willpower to keep trying and fighting for our better days, for a better life. Hope saves lives, and with this project my dream is to save, heal, and inspire lives by giving people a daily dose of hope. I believe we all could use a little more hope in our lives!

What is a hope note? A hope note is basically a "note" with a message that is positive, inspiring, comforting, uplifting, motivating, and most of all hope inducing. A hope note can utilize quotes, lyrics, poetry, photography, and bible verses that you feel will give people hope. It can be something you've written, something I've written, something you've read or heard that gave you hope. You can leave your hope notes anywhere you go during your daily life; school, work, restrooms, coffee shops, restaurants, buses, bookstores, the gym, Starbucks:)...anywhere and anytime you have a chance to leave a hope note please do it!

The goal is to make a positive difference in the world around you by finding something or someone that gives you hope and passing that message of hope to anyone that comes across your hope note. I call this The Hope Chain. A chain where we are all linked by the hope we've given to each other and received by each other.

Format: A hope note can be shaped in any form. It can be a postcard, notecard, post-it, photo, collage... etc. It can be handmade, written, printed...etc. How you shape your hope note depends on you. Be creative! The more effort and heart you put into your note the better. Personalize it so that the receiver can feel the hope you have for them when they read your hope note.

Delivery: You can leave your hope notes to be found by whoever stumbles upon it, or you can give your hope notes to friends, family, classmates, teachers, coworkers, strangers –anyone you feel needs a boost of hope. Believe me, your little act of kindness will make their day so much brighter!

*“We need to realize that our path to transformation is through our mistakes. We're meant to make mistakes, recognize them, and move on to become unlimited.” Yehuda Berg*

*“Just for today I will have a quiet half hour all by myself, and relax. During this half hour, sometime, I will try to get a better perspective of my life.” Al-Anon*

4] [Israeli Research Links Adult Fibromyalgia to PTSD, Childhood Sexual Abuse](#) - The Jewish Press –  
By Hana Levi Julian

Hana Levi Julian is a Middle East news analyst with a degree in Mass Communication and Journalism from Southern Connecticut State University. A past columnist with The Jewish Press and senior editor at Arutz 7, Ms. Julian has written for Babble.com, Chabad.org and other media outlets, in addition to her years working in broadcast journalism.

A new Tel Aviv University study finds that fibromyalgia syndrome - a chronic condition characterized by widespread pain, fatigue and cognitive difficulties — may be a consequence of post-traumatic physical and psychological distress associated with childhood sexual abuse.

The research suggests that survivors of childhood sexual abuse who develop fibromyalgia may be effectively treated with hyperbaric oxygen therapy, the application of hyperbaric pressure in conjunction with increased oxygen delivery to oxygen-deprived tissue.

The new study is part of an ongoing collaboration between TAU, the University of Haifa and Assaf Harofeh Medical Center investigating new therapeutic strategies with which to treat survivors of childhood sexual abuse. It was conducted by Prof. Shai Efrati of TAU's Sackler School of Medicine and Sagol School of Neuroscience and Director of the Sagol Center for Hyperbaric Medicine and Research at Assaf Harofeh Medical Center and published online in *Frontiers in Psychology* on December 14, 2018.

“We now know that severe emotional stress, such as that caused by sexual abuse, can induce chronic brain injury,” says Prof. Efrati. “These non-healing brain wounds may explain certain unremitting long-term physical and psychological disorders like fibromyalgia.

“We also now know that fibromyalgia takes root in the part of the brain responsible for pain interpretation. Using novel brain imaging technologies, we have now, for the first time, identified the injured areas of the brain injured by traumatic abuse.

“We believe our results serve as an explanation for the often limited results of psychological intervention, which do not provide physiologic repair of the damaged brain tissue,” Prof. Efrati continues. “The study shows that when these brain wounds are treated with hyperbaric oxygen therapy, neuroplasticity can be induced and the related clinical symptoms significantly improved.”

Over two years, 30 women suffering from fibromyalgia and bearing a history of childhood sexual abuse were randomly assigned to one of two treatment groups: 60 hyperbaric oxygen therapy sessions or psychotherapy. After the hyperbaric oxygen therapy sessions, the participants reported a significant improvement in all measures of quality of life, including symptoms of fibromyalgia and post-traumatic stress disorder.

The clinical findings were accompanied by an improvement in brain functionality, observed in brain nuclear imaging scans (SPECT) and novel MRI scans (MRI-DTI).

“Even though some of the areas of the brain have previously been associated with fibromyalgia and PTSD, the correlation we found also added new knowledge on brain function,” says Dr. Amir Hadanny, of TAU, Bar-Ilan University and Assaf Harofeh Medical Center, a co-author of the study. “In the future, we hope to be able to diagnose the so-called ‘psychological’ disorders through objective brain imaging.”

According to the study, the ability to recall sexual abuse is by no means a prerequisite for effective treatment of fibromyalgia in cases of childhood sexual abuse. “Lately, we have witnessed women in the #MeToo movement who knew they were sexually harassed and abused but could not recall the details of the attack,” says Prof. Rachel Lev-Wiesel of the University of Haifa, a co-author of the study. “Our new approach demonstrates that not being able to remember traumatic events is a biological rather than an emotional limitation.

“Repeated exposure to traumatic events creates the need to suppress these events,” Prof. Lev-Wiesel continues. “Biologically, that means that the areas of the brain responsible for those memories are actually being shut down in order to cope with reality. This may be the key for the reason why survivors are unable to recall the details or the traumatic event itself.”

The scientists are now researching novel early interventions for childhood sexual abuse survivors.

*“If you don't heal what hurt you, you'll bleed on people who didn't cut you.” Unknown*

*“When a creative artist is fatigued it is often from too much inflow, not too much outflow”  
Julia Cameron*

### **Related stories/studies:**

5] [Bar-Ilan Study Shows Parental PTSD Transmitted to Offspring in Rwandan Genocide Survivors](#) - The Jewish Press by David Israel, writer for news at JewishPress.com

Nearly 25 years after the genocide against the Tutsi of Rwanda took the lives of up to one million victims, the offspring of Tutsi survivors, who weren't even born at the time, are among those most affected by trauma, according to a new study published by researchers at Bar-Ilan University, in

collaboration with a Rwandan therapist and genocide survivor.

The preliminary findings, published in the journal *Psychiatry Research* (Complex PTSD and intergenerational transmission of distress and resilience among Tutsi genocide survivors and their offspring: A preliminary report), highlight CPTSD as a rather frequent debilitating condition among Tutsi genocide survivors.

“For the first time, to the best of our knowledge, these findings demonstrate that CPTSD may have grave consequences not only for survivors themselves but also for their offspring who were born after the genocide,” said Prof. Amit Shrira, of Bar-Ilan University’s (BIU) Interdisciplinary Department of Social Sciences, who co-authored the study with Dr. Ben Mollov, a political scientist at BIU who specializes in conflict resolution, and Ms. Chantal Mudahogora, a therapist who survived the Tutsi genocide and currently resides in Canada.

“The bulk of existing literature focuses on the effects of parental PTSD, but we know of no works that looked at parental complex PTSD,” Shrira added, noting that this pattern is also evident among Holocaust survivors and their offspring, whom Shrira has studied extensively.

The study assessed complex PTSD (CPTSD) among Tutsi genocide survivors and its impact on their offspring. The researchers found that the intergenerational effects of genocide were most prominent among offspring of survivors who suffer from CPTSD. These offspring suffer from more symptoms, such as thoughts and nightmares about the genocide, and feel less equipped to handle adverse situations. The findings also allude to the possibility that whereas both parental PTSD & CPTSD increase secondary traumatization in offspring, parental CPTSD additionally affects offspring self-perceptions.

Whereas PTSD includes symptoms such as nightmares and overall restlessness, CPTSD includes graver impairments such as affective dysregulation, negative self-concept, and disturbed relationships. Following studies pointing to additional consequences of extreme traumatic events such as genocide, which are not covered by existing diagnosis of PTSD, CPTSD is scheduled to appear in the upcoming 11th Revision of the International Classification of Diseases (ICD-11) as a new diagnostic entity.

“We need to understand that genocide and massive trauma can leave their mark not only on survivors who were directly exposed, but also on their offspring and probably on other family relatives, as well. We also know from previous studies that the effects of trauma may extend across several generations and linger for decades after the focal trauma took place,” said Dr. Mollov.

“These insights should guide policy makers and clinicians when planning interventions aimed at mitigating the plight of traumatized individuals and their families, particularly in terms of increasing resilience. This can also bear relevance for improved intergroup relations,” he said.

The opportunity for Shrira and Mollov to study the genocide against Tutsi of Rwanda and cooperate with Mudahogora arose when Mudahogora heard Mollov present a research paper in Bangkok. When she shared with him her concern about the effects of post trauma on survivors of the genocide and their offspring, Mollov brought Shrira, who has studied extensively intergenerational trauma suffered by Holocaust survivors and their offspring, into the research partnership.

As the researchers learned more about survivors of the Tutsi genocide, they were especially surprised to discover that they live among the Hutus who took part in the mass killing, and to learn from Mudahogora that through the Unity and Reconciliation Program spearheaded by the government of Rwanda, together with non-profit organizations and faith-based groups, both ethnic groups are making progress in living together peacefully and in harmony; there are even cases of Tutsi survivors who married Hutu perpetrators and brought them into their families. In the near future the researchers intend to gain a better understanding of this phenomenon among survivors and their offspring.

The researchers hope to present their findings at a seminar in Rwanda and offer assistance in developing applied research and intervention strategies, such as treatment of trauma and seeking to promote unity and reconciliation, to Rwandan stakeholders.

With the agreement between the Israeli prime minister and the Rwandan president to open embassies in each other's countries and establish closer ties, the researchers hope that their applied research can help strengthen Israeli-Rwandan relations for the social benefit of Rwanda.

*"Collect moments not things." Anonymous*

*"You can't start the next chapter of your life if you keep re-reading the last one." Anonymous*

6] [Bar Ilan Study: Parental PTSD Affects Health Choices, Aging, of Holocaust survivors' Children](#) - The Jewish Press by David Israel

A new study on intergenerational transmission of trauma has found evidence that Holocaust survivors suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and their adult offspring exhibit more unhealthy behavior patterns and age less successfully in comparison to survivors with no signs of PTSD or parents who did not experience the Holocaust and their offspring.

Now that they are mostly middle-aged or older adults, offspring of Holocaust survivors may be assessed to determine whether ancestral trauma lingers on to affect their aging process. The results can provide important data not just about Holocaust survivors and their offspring, but also in general about aging individuals who were exposed to massive trauma. [Read the entire article](#)

*"Dare to reach out your hand into the darkness, to pull another hand into the light." Norman B. Rice*

*"Music in the soul can be heard by the universe." Lao Tzu*

*Some great insight, thoughts and creativity in this video, worth watching, wait till you hear about their day jobs. Take care, Michael*

7] ["For decades, Chicago punk rockers embrace their unconventional hobby"](#) – YouTube 4:34 minutes

In Chicago, members of the punk rock band The Bollweevils have been balancing their conventional day jobs -- together, they're a physician, a principal, an electrician and a college administrator -- with their unconventional hobby for over two decades. Reporter Jay Shefsky from Chicago PBS Station WTTW has their story

*“A true community is not just about being geographically close to someone or part of the same social web network. It's about feeling connected and responsible for what happens. Humanity is our ultimate community, and everyone plays a crucial role.” Yehuda Berg*

8] [20 Art Therapy Activities You Can Try At Home To Destress](#) – Lifehack by Jan Shultis

Jan is the owner of All Xena's Horses, LLC, an innovative horse business in the Houston, Texas area, and the founder of The Xena Project, a non-profit dedicated to helping veterans in the saddle. She is a graduate of the United States Naval Academy who served around the world and in Afghanistan as a Public Affairs Officer. Learn more at [Xena Project](#) - Heart, Mind, Spirit - Veterans, Law Enforcement, First Responders, Families

*“Art washes away from the soul the dust of everyday life.” Pablo Picasso*

Art therapy is a broad term used to refer to the practice of creating as a way to heal wounds of the mind or spirit. While art therapists are employed with increasing frequency at hospitals, nursing homes, in schools, and in treatment programs for a wide swatch of ailments, the rejuvenating, stress-busting results of such a practice are something we can all benefit from.

Invite your creative side out to dance with these 20 art therapy ideas you can pursue at home:

**Design a postcard** - Have something to say? Give your words extra dimension by literally decorating them yourself. Writing to a person who caused you pain? Consider burning or otherwise destroying the postcard when you're finished, as a symbol of your decision to move forward. Have the need to send it, but don't want to invite them back into your life? Mail your anonymous thoughts to Post Secret.

**Give thanks with cards of your own** - Focus on words and thoughts of gratitude, of your own design. Pick up a stack of blank cards and envelopes at a paper or craft store, or simply embellish a pre-made card. Consider offering thanks to those helping you through current troubles, or those who have helped you in the past. Already said “thanks” in person? A card is nice way to let folks know that they made a lasting impact.

**Cut and paste a collage** - Not sure what to do with those advertisements and circulars scattered around the house? Take a pair of scissors to them, and let your imagination run wild. If you are seeking encouragement in a particular area – love, finances, body image, and so on – zero in on images that cause you to feel uplifted and positive, or ones that embody your goals. Use them as pieces of the larger puzzle of both your collage and healing.

**Make a digital collage** - Short on art supplies, or simply more of a computer person? Fire up your laptop, and download one of many free collage programs. You can create a collage from your own photographs and memories, or conduct an online search to find images that resonate with you. Programs such as Photoshop will provide the most options, but more rudimentary programs such as Photoshop Elements, PowerPoint or some Adobe platforms offer enough for a first effort.

**Draw in response to music** - Music is a form of art that is often said to move souls. Energize, relax, and otherwise give attention to yours by simply putting a pen or pencil to paper and moving it as the rhythm dictates. Sharp, staccato music may prompt you to draw jagged edges or bold lines; softer

rhythms may encourage you to draw waves. Instrumental music is generally a more effective stress-buster than music with lyrics, because the mind is allowed to relax without distraction. If more formalized or finite images begin to emerge, allow it – the point of the exercise is to allow for creation without expectation or restraint.

**Bring a motivational message to a colorful life** - Do you have a phrase or saying that makes you feel uplifted? Cut the words out of magazines and arrange an encouraging display. Don't have a "go to" phrase? Find generic words, such as "happy," "joy," "inspire," and start with a general display of words. Crack open old journals for inspiration, or start a new art journal for your new creations.

**Move those magnetic words around** - There is art in manipulating the written word, too. Tap into your inner poet and give yourself something nice to read every time you open the refrigerator door, with fridge art. A box of words can be rearranged in a seemingly infinite number of combinations. For only a few dollars, pick up boxes with theme-based verbiage, or boxes that include graphic images. Running low on inspiration? Post a poem or story that resonates with you – just because someone else is the author, doesn't mean you can't still reap the relaxing rewards.

**Bedazzle the box** - Most of us have a box of memorabilia tucked away somewhere (or bits of memorabilia scattered everywhere). Get organized and give your treasures a facelift by literally decorating the box you keep them in. Decor can be specific to a set of memories or time period, or more general. Decorating a box is also a great way to add to a time capsule or memory box given as a gift.

**Create an affirmation you can carry with you** - Gain a more frequent boost from your art therapy efforts by creating a product that you can literally carry with you. Whether it's a piece of jewelry, an article of clothing, or a key chain, choose images, words, and colors that remind you of how and what you want to feel. Not sure how to begin? Attend a class at a local craft store or gallery to get the creative juices flowing and brush up on techniques.

**Brighten up old clothing** - Working through feelings of unworthiness or low self-esteem? Wish you had the budget to completely overhaul your wardrobe? Get thee to the craft store! Spend \$20-\$50 on beads, bows, even a bedazzler, and give items you already own an update worthy of fabulous you. Have a bit more to spend, and already know your way around the business end of a sewing machine? Pick up a pattern for a new item of clothing, or a book on an easy-to-learn craft, such as knitting.

**Color it real** - Your feelings, that is. Select colored pencils in accordance with what draws you the most, then check out how they correspond to this chart. Don't overanalyze or think too much about what your choices might "mean." By taking a second look at your art after it is created, you may gain valuable insight into your underlying feelings.

**Map out your heart** - At a loss for a place to start with art therapy? Go to the source, and draw a picture of your heart – literally. Fill in the shape with images of the things you desire, dream of, and love. You can find photos, or simply assign a colored section to each corresponding desire. However you do it, your heart will be full both literally and figuratively by the time you finish this exercise.

**Capture pain in chalk** - Then wash it away. While one purpose of art therapy is to purge the mind and heart of negative, past, or unwanted emotions, it doesn't make a lot of sense to create a permanent

monument to such emotions. Resolve this dilemma by pouring out your thoughts in chalk. When you're finished, anything you no longer wish to carry can be literally washed away.

**Sculpt a better state** - Sculpting doesn't have to require a lot of space or materials. Make your own play-dough with a few simple ingredients (conduct a quick online search for a variety of recipes), then let your hands and your imagination soar. The malleable stuff is ideal for exploring emotions that you want to work through, without making permanent; anger can even be unleashed when you smash your creation flat. Ready to relax? Mix essential oils into the dough for some aromatherapy. Store leftovers in the fridge for use during your next session.

**Give art therapy a hand** - Use fingerprints to create in a way that unlocks the child in all of us, and provides additional texture to explore. Or, trace your hand and use the colors and textures of your choice to illustrate the things you hope your hands will create. Really need to let loose? Dip your hands in paint and slap some prints on the paper! The release of energy may be just the healing you need.

Not feeling drawn to the more traditional arts? Try one of these, and continue to reap the healing rewards:

**Redecorate a room** - It is often said that healing occurs with even more speed and intensity when the external environment is adapted to facilitate and reflect healing. Burn off extra energy and adapt your environment to your needs by rearranging furniture, ridding your space of old things, and adding punches of uplifting color and texture. Remember to save room for vision boards, affirmations, and other products of your art therapy time.

**Gather with friends, and create in public** - Hesitant to dive into the art world? Gather a group of friends and explore together. Art groups, like book clubs, meet regularly to explore different media and forms of expression at each gathering. Sound like too much of a commitment? Studios are popping up around the country that allow groups to create under the guidance of an experienced teacher, while enjoying both wine and food at the same time.

**String prayer or meditation beads** - Take a trip to a local craft store and select beads that appeal to you. Remember to grab line for your string and a clasp if desired; fishing line can also work in a pinch. The beads can be of similar shape and color pattern, or can be random. If you intend to carry your prayer beads with you, select beads that are small enough to fit into a pocket or purse. Not finding what you want? A specialty bead store may have more options.

**Rake the sand** - Whether you're taking a fork to a plate of sand on your desk or hauling a truck full of tools to the beach, raking patterns is a good way to release emotions in an economical, non-permanent sense. Your creation can be a deliberate piece, or simply a series of geometric shapes that help you blow off steam. For an added shot of healing power, work on a large enough scale that the physical exertion required to wield your rake both calms and burns off excess energy or anxiety.

**Help something grow** - Gardening is an art form that employs plants as paint and your hands as tools. Whether you build your garden in a small tabletop bowl, or take over an entire hillside for your colorful creation, let your imagination soar. Don't know much about plants? Spend some time at a local nursery and find out what grows best in your area, and what care requirements are realistic for you. Peruse local books or visit several plant sellers to gather ideas for your arrangement.

Need some convincing that art therapy is a good choice for you? Consider these [10 Things You Never Knew You Could Learn From Art](#).

*“All children are artists. The problem is how to remain an artist once he grows up.” Pablo Picasso*

*“Just for today I will be unafraid. Especially I will not be afraid to enjoy what is beautiful, and to believe that as I give to the world, so the world will give to me.”*

9] [Through music, Vijay Gupta brings healing community to LA's Skid Row](#) - YouTube 7:52 minutes

Vijay Gupta is a Juilliard-trained violinist who's been using music as a way to connect with L.A.'s homeless and incarcerated and promote healing. A movement that began with one Skid Row occupant has now evolved into a group of 80 musicians who perform in shelters, jails and treatment facilities. Jeffrey Brown talks to Gupta about abuse, dysfunction and how art became his "lifeline."

[Official Website of Vijay Gupta](#) - *Gupta...is one of the most radical thinkers in the unradical world of American classical music. With Street Symphony, he has created a formidable new model for how musical institutions should engage with the world around them. – Alex Ross, The New Yorker*

Vijay Gupta is a violinist and social justice advocate.

An esteemed performer, communicator, and citizen-artist, Gupta is a leading advocate for the role of the arts and music to heal, inspire, provoke change, and foster social connection. Gupta is the founder and Artistic Director of Street Symphony, a non-profit organization providing musical engagement, dialogue and teaching artistry for homeless and incarcerated communities in Los Angeles.

[Street Symphony](#) places social justice at the heart of music making by creating authentic, powerful engagements between professional and emerging artists and communities disenfranchised by homelessness and incarceration in Los Angeles County. Street Symphony operates with the core principle that all people deserve access to a creative and expressive life.

*“Your beliefs become your thoughts, your thoughts become your words, your words become your actions, your actions become your habits, your habits become your values, your values become your destiny.” Mahatma Gandhi*

*“Instead of asking ‘what do I want from life?’ a more powerful question is, ‘what does life want from me?’” Eckhart Tolle*

10] [Even a haircut can prompt a conversation about health care](#) – YouTube 2:43 minutes

In the old days, a man went to a barber shop for a haircut and a shave. But at Urban Kutz in Cleveland, patrons are more likely to be wearing a blood pressure cuff than a neck wrap. Gabriel Kramer of the PBS station Ideastream shares a story about a barber whose customers were “starting to disappear” and who decided to turn his shop into a health care resource as a result.

*“Not all wounds are so obvious. Walk gently in the lives of others.”*

11] [6 Steps to Turn Regret Into Self-Improvement](#) - The New York Times, By Jennifer Taitz

[Jennifer Taitz](#) is a clinical instructor in psychiatry at University of California, Los Angeles, and the author of "[How to be Single and Happy: Science-Based Strategies for Keeping Your Sanity While Looking for a Soul Mate](#)" and "[End Emotional Eating.](#)"

***Stop beating yourself up, and turn your emotions into action.***

Have you ever felt like life would be better if you had taken a different path? If only you had pursued that job, ended that relationship sooner or moved to a new city, everything would be just perfect.

Nonsense, of course. But it's human nature to linger on those feelings of regret. We tend to look back and think that missed opportunities - real or imagined - could have set us on a different, possibly more rewarding path. Left unchecked, these emotions can become overwhelming sources of stress and anxiety.

But even painful emotions like regret can be powerful sources of inspiration. Whether you carry minor regrets that speak to your perfectionism, or you continuously cringe over more serious, "If only I ..." thoughts, it's possible to use regret as a lever to help you move ahead, rather than letting it weigh you down.

And there are good reasons for doing so. Researchers have found that obsessing over regrets has a negative impact on mood and sleep, it can increase impulsivity, and it be a risk factor for binge eating and misusing alcohol.

As a clinical psychologist, one of my most important tasks in helping people lead healthy, happy and meaningful lives is to teach them evidence-based strategies to manage their emotions. That includes how to use regrets to motivate them. I've found that even when people feel stuck in endless what ifs, it's possible to recalibrate. Here's how.

### **Step 1: Evaluate how you cope with regret**

Many of us try to push pain away. Others ruminate about perceived mistakes. But whether you ignore or fixate on what's troubling you, research has shown that it's impossible to run from emotions without consequences. And in a vicious twist, dodging upsetting feelings actually makes them even more present: Suppressing our emotions can diminish our capacity for joy and potentially manifest as physical pain.

So instead of trying to ignore your regrets, it's a better idea to practice acknowledging the experience. Try this: Start by slowing down and noticing your thoughts and sensations. Relax your face and hands, and think about accepting how you feel now without worrying you'll feel this way forever. Reaching this middle ground between avoiding and dwelling will prove less depressing.

This is easier said than done, but consider the alternative: A 2014 study published in The Journal of General Psychology found that drowning in regret can compromise our ability to make wise decisions, and focusing on those negative emotions "undermined performance" on simple tasks.

However, researchers also found that when people find a silver lining in their regret, they are able to think more clearly.

“Regret can be a problem, but one benefit of regret is that it signals improvement is possible,” said Neal Roese, a professor of marketing at the Kellogg School of Management at Northwestern University who focuses on the psychology of judgment and decision-making. “The trick is to avoid obsessing and pull out a lesson that can be applied in future situations.”

Further, when we find ourselves consumed by self-criticism, it can feel tempting to focus on quick fixes, like distracting ourselves, rather than taking steps to improve. And regrets that arise from inaction - i.e., missing opportunities - are particularly frustrating.

Take time to notice how you handled a recent regret. Did you pretend it meant less than it did? Or did you fall into a shame spiral? Once you figure out how you navigate these situations, you can start using your emotions to your advantage.

## **Step 2: Interrupt your obsessing**

Once you’ve identified how you cope, it’s important to learn how to stop a regret spiral from happening, since thinking endlessly about it all but guarantees you’ll feel worse.

Take a moment to list the consequences of a recent regret spiral — like circling for hours over a mistake you made — and keep those notes for review. Did you feel better? Worse? Were there concrete lessons you learned? Or did you just feel bad? The point of this list is to realize that these spirals probably won’t lead you anywhere productive and, most likely, will leave you feeling stuck.

Next, think about the times you’re most tempted to ruminate on your regrets, like right before you go to sleep. Having this list handy will help you keep in mind that it’s wasted energy to focus on your regrets.

Finally, develop a set of concrete, alternative options that will engage you when you can feel yourself standing on the edge of a regret spiral about to fall in. The goal here is stop this type of thinking in its tracks before it consumes your energy. (Ideally, these choices don’t involve venting or scrolling through Instagram, both of which can keep regret churning.)

One activity I have my patients try is to list their favorite authors in alphabetical order. When your mind is focused on a project, it’s less likely to get derailed. Another idea: If you feel the grip of strong emotions, dip your face in ice water. (Really.)

“People become believers in this strategy once they get past the idea of plunging forward into a bowl of ice-water,” said Dr. Kathryn Korslund, an expert in Dialectical Behavior Therapy, a treatment that teaches people how to manage emotions. She said that dipping your face in ice water works because it increases activity in the parasympathetic nervous system, lowering your body temperature and heart rate, preventing emotions from intensifying.

If that seems too jarring, pop an ice cube in your mouth and focus on the sensations. You’ll find that it’s

difficult to simultaneously replay your life's mistakes while fully participating in doing something else.

Keep in mind: These activities aren't meant to be a permanent solution. The goal is to regulate your emotions for a few minutes to then approach your situation with a little more clarity.

### **Step 3: Revisit your regret, then repeat these phrases**

Remember that silver lining effect? This is how it works.

In the same study that found regret hinders our ability to solve problems, participants were asked to read the following two statements and recall at least one benefit from a regrettable event:

- Everything can be viewed from a different perspective.
- There is positive value in every experience.

Afterward, participants showed "improved subsequent performance" on the same set of tasks they completed before finding the silver lining.

In other words, focusing on what you gained can help you pivot from the negative impacts of regret. And keep in mind that so much of your regret story is just that: a story. Researchers even label regretful "if only" stories as counterfactual thinking, since it's impossible to know how things would have turned out had you made a different choice.

### **Step 4: Treat yourself like your ideal mentor would**

Researchers at University of California, Berkeley, asked 400 students to write about their biggest regrets and found that self-compassion, not beating ourselves up, "spurs positive adjustment in the face of regrets."

This "self-compassion led to greater personal improvement, in part, through heightened acceptance," the researchers wrote, adding that "forgiveness stems from situating one's shortcomings or failures - such as a regret experience - as a part of the common human experience."

Imagine your mentor talking you down from a spell of regret. Would she focus on everything you did wrong? Or would she encourage you not to be so mean to yourself, and rather try to find the tangible, practical lessons you can learn from the experience?

When all else fails: Just talk to yourself like you'd talk to a friend.

### **Step 5: Clarify what matters to you**

When you feel profound regret - the type that makes you wonder about your place in life, as opposed to regretting the dumb thing you said to your boss in the elevator - use the emotion as a springboard to examine what truly is important to you. Consider the values you most want to stand for, and the values that are core to your identity.

One of my clients came to see me after feeling guilty about how angrily she speaks to people. Together, we worked on utilizing her remorse to pinpoint the virtues she most cherishes - "I care about being nice

rather than being right” was one - since focusing on the damage already done wouldn’t do her or her relationships any good.

Take the time to ask yourself why you feel such profound regret, and work backward to identify the values that are tied up in your feelings. Unraveling that knot can help you use that as motivation for personal growth.

### **Step 6: Take action**

There’s a Japanese art called kintsugi. Literally translated, this means “golden repair.” But it’s much more than that.

Kintsugi is a philosophy of repairing broken things, like cracks in pottery, for example. Rather than hide an item’s imperfections, the reparation process highlights them. Those imperfections are considered part of an item’s history, and repairing it this way can add beauty to the original items — like using precious metal to fix cracks in pottery.

Make a list of regrets large and small, then brainstorm exactly how to take steps to remedy whatever is haunting you. The ultimate cure for anticipating regret isn’t feeling lousy or overthinking. It’s thoughtfully pursuing solutions, and using the wisdom gained through self-reflection to act.

*“Sometimes, reaching out and taking someone's hand is the beginning of a journey. At other times, it is allowing another to take yours.” Vera Nazarian*

12] [Songs For the Keys to Your Life](#) – You Tube 3:08 minutes - [Survivor Knights](#) Event, Philadelphia, PA

Hey folks, I'd like to share a song of mine; the meaning to a song is in the ears of the listener, so however this songs touches you, that is for you. For me, the song serves a few purposes, [1], it 'sings out' to my friends [self included] who have neglected our creative gifts, for whatever the reason[s], and [2], it also conveys the sadness I have felt as I have performed across this country and met countless folks whose lives have been impacted by trauma, abuse & mental health concerns and how those challenges have negated their own creativity. How to encourage folks to pursue and support them in their creative endeavors is something we should all strive to help with. Michael

*“There is no exercise better for the heart than reaching down and lifting people up.” John Holmes*

[Michael Skinner trauma healing w/music, "We're All Creative"](#), with Pat Deegan

Please note, this video is part of Pat Deegan's, Conspiracy of Hope [www.recoverylibrary.com](http://www.recoverylibrary.com) and [www.patdeegan.com](http://www.patdeegan.com) Please visit her websites to learn more about Pat's incredible work.

Three new videos to share from a gig in Nashua, NH, Jan 11, 2019 – one of my tunes and two of the very first cover songs I learned to play back in the mid 90's.

1] [Feel Like A Man](#) (c) Michael Skinner – You Tube 4:09 minutes – from my ["PIRATES"](#) album/CD

2] [Stand By Me](#) – YouTube 5:07 minutes - a great song and I love to play this tune and give thanks to all of those in my life who have stood by me, through the good and the bad. Thank you!!! PS covered this song on my "[Waitin' For A Train](#)" album release.

3] [If I Were A Carpenter](#) – You Tube 3:39 minutes - Always loved this song, even included a version on my first album release, "[TRAIN OF TEARS](#)"

[Michael Skinner Music](#) – Facebook Page – Music, performance videos, art work, photos & more!

This page is brand new, please check it out, thanks!!!

*“We rise by lifting others.” Robert Ingersoll*

*“When we give cheerfully and accept gratefully, everyone is blessed.” Maya Angelou*

***Thank you & 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

[The Surviving Spirit Speakers' Bureau](#)

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