



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 March 2021

Hi Folks,

Spring is here and that has brought some much-needed energy and hope for new beginnings after this very long winter of Covid 19 and all that it entails. I hope we are starting to see daylight at the end of this tunnel.

I was grateful to be a part of a Survivor Stories event hosted by Michael Broussard of [Ask a Survivor](#). I'm performing two songs of mine and sharing the back story about their creation - "Songs For The Keys To Your Life" and "When Your Heart Follows A Lie"...

[Survivor Stories with Michael Skinner](#) – YouTube 21:15 minutes

Thank you for allowing me to share this month's newsletter with you.

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“The secret of change is to focus all of your energy, not on fighting the old, but on building the new.” - Socrates

1] [Roxane Gay on How to Write About Trauma](#) By [Monica Lewinsky](#) @ [Vanity Fair](#)

In a candid interview, the novelist, essayist, and professor talks to Monica Lewinsky about finding a way to write about terrible things, doing double duty on therapy, and handling all forms of criticism.

We are walking wounds, but I am not sure any of us know quite how to talk about it,” writes Roxane Gay in her new essay, “Writing Into the Wound,” published on Scribd. The piece, inspired by an undergraduate workshop Gay taught at Yale on writing trauma, describes Gay’s experience attempting to write about being gang-raped at age 12, first in fictional stories written as a teenager, “melodramatic and overwrought and dark and graphic,” and then, as an adult, in work like her essay collection *Bad Feminist*. “I wrote around it,” she writes of that book’s description of the assault. “In part, I was protecting myself. I could admit this thing had happened to me, but I was not ready to share the

details.” Finally, in *Hunger: A Memoir of (My) Body*, Gay wrote “directly and openly about my sexual assault, how it changed me, how that assault has haunted me for more than thirty years.”

In her new essay, she describes the book’s reception—overwhelmingly positive responses from readers, while interviews with some members of the media ranged from misinformed to callous—and how the experience of writing the book led to further questions of how to depict trauma in writing. The piece is well hewn but expansive, exploring the ways in which we reveal ourselves through writing—by choice, as in the detailing of an assault, or more obliquely, as in how a journalist describes a piece of writing about an assault, and the writer who experienced it.

Roxane and I have known each other for a few years and, of course, my awareness of and admiration for her writing predated that. I’m sure few would wonder why I was interested in talking to her about this particular essay—which we did via a Zoom call from our respective Los Angeles homes—about the nuance and intricacy involved in writing about one’s trauma for public consumption.

Monica Lewinsky: Did teaching the course on trauma writing change your thoughts about how we write about trauma?

Roxane Gay: I don’t know that it changed my thoughts, but it certainly expanded them and helped me develop a stronger understanding. I thought of the class after asking myself, how do we write about trauma? And how do we write about it well? I had edited an anthology called *Not That Bad*, a compilation of women writing about their experiences with rape culture. Most of the submissions were just straight testimony. They weren’t essays. And I was in the unfortunate position of having to reject these truly painful stories that clearly took quite a lot for the writers to submit. It got me thinking, how do we teach people how to take a trauma—whether it’s theirs or someone else’s; a cultural trauma, collective trauma, so on—and write about it in ways that can be more than just catharsis? Over the course of the semester my students were really astonishing in the different ways that they approached the topic and tried to answer the question I posed to them at the beginning of the semester which is, “How do we write trauma, and how do we do it well?” It really helped me to further refine my thinking.

Does “writing trauma well” fall under the category of what we would normally say is “good” writing? Or does writing trauma well mean that it’s effective in a different way?

That’s a good question, and I think a lot of the time what we mean by writing well is very subjective and there can be a lot of different criteria. For some people, writing about trauma well means that it helps them work through something. But is that going to be writing trauma well for an audience? And which audience? You really do have to think through these questions as you’re writing trauma and decide, what is your end goal? And what are you going to consider a success?

I’ve written about my trauma and what ends up feeling meaningful to me is when someone connects with it in a way that helps them. You had an outpouring of that after *Hunger*. Did that mitigate some of the experiences you were having with the press? What was that like?

It was surprising, because I did not expect the book to resonate with as many people as it did, and with as many people who were not fat. I just thought, Great, I’m going to reach my fat brethren, yay. But living in a body is hard, no matter what that body looks like, and no matter what that body’s ability is.

And so people really had a lot to say, and I really felt I had done it well, because so many people came to me. But also because it created a small measure of change. Now, it's being taught in many medical schools and it is helping doctors rethink how they interact with their fat patients and how they treat their fat patients and how they understand their fat patients. And that, for me, was when I knew I had done okay. Because, that's such a real problem, fat phobia in the medical profession. And so many fat people go undiagnosed with issues they have every right to seek treatment for. Being fat is not a crime. And so, if the medical establishment can decriminalize fatness a little bit, I will have considered my life a life well lived.

My best friend from college is a pediatrician, and she read *Hunger* and told me that it completely changed how she talked to all of her adolescent patients around this issue.

My confession is that *Hunger* was too hard for me to read. I've struggled with weight my whole life and was also fat-shamed publicly. It opened up those triggers. But I do wonder, do you like or dislike when people say that it was brave to write something like this?

I have tried to come to a place of peace about it, because I don't feel brave. And so it feels like people are giving me a recognition I don't deserve when they say that. I don't think it's particularly brave to write about your reality and to write about the ways you've suffered or the ways that you have experienced joy. But, at the same time, I do recognize, given how terrifying I found it to write the book, that it took something to finally hit send and give it to my editor—and I delayed that for a year, because I was so overwhelmed by the prospect of even starting the book. So yeah, in the end it did require some bravery. I try to just be as gracious as possible when people say that because I do recognize it's a compliment and that people don't need to know all of my interior angst. But I also sometimes find myself qualifying it like, "Oh, I'm not brave."

Like just now?

Exactly. Exactly like that.

You wrote in the essay, "How do we write about the traumatic experiences of others without transgressing their boundaries or privacy?"

That's a question I think that we are always going to have to grapple with, but I always think we have to err on the side of respecting other people and their lives and not putting words or experiences into their mouths that they have not shared. I don't ever want to suppose that I know anything about someone who's experienced trauma, if I haven't asked them about it directly. We see all kinds of speculation. You're very familiar with this. The media will invent stories, whole cloth.

According to the tabloids, I had an alien child once, you know?

Oh, I did not realize. How are they doing?

Wonderful. I'm getting the tax credit.

Lucky! Yeah. It's wild to see what writers can do. I think that as long as we recognize that we have to respect other people and their lives, even if we're writing about them, we are going to get to a place

where we're doing a reasonably good job of writing about the trauma of others. I never want to co-opt someone's experience, and so when I write about the trauma of others, I just try to be careful. I try to use common sense. I think, Would I want something like this written about me? Because having had people write about me and do so in ways that are inaccurate, or just wrong, or offensive—I know how that feels. I would never want anyone else to feel that way, and so I try to be careful. And I think if everyone was a little more careful and a little more thoughtful about the choices that they make, we could spare people further trauma.

Do you feel comfortable talking publicly about the healing modalities that you've used or are using?

Oh yeah, I'm very comfortable. I took a long time to write about my sexual assault because I wasn't ready, because I didn't want people to know something so intimate and something so painful. And then I started to think, It's been so long. Let it go. And so, one of the things that got me to a place where I was able to write about it and open myself up to everything inevitably that would rise out of writing about it was a therapy. And a lot of reading and support groups online, and things like that. And so, I'm actually way more comfortable talking about the healing modalities that I am using than I am talking about the trauma itself. And I'm fine talking about the trauma itself. It's not that interesting. It happened, it's over, and yes, I'm still dealing with the repercussions of it, but it's not that interesting.

What is interesting is, for me, is just how long trauma can linger and how sometimes when you least expect it you have these reminders. And that has been one of the more stunning things about living through trauma. Trauma compounds. It just surprises me where I feel like I'm doing something normal, everything is cool, and then something happens and all of a sudden nothing is okay, everything is terrible and I am falling apart. And then I have to pull myself back together all over again.

We don't talk a lot about the messiness of recovery, because people like to believe that it is a contained and discrete experience. It happens, it's over, you heal, you move on. You heal, but sometimes the wound reopens, and it heals again and then reopens and scar tissue develops, and so on. I try to also accommodate that in my writing so that people are clear that I'm not offering you some sort of magical solution. This is not therapy. This is just a memoir. It is an accounting of a life.... So many people with trauma feel like they're failing because they have a bad day or a bad week or a bad year. And you know what? If you wake up, you're not failing. If you brush your teeth, you're not failing. And I think if we just have slightly more realistic goals for ourselves than perfection, we'll be okay.

During the pandemic, after things just completely went away for about two months, three months, people figured out that virtual events are viable and work started pouring in again. And of course, I was writing about the election, and I had gotten married, and my mom has lung cancer. I have a lot going on. I haven't had a chance to worry about my own shit because there's five other things that are horrible that I'm dealing with at the same time. But one of the things that the isolation did do, though, was force me to recognize that I actually have time to work on some things that I have not worked on personally. I've kicked up therapy to twice a week now, and that has been very useful. I was very resistant, but someone told me that it's very useful to go twice a week.

Or a double session.

It takes me a while to warm up and I find that around minute 41 is when I really when I'm like, "and so

then he stabbed me.” And then she’s like, “Well, we got to go!” And so I have found that because even though I’m still busy, I’m not traveling, which saves so much time and so much energy that I have been able to direct that energy to productive things. And in addition to the increased anxiety of is humanity coming to an end, so it’s been challenging. What about for you, Monica?

My experience in the beginning of the pandemic was that old trauma made it really challenging. In the first several months of 1998, I couldn’t go outside. So, because of that, unless I’m sick, it’s rare for me to not leave my house at least once a day. Yes, we could go for walks...but. There was a real claustrophobic feeling about quarantine for me—that “have to stay inside” mandate. And then, in terms of compounded trauma, I had just started dating somebody and Linda Tripp died unexpectedly. A lot of old trauma kicked up.

It surprises me, all the crevices in the psyche where trauma can lurk. My therapist is a trauma psychiatrist and she talks about exactly what you were just saying, that there’s such a long echo of trauma. I’ve had the experience of sometimes trying to prepare for something that I think will be traumatic, and then it’s like, surprise! Trauma has its own way of wanting to deal with something.

And its own agenda. I find that whenever I think I’m planning for how I’m going to feel about something, life surprises me. The most surprising thing about *Hunger* was not the reader reception, it was the way the press dealt with it. I had anticipated it and my best friend and I had actually spent some time trying to imagine what were the worst things that reporters were going to ask me? What were the worst headlines? We ended up being right, and then it was way worse. If I had known I would’ve never, ever published the book. So I’m glad in a way that I did not know.... Culturally, it’s really hard for people to let go of these singular narratives. Again, this is nothing you don’t already know. It just surprised me, I must say. It surprised me.

But you don’t regret publishing *Hunger*, do you?

I don’t regret it. The book has done more good than not. [Read the entire article](#)

1a] [Hunger: A Memoir of \(My\) Body](#) by Roxane Gay

From the *New York Times* bestselling author of *Bad Feminist*: a searingly honest memoir of food, weight, self-image, and learning how to feed your hunger while taking care of yourself.

“I ate and ate and ate in the hopes that if I made myself big, my body would be safe. I buried the girl I was because she ran into all kinds of trouble. I tried to erase every memory of her, but she is still there, somewhere. . . . I was trapped in my body, one that I barely recognized or understood, but at least I was safe.”

In her phenomenally popular essays and long-running Tumblr blog, Roxane Gay has written with intimacy and sensitivity about food and body, using her own emotional and psychological struggles as a means of exploring our shared anxieties over pleasure, consumption, appearance, and health. As a woman who describes her own body as “wildly undisciplined,” Roxane understands the tension between desire and denial, between self-comfort and self-care. In *Hunger*, she explores her past—including the devastating act of violence that acted as a turning point in her young life—and brings

readers along on her journey to understand and ultimately save herself.

With the bracing candor, vulnerability, and power that have made her one of the most admired writers of her generation, Roxane explores what it means to learn to take care of yourself: how to feed your hungers for delicious and satisfying food, a smaller and safer body, and a body that can love and be loved—in a time when the bigger you are, the smaller your world becomes.

“But pain’s like water. It finds a way to push through any seal. There’s no way to stop it. Sometimes you have to let yourself sink inside of it before you can learn how to swim to the surface.” - Katie Kacvinsky

“You’ve been criticizing yourself for years and it hasn’t worked. Try approving of yourself and see what happens.” - Louise Hay

2] [Why Sound Heals](#) By Christina Sarich @ [Uplift](#)

What Produces the Healing Power of Sound? - We can feel it when we turn on the radio and our favorite song happens to be playing, or when we sit quietly and listen to the rain. There is a palpable peace when we are absorbed in quiet and a different kind of rejuvenation when we hear the wind in the trees. There is no doubt that sound has subtle, but profound effects on our body, minds and spirits. How exactly does sound work, though, to heal us?

Just Like an Orchestra, You Can Tune Your Body - Have you ever listened to an orchestra prepare to play an invigorating symphony? There is a cacophony first with the woodwinds and strings, horns, and timpani making quite a ruckus, but when they tune their instruments precisely, the sound that washes over you like a wave, can bring peace and excitement that surpasses some of the most invigorating practices on earth – like sky diving, or dropping forty-five feet into a hidden cave.

The body works in much the same way. If a single instrument (organ, or organ system) is playing its own tune, and not in harmony with the rest of the body, disease is more likely to happen. As sound therapist, Dr. John Beaulieu, ND, PhD explains:

“The fundamental principle of Energy Medicine is that an underlying energy field generates physical, emotional, and mental behaviors or symptoms. If we change the energy field, the physical, emotional, and mental behaviors will also change.”

Cymatics - One of the most effective ways to change the energy field is through a science named cymatics. Though he was not the first to discover that sound could heal, Dr. Hans Jenny, M.D. of Basel Switzerland put together some fascinating experiments where we could literally ‘see’ how sound works.

Jenny created ‘cymatics’ when he put sand, fluid or some other powder on a metal plate that was attached to an oscillator. An oscillator is essentially a vibrator, but his oscillator was controlled by a generator that was able to produce many thousands of types of frequencies. Some of these can be found in nature, and others are created by man.

“Sound is not unorganized chaos. It is a dynamic but ordered pattern.” – Dr. Hans Jenny

By changing the frequencies on the oscillator, Jenny found that sand, or water or whatever substance he was using to create a visible medium for his sound, would morph into some very interesting shapes. These shapes mimicked the properties of divine geometry, and the higher the frequency, the more complex the shapes would appear to be. He wrote:

“Since the various aspects of these phenomena are due to vibration, we are confronted with a spectrum which reveals a patterned, figurative formation at one pole and kinetic-dynamic processes at the other, the whole being generated and sustained by its essential periodicity.”

What Jenny was observing was really a simple way of observing matter come to life. Since we now understand, through the emerging field of quantum physics, that patterns emerge via waves of energy, the plates were showing the scientist a similar phenomenon. In ancient Sumerian society, this was a known fact. This is why practices like mantra were held in high esteem. The seed syllable, OM, for example, causes a certain frequency to imprint upon the ‘matter’ around it, and thus changes the energetic field.

“The kind of singing that we do calms the spirit and helps us live in peace with our world and with one another,” says Abbot Philip Lawrence, a scholar of chant who also leads the Monastery of Christ In The Desert – home to an American order of Benedictine monks from Abiquiu, New Mexico. “Chanting has some strange effect on the brain waves according to various studies,” continues Abbot Philip, but this effect is certainly not the Monks of the Desert’s objective; rather their goal, and that of Gregorian chant, notes Abbot Philip, is “to focus on the words rather than the challenge of voice production or sight-reading. It is always our hope that our singing will bring others to peace, inner tranquility and an appreciation of beauty. These values can help create a world in which peace and tranquility prevail.”

Since all matter is just different frequencies of the collapsed wave, or quantum field, then we have the ability to create a different reality with sound.

Sound and the Golden Number - The possibility for great healing can be seen in the science of sound. The picture of the Sri Yantra, a mandala created by sound, and said to be imagined by a yogi in deep meditation, is a representation of one of the oldest sounds in the world. Some call it a manifestation of divine sound. The triangles that appear in the Sri Yantra are perfectly integrated based on the divine number, Pi, which is also the basis for the golden mean, Phi. The Greek philosopher, Pythagorus understood sound and divine geometry, and it was written about by Euclid in “Elements” around 300 B.C., by Luca Pacioli, a contemporary of Leonardo Da Vinci, in “De Divina Proportione” in 1509, by Johannes Kepler around 1600. Many others knew of this ‘cosmic’ mathematics, and its power to heal throughout the ages.

The harmonics of sound work to create order out of chaos. Disease, you might say, is a form of chaos in the body. According to Dr. Robert Friedman, the connection between the Golden Ratio and ideal health was a no-brainer. During his medical residency in the 1980s, Dr. Friedman began observing the Golden Ratio throughout the human body—on the anatomical, physiological, and molecular levels. “The deeper I looked,” said Friedman, “the more deeply I discovered this incredible and ubiquitous Code to be embedded throughout the structure and function of the body...it only followed that the more one could harmonize with this grand principle, the more efficient and effortless life could be.”

Healing Frequencies - What is illness? *“Emotional issues that are unresolved block the healing*

vibrations or cause the disease state to return.” – R. Gordon

Over millennia, those who have studied the science of sound, have come to understand that certain frequencies are very healing for the human body. Overall, however, you are trying to create resonance – “When two systems are oscillating at different frequencies, there is an impelling force called resonance that causes the two to transfer energy from one to another. When two similarly tuned systems vibrate at different frequencies, there is another aspect of this energy transfer called entrainment, which causes them to line up and to vibrate at the same frequency.” (Richard Gordon)

When we ‘entrain’ with healing frequencies, our bodies and minds vibrate in harmony. These include:

285 Hz – Signals cells and tissues to heal. Leaves the body feeling rejuvenated.

396 Hz – Liberates guilt and fear to make way for higher vibrating emotions.

417 Hz – Allows the ‘undoing’ of challenging situations.

528 Hz – Said to heal DNA, repair cells, and awaken consciousness

639 Hz – This is the vibration associated to the heart. It allows feelings of love for self and ‘other’ until there is no longer a distinction. To balance relationships, listen to this frequency.

741 Hz – Said to clean the cells and heal them from exposure to electromagnetic radiation. Helps shift someone into empowerment so they can create the reality they wish to see.

852 Hz – Awakens intuition.

963 Hz – Activates the pineal gland, and aligns the body to its perfect, original state. Of course, there are further frequencies, many of which that are not even within the human range of hearing, but they are healing nonetheless. George Lakhovsky, a Russian engineer understood the power of sound as well. He understood that certain frequencies would make a living being grow stronger. I hope you are able to find healing in the frequencies I’ve described, and that this introduction to why sound heals will spur you to learn more.

“At the root of all power and motion, there is music and rhythm, the play of patterned frequencies against the matrix of time. We know that every particle in the physical universe takes its characteristics from the pitch and pattern and overtones of its particular frequencies, its singing. Before we make music, music makes us.” – Joachim-Ernst Berendt, The World is Sound

“Music is the language of the spirit. It opens the secret of life bringing peace, abolishing strife.” - Kahlil Gibran

“I use music in the operating room to help create a healing environment for patients and staff. There is a reason that certain heart rates are healthy and certain beats of music heal and relax us.” Bernie Siegel

[Christina Sarich](#) is a musician, yogi, humanitarian and freelance writer who channels many hours of studying Lao Tzu, Paramahansa Yogananda, Rob Brezny, Miles Davis, and Tom Robbins into interesting tidbits to help you Wake up Your Sleepy Little Head, and *See the Big Picture*. Her blog is [Yoga for the New World](#). Her latest book is [Pharma Sutra: Healing The Body And Mind Through The Art Of Yoga](#).

2a] [UPLIFT](#) - We Are One - inspired by unity, peace and love. Embracing who we truly are.

Inspiring original contributions from our beloved global UPLIFT family. Check out our [Community Contribution Guidelines](#) if you have any inspirational gifts to share.

The following guidelines are aimed at non-professional contributions from the UPLIFT Community, if you are a professional writer looking to contribute to UPLIFT, please check out [our article submission guidelines](#).

Community Contribution Guidelines - UPLIFT is resonating and spreading Unity, Peace, and Love throughout the world and everyone is welcome to participate. UPLIFT is a collective field open to contributions; an inspirational space for co-creation and igniting hearts for conscious collaborations.

We welcome creative writing community contributions: personal stories, poems, vignettes, anecdotes, letters, prayers, etc about Unity, Peace and Love. Create what you are passionate about & inspired by!

“The true beauty of music is that it connects people. It carries a message, and we, the musicians, are the messengers.” - Roy Ayers

“As soon as healing takes place, go out and heal somebody else.” - Maya Angelou

3] [Holding a partner’s hand while processing painful memories can weaken the lasting effects of emotional pain](#) by Beth Ellwood @ PsyPost

Consoling touch helps facilitate the processing of painful memories, according to findings published in [PLOS One](#). The study found that while handholding does not immediately reduce emotional pain, it appears to reduce the experience of prolonged distress.

Emotional pain is commonly experienced and often has a more profound impact on the sufferer than physical pain. Such psychological pain lies at the heart of various mental health concerns including depression, anxiety, and suicidal thinking. Social support such as sharing one’s feelings with loved ones is said to facilitate the processing of emotional pain, but researchers [Razia S. Sahi](#) and her colleagues say there may be more subtle ways to secure comfort from others — like consoling touch.

“Consoling touch is a powerful form of social support across cultures and species, but we still don’t have a complete picture of how touch shapes experiences of emotional pain, like the experience of loss,” said Sahi, a doctoral student and member of the [Social and Affective Neuroscience Lab at UCLA](#).

“We wanted to better understand this phenomenon in terms of how touch affects subjective feelings of emotional pain and comfort, and to see whether it has any potential lasting effects on the way that people process autobiographical emotional pain.”

Research has already documented the alleviating effects of touch when it comes to physical pain, but the field has yet to determine whether touch can similarly reduce emotional pain. A research team led by Sahi aimed to explore whether holding a romantic partner’s hand while processing a painful memory would be associated with a less distressing experience.

The researchers recruited a sample of 60 university-age couples who had been together for an average of 7 months. Within each couple, one partner was assigned to be the storyteller and the other was assigned to be the listener.

At an initial lab session, the storytellers related 4-5 stories from their past alone in a room while in front of a video camera. Two of the stories were neutral, and 2-3 stories were emotional (e.g., involving betrayal, loss). After recounting each experience, the storytellers gave ratings from 1 to 10 for how hurt, sad, angry, or emotional they felt, and how much pain, or stress/anxiety they felt. These ratings were averaged into a single measure denoting their emotional pain during the task.

A week later, both partners returned to the lab for session 2. Here, each couple watched the recordings of 2 neutral and 2 negative videos that were recorded by the storyteller at the first session. Importantly, during the watching of each video, the couples were instructed to either hold hands or to squeeze a stress ball. Following each video, the storytellers completed the same assessments as the first session to describe their emotional pain during the task, and a new measure of how comforted they felt by their partner during the task.

Interestingly, the researchers found no significant differences between the levels of emotional pain reported by storytellers during the handholding condition versus the stress ball condition (after controlling for the emotional pain at first recall). In other words, holding a partner's hand did not appear to reduce the immediate emotional pain felt by storytellers while watching the distressing videos. It did, however, lead to increased feelings of comfort.

Interestingly, handholding did appear to have a diminishing effect on emotional pain in the long term. Between 1 and 7 months after the lab sessions, the storytellers completed an additional survey where they were reminded of the emotional memories they had shared and were asked to rate how much emotional pain they had experienced at the time of the event and how much emotional pain they felt now when recalling the event.

At this follow-up survey, storytellers reported less emotional pain associated with the memory that had been processed while holding their partner's hand, compared to the memory they had processed while holding a stress ball. The researchers suggest that consoling touch from a partner may have created a feeling of safety that reduced the painful feelings associated with the negative memory. Overall, the authors say their findings suggest that while consoling touch can assuage both physical and emotional pain, the processes through which this happens are somewhat different.

“The main take-away is that while touch provides a source of comfort during emotional pain, it may not actually reduce immediate subjective emotional pain related to personally significant events, in the same way that it has been shown to reduce subjective reports of physical pain,” Sahi told PsyPost.

“This could be a good thing, since, unlike physical pain, emotional pain may need to be processed and experienced in order to be adaptively regulated over time. Indeed, this idea may help explain our finding that touch reduced lasting emotional pain associated with autobiographical memories, but not immediate pain.”

“These results are somewhat surprising and further research is needed in order for us to have a clearer

sense of what is happening during the provision of social support via consoling touch in emotional contexts,” Sahi added.

The study, “[The comfort in touch: Immediate and lasting effects of handholding on emotional pain](#)”, was authored by Razia S. Sahi, Macrina C. Dieffenbach, Siyan Gan, Maya Lee, Laura I. Hazlett, Shannon M. Burns, Matthew D. Lieberman, Simone G. Shamay-Tsoory, and Naomi Eisenberger.

[Beth Ellwood, Author at PsyPost – more of her articles.](#)

3a] [PsyPost](#) - PsyPost is a psychology and neuroscience news website dedicated to reporting the latest research on human behavior, cognition, and society.

We are not interested in re-writing press releases from universities. We are not interested in over-generalizing or mischaracterizing research to get more clicks. We are not interested in confirming or disproving ideological beliefs. *We are only interested in accurately reporting research about how humans think and behave.* And we only report on research that has been published in legitimate, peer-reviewed scientific journals.

Our mission is to spread objective information about psychology and neuroscience research. By reporting on a wide variety of important, interesting, and overlooked studies, PsyPost provides the general public, mental health professionals, and academics with free updates on new research — providing everyone with a glimpse into the latest knowledge being uncovered by scientists.

The publication covers the latest discoveries in psychology, psychiatry, neuroscience, sociology and similar fields.

“By healing the internal issues that we can heal as a people, our children don't have to suffer the same agony and pain that we put each other through.” - Bill Duke

“Without understanding your history, you can't get a perspective about the present.” - Bill Duke

4] [Why Men Resist Going to Therapy, And Why We Shouldn't](#) by Sam Blum @ Liferhacker

Men get depressed, suffer anxiety, and battle suicidal thoughts and urges, yet are far less likely than women to seek therapy. While women are more likely to consult with a therapist, men often downplay [their bouts of mental anguish](#), and often go to extreme lengths to avoid tending to their psychological needs, possibly upending their lives and those of loved ones as a result.

This anti-therapy bias is so pervasive that the “men would rather do X than go to therapy” meme has taken off on twitter. “Men,” one tweet suggests, “[will literally learn everything about ancient Rome instead of going to therapy.](#)” Or “[will literally teach you how to open a can of beans for 6 hours.](#)” Or “[will literally get a whole new girlfriend instead of going to therapy.](#)”

The idea that men must be strong in the face of mental distress is deeply entrenched, leading to higher rates of substance abuse, homicide, suicide, and a lower life expectancy than [women in the United States and beyond](#). “We’ve got a society that encourages men to have the answers, and if they don’t, to

be able to figure them out on their own,” says [Justin Lioi, a Licensed Clinical Social Worker in Brooklyn, New York](#). “There’s not a lot of spaces where [men] are given the freedom and support to be ok with uncertainty, to sit with helplessness.”

A lot of men’s reservations about therapy today are rooted in archaic notions of masculinity. The outdated conventional wisdom hoists men up as paragons of emotional stability, who are expected to be wage-winners and protectors of the family. That notion endures, coloring the aversion that lots of men have to talking about their problems in present day.

But as many men tell it, it’s far more destructive to resist seeking treatment than it is to sit down in a room with a therapist and emotionally unload. And there are many ways for men to break down the stigma associated with therapy, so they can ultimately reckon with their inner-turmoil in an effort to grow and become happier.

Not going to therapy is worse - Brenton Chapman, a marketing manager from New York, explains how a snowballing set of problems involving his former marriage, work stress, and “unresolved trauma” put him in the hospital in the summer of 2018. The incident, though traumatic, was ultimately enlightening: It kickstarted his road to recovery through therapy, which he says has been transformative.

But it was Chapman’s once-lifelong personal grudge against therapy that put him in the hospital, he says. He wrote in a direct message to Lifehacker:

“I have lived with Borderline Personality Disorder since I was a teenager, but never sought help or got a diagnosis because I was raised to believe I should be able to fix myself and deal with my own problems. I didn’t believe that therapy could help me, and that going would be an admission of weakness.”

Matthew Weatherly-White, a retired finance professional, had a similar bias against psychological treatment, only to see his life overcome by emotional anguish that seeped into his personal and work relationships. “I blew up a marriage, a business partnership and a role as co-founder in a multi-billion asset management firm,” he says, “all because I thought therapy was for the weak-willed and soft-minded.”

Men who ignore their psychological issues often see their romantic and platonic relationships suffer. “The bulk of my referrals come from a woman in a guy’s life—sometimes she’s even making the first call,” says Lioi, the therapist. “When men constantly put [the emotional burden] on others, the relationship can quickly move to one of co-dependence.”

Often, Lioi says, men relent and sign up for therapy as a last resort, when important relationships are on the verge of collapse. “Sometimes it takes the loss or fear of the loss of a relationship to get someone into the office—a partner who says they’re going to leave, a boss who says that their anger issues need to get under control.”

Men’s lukewarm acceptance of therapy isn’t all that surprising, when considering the American Psychological Association [published its first-ever guidelines for men and boys in 2019](#). Stoicism is internalized by boys from a young age, rendering them ill-prepared to describe their emotions and deal

with their complexity and nuance. As the [APA wrote in 2005](#) of young boys:

“They learn to suppress their emotional responses—like crying or even sad facial expressions—so much that, by the time they are adults, they are genuinely unaware of their emotions and how to describe them in words.”

Without a supportive forum for voicing emotional honesty, men are often lacking outlets for expressing themselves, or worse—paralyzed by the association of weakness that comes with being vulnerable about their problems.

But luckily, the suffering is optional. Though it’s hard to escape generations of socially conditioned myths about emotional vulnerability, there are different ways men can look at therapy so it seems less daunting.

What men say about therapy - “The framing of therapy for men should never be about being broken and needing fixing,” says Edward Clowes, a journalist based in London, England. Clowes, like many men, harbored typical reservations about therapy, worrying more about the implications of talking about his feelings than the harm he might be causing himself.

He tells Lifehacker:

“I didn’t know anyone of my age who had done it, and because of the societal stigmatization of men in therapy, I was a bit worried that I might be seen as defective or effeminate.”

But Clowes found the treatment profound, resonating with immediate impact. “It clicked immediately,” he says. “I had the most incredible therapist, who was exactly what I needed at that moment in my life. Any fears about being seen as weak, or broken, had dissolved by the end of the first hour.”

As he now attends counseling weekly, Clowes offers a metaphor that might help other men chip away at the harmful associations that prevent them from seeking help.

“Men should look at therapy the same way they look at any other act of self-improvement. Like going to the gym but for your mental health, instead of your physical health.”

One way to ease the oft-intimidating burden of the first visit with a therapist, is to start with telehealth sessions, which have understandably become the norm for many counselors during the pandemic. “Online counseling has actually helped a lot of people who would find going into an office to talk about their issues too vulnerable,” says Lioi. “Tele-therapy means you can be in your own space and there’s some distance which often allows for more honesty and vulnerability.”

Another way to dispense with the societal stigma is to hear how therapy has helped various men who were emotionally troubled before they began counseling. Danny, a PR professional, says his therapist “is good at steering me in the right direction in ways that I don’t know I want[ed].” After spending most of last year in counseling, he says, “I wouldn’t be who I am today in 2021 if not for how I spent 2020, actively working on ensuring that I remained intact and growing.”

Of course, therapy doesn't always work so seamlessly; it can take time to [find the right counselor](#) whose methods work for your goals and needs. There's also the financial burden imposed by seeking therapy in the United States, so definitely do the homework to find out which school of therapy appeals to you, and if your chosen counselor accepts insurance, or will work with you on different payment options.

But once you do find a good fit, the net result of working on your mental health can be euphoric. Clowes, who feels "light as a feather" after his sessions are done, is already imploring other men in his life to explore the possibility of therapy.

"I'm only scratching the surface of my own journey through counseling, but I'm encouraged to note that one of my friends recently started seeing a therapist for the first time," he says. "I hope that I have helped make it a fraction more normal, and less daunting for him."

With more men attempting to normalize the act of seeking counseling, it offers a hopeful new future in which the arcane stigmas—and the Twitter jokes—slowly drift away.

[More articles by Sam Blum](#)

4a] [Lifehacker](#) – Do everything better

"It's not forgetting that heals. It's remembering." - Amy Greene, *Bloodroot*

"People are trapped in history and history is trapped in them." - James Baldwin

5] [Northern Wildflower](#) by Catherine Lafferty @ Fernwood Publishing

This is the story of how a young northern girl picked herself up out of the rough and polished herself off like the diamond that she is in the land of the midnight sun.

Northern Wildflower is the beautifully written and powerful memoir of Catherine Lafferty. With startling honesty and a distinct, occasionally humorous, voice, Lafferty tells her story of being a Dene woman growing up in a small northern Canadian mining town and her struggles with discrimination, poverty, addiction, love and loss. Focusing on the importance of family ties, education, spiritualism, cultural identity, health and happiness, the relentless pursuit of success and the courage to speak the truth, Lafferty's words bring cultural awareness and relativity to Indigenous and non-Indigenous readers alike, giving insight into the real issues many Indigenous women face.

5a] "[We should be coming out and staking our claim](#)" An Indigenous woman on reclaiming her land, identity in Yellowknife | PBS NewsHour Weekend – video 5:54 minutes

We've been bringing you a series of short stories from the Indigenous community in Yellowknife, Canada exploring alcohol use, addiction, resilience and healing. The "Turning Points" project, from the [Global Reporting Center](#), is a series produced, directed and authored by Indigenous people who wanted to share their stories. This is Catherine Lafferty's — a story of native language, education, family, abuse, alcoholism, and coming home.

To learn more and to see the full series of stories, visit [The Turning Points project website on GlobalReportingCentre.org](http://TheTurningPointsprojectwebsiteonGlobalReportingCentre.org).

5b] [Fernwood Publishing](#) - “In an era when the restructuring of capitalism seems to be threatening to erase many of the gains that have been made by the oppressed in society, we think that our books have a part to play in bucking the trend.” – Errol Sharpe, Fernwood Publishing

Fernwood Publishing and our literary imprint, Roseway, publish critical books that inform, enlighten and challenge. We are political publishers in that our books acknowledge, confront and contest intersecting forms of oppression and exploitation. We believe that in publishing books that challenge the status quo and imagine new ways forward we participate in the creation of a more socially just world. We are not afraid to take risks in this regard and are proud to publish those individuals or ideas that too often go unheard. While corporate giants act to silence dissent, we act to give dissent a voice. As an independent Canadian publisher, we also emphasize, though not exclusively, Canadian authors and the Canadian context. The quality of the books we publish and the relationships with our authors demonstrate that every member of our small team is dedicated to the publishing and political goals of social justice.

“Progress and healing involves seeing every person as not so different from ourselves.” - Bryant H. McGill

“We do a very good job at fixing broken bodies but not such a great job at healing broken minds with our returning veterans.” - Michael McCaul

6] [HUG ME Ink](#) - a nonprofit organization whose mission is to advocate and educate on mental health awareness through the arts will be publishing, PEER INK: A Magazine for Peers by Peers. We're looking for original poems, stories, articles or art work for upcoming issues. Everyone is welcome to submit! This upcoming issue will be our longest issue...it's our May issue..the theme for May will be Mental Health Awareness Month.

Mission - The mission of HUG ME Ink is to advocate and educate on mental health awareness and bullying prevention through the arts.

Vision - We envision a world that inspires people in recovery to live fulfilling lives through their own creativity.

1. SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

If you are interested In submitting, please adhere to the following guidelines:

ARTICLES & STORIES: Send as a Word doc and on any topic you feel would benefit peers to include wellness, health, peer specialist movement, etc.

ART WORK: Send art work (photography, drawing, etc) as JPEG or PNG file. Please include your name, age, city and state.

POEMS: Send as a Word doc on any topic

With all submissions, please include a short bio. Photo (optional) Please send to hugmeink@gmail.com

HUG ME Ink is a peer-led nonprofit organization increasing mental health awareness & recovery sustainability through the arts.

PEER INK: Our Peer-to-Peer Wellness Magazine. This magazine includes articles, stories, artwork, photography and more about peer support, empowerment, wellness, and mental health.

“Healing takes courage, and we all have courage, even if we have to dig a little to find it.” - Tori Amos

“We need 4 hugs a day for survival. We need 8 hugs a day for maintenance. We need 12 hugs a day for growth.” - Virginia Satir

7] [Men's Story Project Story Project Events](#) ~ **MenHealing**

1 in 6 men experience sexual victimization in their lifetime. That's 29,000,000 males in the United States alone. The statistics are astounding, but there are stories behind the statistics.

MenHealing Presents The Men's Story Project – Survivors' Healing Journeys

In this public storytelling and community dialogue series, twelve male survivors of sexual victimization from across the United States will publicly share powerful stories about their journeys of healing, with a live online audience.

FREE registration is now open for the four live events. Each event will feature six bold storytellers, followed by an audience-presenter dialogue.

These events will take place LIVE online, via Zoom. ASL interpretation will be provided.

Advance registration is required for each event you'd like to attend.

We look forward to seeing you there! [Register Now](#) Still time for the Encore Presentations

[Thursday 4/1 Part I \(encore\)](#) 4 – 6 p.m. PT / 7 – 9 p.m. ET

[Tuesday 3/30 Part II \(encore\)](#) 4 – 6 p.m. PT / 7 – 9 p.m. ET

Part I Presenters: Michael Guinn, Judson, Andrew, Mike Davis, Jon Gilgoff, Kevin Flood

Part II Presenters: David, Kevin O'Donnell, Michael Lain, Mike Chapman, Jeff Brandt, Rob

[Faces of MenHealing](#) ~Video Series - Weekend of Recovery Alumni

7a] [Help for Male Survivors of Sexual Assault & Abuse](#) ~ **MenHealing** conducts healing workshops for men, age 18 and older, who have experienced sexual abuse or sexual assault as a child and/or as an adult. Since 2001 we have served more than 1,649 men through 83 Weekend of Recovery and Day of Recovery Events.

Our Vision - MenHealing holds a deep commitment to expand services to underserved populations of male survivors of sexual victimization and to ensure that resources are invested and managed with attention to long-term sustainability.

Our Mission - We are a 501(c)(3) non-profit, tax- exempt organization dedicated to providing help for for male survivors of sexual assault, sexual abuse and sexual trauma during childhood or as adults. **MenHealing** ensures the sustainability of the Weekend of Recovery program.

“One of the most sincere forms of respect is actually listening to what another has to say.” - Bryant H. McGill

“An exchange of empathy provides an entry point for a lot of people to see what healing feels like.” - Tarana Burke

8] [It's Ok That You're Not Okay](#) by Megan Divine

Refuge In Grief - Some things cannot be fixed. But they *can* be carried.

It's OK That You're Not OK isn't your typical book on loss. It's a whole new way to look at grief – and love.

Many people who have suffered a loss feel judged, dismissed, and misunderstood by a culture that wants to “solve” grief. Megan writes, “Grief no more needs a solution than love needs a solution.” Through stories, research, life tips, and creative and mindfulness-based practices, she offers a unique guide through an experience we all must face—in our personal lives, in the lives of those we love, and in the wider world. She debunks the culturally prescribed goal of returning to a normal, “happy” life, replacing it with a far healthier middle path, one that invites us to build a life alongside grief rather than seeking to overcome it. In this compelling and heartfelt book, you'll learn:

- Why well-meaning advice, therapy, and spiritual wisdom so often end up making it harder for people in grief
- How challenging the myths of grief—doing away with stages, timetables, and unrealistic ideals about how grief should unfold—allows us to accept grief as a mystery to be honored instead of a problem to solve
- Practical guidance for managing stress, improving sleep, and decreasing anxiety without trying to “fix” your pain
- How to help the people you love—with essays to teach us the best skills, checklists, and suggestions for supporting and comforting others through the grieving process
-

It's OK That You're Not OK is a book for grieving people, those who love them, and all those seeking to love themselves—and each other—better. Order your copy now.

Cool note: want to be part of a secret team, getting this book to those who need it most? Learn [more at this link](#).

I want to tell you about this neat thing we're doing over here in the [Grief Revolution](#) community. It's

called Love Letters, and it's the coolest, sweetest, random act of love and magic that we've come up with so far – and I want you to be part of it.

Watch the video below to find out how it all got started, and how you can be part of the invisible force of love out there in the world, making things better for random strangers you won't ever meet. Sound intriguing? Check out the video. It really is the neatest thing, and it's easy to take part in this Grief Revolution love letter campaign.

[Want to be part of a team spreading love & support in the world?](#) - YouTube 10:41 minutes

I'm Megan - a psychotherapist, writer, grief advocate, & communication expert dedicated to helping you live through things you never thought you'd face.

I'm proud to have created an online community and resource that helps people survive some of the hardest experiences of their lives.

Through my book, podcasts, and online courses, I help people learn the skills they need to love themselves – and each other – better.

My normal old life was pretty deep: professionally and personally, I spent most of my time under the surface of things. I helped people explore their inner worlds, hear their own hearts, find truth and meaning in their lives.

And then, on a beautiful, ordinary, fine summer day in 2009, I watched my partner drown. Matt was strong, fit, and healthy – just three months from his fortieth birthday. It was random, unexpected, and it tore my world apart. [Learn more](#)

“Let us always meet each other with smile, for the smile is the beginning of love.” - Mother Teresa

“The most powerful weapon on earth is the human soul on fire.” - Ferdinand Foch

8a] [Grief Doesn't Have Five Stages](#) by Suchandrika Chakrabarti @ [The Outline](#)

Despite what we want to believe, there is no linear path through loss.

If you haven't experienced the death of someone close — someone so important to your life that the loss left you hollowed — then you haven't yet found out what your imagination is capable of.

Grief is like an impenetrable force field around the person left behind, the person who used to be like you (pro-tip: they're not really like you anymore; acknowledge that).

Inside it, the mourning person is both incredibly lonely and never alone. “You run through me unceasingly, like blood, like my own thoughts,” the writer John Niven says in [this Father's Day letter to his late dad](#). A beautifully expressed, completely private moment between the two, but only really happening inside one person's mind.

“A lot of grief feels like madness and is crazy-making,” says Julia Samuel, psychotherapist and author

of [Grief Works](#). Death is an enormous concept to grapple with, and, yes, it can feel like you're losing your mind. Mourning is inscrutable for those who have yet to experience it; no wonder we try to impose a linear order onto it. Both the grieving and the witnesses to grief feel the need to map a way out.

You've heard of them, the five stages of grief: denial, anger, bargaining, depression, acceptance. You've seen [that Simpsons clip](#). They sound faster than the 12 Steps, less prescriptive than the 10 Commandments, but much less fun than the Rule of Threes. Unfortunately, I can tell you this is not at all how grief works. [Read the entire article](#)

Suchandrika Chakrabarti spends her time writing, teaching and on Twitter. You can find her there [@SuchandrikaC](#).

8b] [The Outline](#) is a new kind of publication founded by journalists and storytellers. We want to help you understand the world better, feed your curiosity, challenge your assumptions, and show you something new.

We're dedicated to telling the right stories for right now, and our coverage is focused on the increasingly complex confluence of culture, power, and technology.

"Immature love says: 'I love you because I need you.' Mature love says 'I need you because I love you.'" - Erich Fromm

"Nothing is so healing as the human touch." - Bobby Fischer

9] [How Your Diet Affects Your Mental Health](#) by Michael Easter

What you eat changes how you feel. These foods are the best for your brain.

Active people tend to overthink what food is doing for their body—Is keto good for endurance? What's the perfect post-training macro spread? Butter or no butter in my coffee?—but underthink what it's doing for their mind. Yet you've probably noticed that what you eat impacts what's going on upstairs. We've all devoured a cheat meal and afterward felt off, not just physically but also mentally and emotionally. And new research suggests that the connection between diet and mental well-being is a little more nuanced than scientists once thought.

[Earlier studies](#) suggest what you might expect: eating junk isn't great for your brain. People who consume plenty of fruit, vegetables, and fish seem to be less at risk of depression compared to those who favor fatty meats, processed carbs, and sweets. But emerging research shows that even among healthy diets, some might be better for mental health than others. In a recent review published in [Molecular Psychology](#), researchers analyzed 41 studies that sought to quantify the impact of various diets on clinical depression. The analysis accounted for a variety of eating plans including the Mediterranean diet, the [DASH diet](#), and the [Healthy Eating Index](#).

The winner? The [Mediterranean diet](#), which according to the [American Journal of Clinical Nutrition](#) features abundant fruits and vegetables, olive oil, dairy products like yogurt and cheese, cereals, beans, fish and poultry, and moderate amounts of red meat and wine. (Sometimes it seems to be the best diet

for just about everything: it [may help you live longer](#), and it recently won the top spot in an [exhaustive, expert-led analysis](#) of 40 diets based on metrics like being heart-healthy, plant heavy, and easy to adhere to.)

Drew Ramsey, an associate professor of psychiatry at Columbia University and the author of [Eat Complete](#), says the Mediterranean diet may have a positive effect on mental health because it helps fight inflammation. “Molecules that are responsible for inflammation influence things like your mood and energy levels,” says Ramsey. “For example, inflammation gets in the way of the brain’s self-repair process. Many antidepressant medications are also powerful anti-inflammatories that spur brain growth.” The diet may also improve your gut microbiome, which [research](#) suggests influences depression.

But don’t purge your refrigerator or medicine cabinet quite yet. Observational nutrition studies, where researchers ask participants to recall their eating patterns, can be unreliable, says Trevor Kashey, an Ohio-based registered dietitian. “People lie, don’t know how to track their intake, and have terrible memories,” he says.

More importantly, *every* diet in the study showed some positive impact on depression. “When we begin to dissect which particular healthy diet is optimal, it misses the point,” says Ramsey. “The big take home for individuals and for our mental health care systems is that food matters.” The study itself concludes that “adhering to a healthy diet, in particular a traditional Mediterranean diet, or avoiding a pro-inflammatory diet appears to confer some protection against depression.”

To that end, Ramsey recently conducted a separate [study](#) that looked at which foods are highest in the 12 nutrients associated with preventing or relieving depression. Low levels of [folate and B12](#), for example, are associated with depression, and the symptoms are often relieved by taking in more of those vitamins. The [full list of foods](#) with purported mental-health benefits is expansive, but vegetables, organ meats (like liver), fruits, and seafood took the top four categories.

No single food has magical powers, however. “We want to shift [the conversation away] from singular foods and diets and into talking about food categories,” says Ramsey. His study, for example, found that spinach, Swiss chard, kale, and lettuce contain the highest antidepressant nutrients per serving, but that it didn’t really matter which leafy green you ate—what matters is that leafy greens are a regular part of your food intake.

“As a clinical psychiatrist, it’s intriguing to think about food interventions and how they could shift an entire organism,” says Ramsey. “What happens if I get someone using food for a more diverse microbiome, lower overall inflammation, and more connection to a sense of self-care? Those are all great things for someone struggling with mental and brain health.”

These findings could have a big impact. [Worldwide](#), 4 percent of men and 7 percent of women suffer from depression, and the disorder can affect all facets of life, including productivity and athletic performance. Nutrition is just one piece of the mental-health puzzle, but it has researchers excited. “I really am a big fan of responsibly using medications and effective talk therapy to treat depression,” says Ramsey. “But [focusing on] diet allows us to empower patients to think about their mental health as tied to nutrition.”

“Awareness is the first step in healing.” - Dean Ornish

“Trauma doesn't make people stronger, kinder, or more empathetic. It's the person and their efforts in healing. Stop giving credit to the trauma rather than the actual person that worked so hard to heal.” - Jillian Turecki

10] [Brain fog is a real thing](#). Well-being columnist Jennifer Moss sheds some light on it - CBC News

Prolonged stress and chronic fight-or-flight state can override ability to focus

Are you struggling to tackle simple projects or feel like it's hard to organize your thoughts?

Do you open your laptop and wonder, "where do I start"?

If yes, then you could be one of the millions experiencing "brain fog" – a byproduct of chronic stress that has dramatically increased over the past year.

Other symptoms of brain fog include:

- You feel like you're searching for your words.
- You have difficulty making up your mind and making small decisions becomes a big deal.
- You lose your focus quickly – you go to the fridge for milk but, when you get there, wonder why you're standing in front of an open fridge.

Brain fog can also make you feel extremely mentally fatigued, which reduces productivity. Take, for example, something you used to do, something that was a simple part of your day and easy to accomplish. Now, it suddenly feels exhausting.

For me, tidying the kitchen has become a Herculean task. I mean, it's a task few of us actively enjoy at the best of times, but this year – it just feels so taxing.

Contributors to brain fog - The reason we're struggling like this, according to Dr. Lily Brown, professor of psychology at the University of Pennsylvania, may be because our fight or flight is in overdrive lately. When our limbic system is consistently triggered by stressful information or events it overrides the executive functioning part of our brain, which is where rational and clear decision-making occurs. The more that override happens, the more we struggle to focus, motivate, think clearly, or control impulses.

We also see brain fog show up when we're engaging in less physical activity than usual during the day and/or experiencing poor sleep. Both of these deficits also happen to be a result of stress.

In previous columns, I've discussed how lack of sleep can be massively disruptive to our well-being. One study found that after just one all-nighter, subjects who participated in a simulated driving experience drove similarly to people with a blood alcohol level of .10 per cent (.08 is the drunk driving limit in Canada).

According to physician Dr. David Greuner, who has led several sleep studies, "In a nutshell, sleep consolidates memory; a lot of the information you take in while you're awake is processed while you're sleeping so not only is your memory affected, but your ability to solve problems is also hindered, in addition to your alertness, attention, concentration and judgment. Your brain isn't as efficient as it should be."

A 2013 study at the University of California, Berkeley found that during sleep, your memories are moved from short-term holding to long-term storage. When you get poor quality sleep, those memories don't move to the prefrontal cortex for storage and they're forgotten. In other words, after a bad sleep, we don't retain any of the information or learning we've acquired the day before.

Vicious cycle of stress and brain fog - Poor sleep may be a result of stress, but right now it's also being exacerbated by the massive shift to working from home and video conferencing.

Where people used to get up and walk around the office to chat with co-workers or go for a walking meeting, many are now sitting at desks all day, on video conferencing calls, becoming extremely sedentary.

And, a decrease in physical activity increases poor sleep because we aren't tiring ourselves out physically during the day – so brain fog becomes a vicious cycle.

Recent evidence shows that chronic stress and the resulting brain fog can lead people to experience depression, weight gain, an increase in alcohol consumption, and feelings of isolation.

When we're tired from being on conference calls, or tired from brain fog, it may be hard to motivate ourselves to get on the phone to call a friend, so we disconnect from others. This increases our feelings of loneliness – and there's that vicious cycle again.

How to manage brain fog at work - The workplace is where we're seeing the impacts of brain fog most clearly: On average, in the past year people have added 48 minutes to their workday. Trying to keep up with productivity demands at work when it's hard to stay on top of those demands because we're unfocused or because work takes way more effort than normal increases the risk of burnout. That's why we need to manage the causes of brain fog.

First, we need to reduce the amount of time we're spending on video conferencing calls. In the past year, meetings have increased by 24 per cent, on average. So, communicate with your peers, manager or team and start asking:

- Is this meeting necessary?
- Does it have to be a video call?
- Does it have to be longer than 30 minutes?
- Who absolutely needs to attend?
- Can we turn off our cameras or get on a call?
- Can we start the meetings with a check-in: How are people feeling? Are they back-to-back all day?
- Can the meeting leader set a timer to let people who are booked back-to-back jump off 5–10

minutes early?

We need to get better at questioning practices that were used for solving immediate problems in an acute situation – we're now a year into the pandemic. This – working from home and video conferencing – is how we're working now and will be for some time, so it's important to figure out ways to make it more sustainable.

How to manage brain fog in daily life - To address brain fog effectively we need to identify the cause.

Ask yourself:

- Is the source of stress temporary — like a big project at work — or is it more work in general?
- Am I experiencing a challenge to work/life balance – more chores and life tasks to juggle while working?
- Is my diet or alcohol consumption contributing?
- Is this feeling of brain fog persistent both in times of stress and times of calm? If it's there in times of calm, it's important to see your doctor because it could be a sign of something more serious.

If we're pretty certain the cause of our brain fog is a year of unrelenting stress, here are a few ways to tackle it:

1. Of course, more sleep and exercise, less drinking and overeating. This recipe is common knowledge but sometimes, during a stressful time, hard to manage.
2. If you want to do something right now and – as I like to say – control the controllables, start by taking just 15 minutes for something you love. That could mean doing something you think is totally frivolous. There's one caveat: It must be done with zero guilt. Remind yourself that you're giving a very fried brain a much-needed chance to recharge. To optimize our brains, we need to take short breaks throughout the day.
3. Develop a stress management plan:
 - Set boundaries around time for self-care.
 - Analyze your schedule: Is there anything you can de-prioritize? Be ruthless. It's easy to say that everything is a priority, but that's never the case.
 - Come up with your "three ways to manage stressful situations anywhere." Your three things may include breathing exercises, or mindfulness – just make sure they're things you can do anywhere.

Look forward to spring - Another factor that plays into brain fog is weather. So, in the middle of winter it can feel a bit hard to motivate ourselves to make changes.

But remember: Spring is near – just over a month away. The increased light will clear away some of those cobwebs. A little hope can go a long way toward clearing our minds.

[Jennifer Moss](#) is an international public speaker, award-winning author, and UN Global Happiness Committee Member.

“Without knowledge action is useless and knowledge without action is futile.” - Abu Bakr

“Just don't give up trying to do what you really want to do. Where there is love and inspiration, I don't think you can go wrong.” - Ella Fitzgerald

11] [Our Stories Matter](#): Call for Proposals and Submissions of Prose, Poetry, Art, and Music - [Hearing Voices Network USA](#)

We are seeking MORE poetry and personal narratives of 5000 words or less from voice-hearers and visionaries from the United States! Thanks to those who have contributed so far!

Visual art and music can also be submitted. The due date for submissions is May 31st, 2021. Please submit to info@hearingvoicesusa.org

The title of the book will be **Our Stories Matter: Voices, Visions, and Lives**

12] [Stages of Healing](#) By Eli Weintraub Maurx, Author/Artist - Weave Inspiration On Every Horizon

After many years of working independently and with groups in therapeutic settings I noticed a trend of stages we shared in our healing through art. The following are what I identified and experienced.

Hey folks, this sharing warrants a visit to her website to view the stunning artwork. MS

“We all strive for balance, often moving to extremes to find ourselves somewhere in the middle where we can sustainably exist in optimal inspiration. Working toward balance takes a lot of ingredients. We need courage, reflection, attention, action, and a push-and-pull relationship between effort and relaxation.” - Tara Stiles

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

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 Facebook Page](#)

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[Michael Skinner Music](#) - Hope, Healing, & Help for Trauma, Abuse & Mental Health - Music, Resources & Advocacy

Live performance of "Joy", "Brush Away Your Tears" & more @ [Michael Skinner – You Tube](#)

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