



Healing the Mind, Body & Spirit 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 May 2022

Hi Folks,

The month of May recognizes Mental Health Awareness and National Trauma Awareness - very cool.

On that note, I'd like to share a few resources that I had the honor of participating with that address trauma, abuse and mental health.

The Brave and Unbroken Podcast is brand new – recorded in March and aired in April. The other two resources are video clips shared at my You Tube Channel.

Please note, I am currently working on my You Tube Channel to share more resources, music and conversation – I have recorded several new videos and hope to have them posted soon. A gentle plug, please consider clicking the [Subscribe button](#) and the [Bell icon](#) to receive future notifications as new content is posted. At some point I will be hosting interviews with fellow advocates. All of the videos will be sharing *Hope, Healing & Help*. In the interim, I have create several [Playlists](#) of the videos already shared – Having Fun With Music, Podcasts & Interviews, Songs about Life, Love & Loss, Peer Support and Healing Trauma, Abuse & Mental Health.

1] [Brave and Unbroken Podcast with Michael Skinner](#) - 20 minutes • Brave And Unbroken Project

Using humor and compassion, Michael takes his listeners on a journey from child victimization through the mental health, legal and medical systems to his current career as a successful musician and award-winning speaker.

Michael offers trauma survivors hope, insight and motivation. He gives professionals a rare opportunity to learn about their system from the inside out, to see what helps trauma survivors and what doesn't.

2] [Michael Skinner - trauma healing with Pat Deegan](#) - YouTube 5:50 minutes -

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

3] [Michael Skinner - Empowerment, Voice and Choice](#) – YouTube 2:46 minutes

Video clip from, SAMHSA's Trauma-Informed Approach: Key Assumptions and Principles

“The strongest principal of growth lies in human choice.” - George Eliot

Thank you, Michael

“If the last two years have taught us anything, it's to cherish our relationships.” - Billie Jean King

Making friends later in life is really rare, and really rewarding. - Bruce Springsteen

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12] Free Online Therapist & Counseling - 7 Cups

“The reason why you need emotional support is because it's important for survivors to be heard. To be understood. To be able to express yourself without fearing criticism or harsh judgment. To be validated for your pain, suffering, and loss. For others to be there for you to encourage you, especially if you're having a bad day or feeling triggered.” - Dana Arcuri

1] [How 15 minutes of mental health hygiene can change your whole day](#) – by [Madeline Holcombe](#) - Writer, CNN Science and Wellness

You brush your teeth twice a day to keep plaque from building up and see a dentist regularly for extra maintenance. It's just good hygiene.

But how often are you practicing mental hygiene?

Whether you have a specific concern or are just trying to get through your day a little better, taking about 15 minutes each morning to maintain your mental health is something everyone could benefit from, said Broderick Sawyer, a clinical psychologist in Louisville, Kentucky.

"This is the mental health equivalent of brushing your teeth before you need a root canal," he said.

The hygiene comes in the form of lowering levels of cortisol, the main stress hormone. An intentional daily practice for stress relief not only makes you feel better today -- studies suggest it could improve your well-being later in life.

Increased cortisol levels can lead to a number of physical health complications, according to [research from 2020](#). And [a study from 2016](#) found that emotional regulation has been shown to improve health resilience in older age.

Sawyer has culled together a method for mental health hygiene. He explained why it should be part of your routine and how you can build it into your life.

Yes, you do have 15 minutes - If you are stressed and overwhelmed, carving out 15 minutes in your morning for relaxation sounds like just another hurdle on your to-do list. That addition, however, will make the rest of the list easier to get through, Sawyer said.

"It's not about I don't have time, you have time for a lot of things," he said. "If we really can (practice mindfulness) throughout the day, then our mental health needs less of our energy, less of our juice."

Taking time to reset your mental space at the start means that the stressors of the day aren't piling on top of an already overwhelmed system.

And if you start the day stressed, that is often the baseline you come back to the rest of the day, Sawyer said. When you start with a clear, relaxed mind, you have a calm reference point to which you can return.

"Having a practice of mental health hygiene is like cleaning your mirror and looking into it, and you

look in it and know what is and is not you," Sawyer said.

That understanding of what a relaxed baseline feels like and what brings you away from that can help you have compassion for yourself and others who may also get anxious or upset, he added.

"When we do these things every day, we essentially 'practice feeling happy,'" Sawyer said. "Then in turn, this can make us feel more confident when stressful life situations come up -- because we do a good job nourishing ourselves."

Here's how to build in your daily practice.

1. Try new activities - The first step in improving your mental health hygiene is experimenting with different activities -- anything that brings calm and lowers cortisol, Sawyer said.

"It's just learning to treat and cultivate that inner space with awareness," he added

To start, set aside 15 minutes in the morning every day as time to slow down and intentionally focus on your inner well-being. The things you fill that time with could be ones you do every day anyway but made more relaxing -- like drinking your morning coffee slowly with some deep breaths or swapping talk radio for music you enjoy on your commute, Sawyer said.

But it also could help to switch things up, like sitting outside, going for a walk or stretching, he added.

The important thing is to continue trying new activities until you find something that works for you -- and don't be discouraged if it takes some time to see the benefit. [Read the entire article](#)

"Watch your thoughts, they become your words; watch your words, they become your actions; watch your actions, they become your habits; watch your habits, they become your character; watch your character, it becomes your destiny." - Lao Tzu

"Children must be taught how to think, not what to think." - Margaret Mead

2] [Fountain House Spotlight: Finding Courage to Break Free](#) by Phillip Williams-Cooke

Growing up, I always had a vision of leaving my hometown, and making something of myself. I had big dreams, and in my mind, I was dead set on doing whatever it took to get out of the turbulent situation I was living in.

When I was 18, I finally had that chance. I left Birmingham, Alabama and eventually found myself in Kentucky, Ohio, and New York City pursuing my education and career. But it wasn't easy. My childhood, although there were good times, was clouded by traumatic events and abuse. I wasn't diagnosed with Bipolar Type I Disorder until my mid-30s, but that's where everything took root. It has been really hard on me but I'm constantly working through a lot of the emotional trauma still to this day.

As a black gay man growing up in the South, it was taboo even to talk about being gay, and it was especially taboo to talk about mental health. I endured a lot of mockery and bullying from family and

some peers. But over time, I became comfortable in my own skin. When it comes to my story, I like to focus on resilience, and the fact that I've broken through. Because the truth is, that is what defines me. Not my trauma, not my childhood – but the fact that I made it through. And now, I find meaning in my life by helping others – especially those who are BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) and LGBTQ – do the same. I have so much love and compassion for anyone who has gone through something similar.

When it comes to mental health, there's a lot of fear and mistrust amongst the African American community. There's also a lot more stigma. As a community, we still have in the back of our minds a lot of the historical and systemic racism that has happened in our country for over 4,000 years, and the stress and trauma of that has been passed down from generation to generation, which has led to many mental health challenges. There's also, of course, socioeconomic barriers and a general lack of access to quality medical and mental health care. Historically, African Americans in general haven't had an equal voice. People in my community still carry that fear with them when they seek mental health services and supports. They oftentimes wonder, will I be listened to? Will people understand me? Will I be misdiagnosed?

I feel that it's so important for people of color to have support from someone they can relate to and trust. That's a big part of why I decided to get involved in peer support work. In 2020, I became a Peer Specialist at Fountain House. I facilitate groups each week in the evening/weekend programs, along with special programming on holidays. Apart from that, I provide consultation for the in-house peer services, communications, and more at Fountain House. I'm a consultant for mental health agencies across New York State – including the New York Association of Psychiatric Rehabilitation Services, the National Alliance on Mental Illness, and the NYS Office of Mental Health. I'm also proudly one of the first peers to serve as a board member with the NY Association of Black Psychologists.

I'm so grateful that as a peer support worker, and as an advocate, I can lead by example, and tell people, "You're not alone." So many people across the country are struggling with their mental health, and [peer support](#) can be the key to unlocking what's stopping them from getting help. I don't see a lot of people of color in the world of peer support, primarily because I don't think they know it exists, or are turned off by it because of misinformation and a history of trauma in the mental health field. Having more people of color involved in peer support can really break down barriers and go a long way in helping to heal ourselves from within. There's something so liberating about talking to someone who looks like me and has gone through what I have gone through.

I'm so grateful for the peer support movement. It's a movement that started back in the 1970s, built around the idea that people with lived experiences can help each other heal. It brings humanity to everyone who is struggling and suffering. [Read the entire article](#)

2a] [Fountain House](#) - Fountain House is a national mental health nonprofit fighting to improve health, increase opportunity, and end social and economic isolation for people most impacted by mental illness.

Drawing on more than 200 community-based social rehabilitative programs inspired by Fountain House and known as clubhouses - to reflect an insistence on belonging and acceptance - in nearly 40 states and with our more than 60,000 members, we are leading a national movement for the dignity and rights of people with serious mental illness.

“When it comes to my story, I like to focus on resilience, and the fact that I've broken through. Because the truth is, that is what defines me.” - Phillip Williams-Cooke

“It is only when you learn to be present and available with non-judgment and compassionately hold space for the wounded and broken fragments of yourself, that you are able to truly hold space for another.” - Markus William Kasunich

3] [Depression is not sadness](#) by Rebecca Waechter, Artist

An acquaintance of mine wrote the following poem, and I found it inspiring enough to create a painting from it.

Depression is not sadness;
it is being buried in dreams
of anxiety and pain
It is staring at the
same
page
of a book
and not even hearing the rain

Depression is not sadness;
it is wanting someone there
but having nothing to say
It is not feeling the wind
on a cool breezy day

It is staring at the ceiling,
watching the fan ocillate
It is face down in the couch
under a boulder's weight

Depression is not sadness;
when you feel like a burden,
no one can hear you cry
And you wouldn't have an answer
if they asked you why
The shower stays
bone
dry

The sun rises and sets
behind the curtains you close
The moon looks down on you
with its soft, milky glow
Caresses your hair

and all the oil it's grown

Depression is not sadness;
it is waiting without a clock
and existing is a chore
It is being chained
to the bottom
of the ocean floor

Going up
or going down
on the same elevator
Depression is not sadness
Do I end it all now,
or later?

C. L. J.

Anyone who has experienced depression knows the accuracy of these feelings. This poem really moved me because I could relate to it. Depression is something I experienced when my husband and I PCS'd (military moved) to Florida. Several things did not work out as expected including a continued delay in my ability to get my counseling license. Everything compounded leaving me with typical depression symptoms. I couldn't concentrate on simple tasks (think vegetables burning in a pan?). I lost my appetite (not just because of the vegetables). I felt hopeless and felt like crying pretty frequently, but I wouldn't say that I ever felt sad. If I hadn't been through the education and training to become a therapist I probably wouldn't have known it was depression until much later.

I had a few sessions with a therapist, and hashed out my feelings of regret for not being able to continue my therapy career. It took a little time, but I accepted that I wasn't supposed to be a therapist right then or maybe ever. I've learned over the years that things happen for a reason, and patience usually reveals the reason why. I poured my time into my first love... art. It has since blossomed into this great side-career where I get to make someone's day, and create what I love. [Read the entire article & see her art!](#)

"It's important that we undo the long-time narrative that depression=sadness. It's destructive and can keep people from seeking therapy because they can't recognize what is going on. At the very least, they may feel completely overwhelmed with symptoms by the time they decide to seek help." - Rebecca Waechter

"The most profound thing we have to offer our own children is our own healing." - Anne Lamott

4] [Compassion for Voices: a tale of courage and hope](#) - YouTube 5:12 minutes - Eleanor Longden, narrator [her book - [Learning from the Voices in My Head](#)]

A film about the compassionate approach to relating with voices, with potential for use as a therapeutic, educational, and de-stigmatising tool.

This project is a Cultural Institute at King's project led by Dr Charlie Heriot-Maitland, Department of Psychology at King's, in collaboration with Kate Anderson, independent animation director. It is part of the Cultural Institute at King's Collaborative Innovation Scheme for Early Career Researchers.

4a] [Compassion for Voices](#) – Compassionate approaches to voices and other experiences

“There is hope, even when your brain tells you there isn't.” - John Green

“You look at me and cry; everything hurts. I hold you and whisper: but everything can heal.” - Rupri Kaur

5] [The Compassionate Mind](#) - What is compassion?

For thousands of years, compassion has been seen as the antidote to suffering and harmfulness. Research has now revealed how our capacities for compassion evolved, how it works in our bodies and our brains, and when cultivated, is a source of courage and wisdom to address suffering.

The definition of compassion used by the Compassionate Mind Foundation is *“...a sensitivity to suffering in self and others with a commitment to try to alleviate and prevent it.”*

Compassionate courage lies in the willingness to see into the nature and causes of suffering - in ourselves, others and the human condition.

The Compassionate Mind Foundation was founded as an international charity in 2006 by Professor Paul Gilbert and colleagues including Prof Deborah Lee, Dr Mary Welford, Dr Chris Irons, Dr Ken Goss, Dr Ian Lowens, Dr Chris Gillespie, Diane Woollands and Jean Gilbert. We believe that one of the greatest challenges facing humanity is how to stimulate compassionate ways of thinking and problem solving for the benefit of all.

The Compassionate Mind Foundation promotes an evolutionary and bio-psycho-social informed approach to compassion which now forms the basis of a psychotherapy ([CFT](#)) and [Compassionate Mind Training](#).

The last 15 years have seen an expanding evidence base for a compassion focused approach to the alleviation of mental health difficulties and promoting well-being. It is now being used internationally in various settings including hospitals, prisons, schools and businesses.

Our Mission and Aim -To promote well-being through the scientific understanding and application of compassion via:

↑
Liaising with those with specific interests in the scientific study of compassion and its underlying processes, and facilitate communication and interchange between them.

Supporting research and teaching of the evolution informed compassion focused approach to human difficulties.

Facilitating open discussion on how to further promote a compassionate focus in many domains of

human activity.

Engaging in activities and raise funds to support the work and aims of the Foundation.

The CMF supports research and teaching of an evolution and contemplative informed compassion focused approach to human difficulties. We provide workshops, conferences, and a number of different resources for clinicians and individuals to support their work and personal practice, and facilitate the open discussion on how to promote compassionate motives and behaviours across all domains. The CMF supports dissemination of the flow of compassion whereby we are able to be compassionate to others, open to the compassion from others, and compassionate to ourselves.

Our Work - A guiding principle of the Compassionate Mind Foundation is that our human potentials for creativity, love, altruism, compassion, but also for selfishness, vengeance and cruelty are all linked to the way our brains have evolved to solve various challenges to survival.

Modern research is beginning to illuminate the genetic basis of these dispositions and the way our social relationships, from the cradle to the grave, shape our brains and value systems, and thus dispositions to create different patterns of activity in our brains. The more we understand these processes the more we can understand how different patterns in our minds are created. This knowledge allows us to stand back and explore ways to manage the potentials in our evolved brains' such that we can advance certain dispositions and potentials over others.

The Compassionate Mind Foundation supports thousands of clinicians around the world to develop, practice and promote Compassion Focused Therapy (CFT). In addition to delivering a number of workshops and training programs, we provide clinicians with resources including training materials, handouts, practices and scales.

“May you be well. May you be happy. May you be free from suffering. And may you bring these things into the world for others.” - Paul Gilbert

“Life doesn't make any sense without interdependence. We need each other, and the sooner we learn that, the better for us all.” - Erik Erikson

6] [The Invisible Key: Unlocking the Mystery of My Chronic Pain](#) by, Maria Socolof, author

An acute injury. Chronic pain. A shocking discovery. Maria Socolof, a former collegiate athlete, at age forty, ruptured a disc in her neck when she rolled over in bed. Time and conventional medicine failed to heal her. Years of debilitating pain followed. She sincerely questioned whether life in such pain was worth living. Then, through mind-body approaches and bewildering revelations, true healing finally began. Her raw chronicle attests to the impact emotional trauma can have on the body and how we can set ourselves free from the limitations of our subconscious. She went from being unable to stand for more than fifteen minutes to hiking in Alaska five years later. She shows us that one can heal, even when hope is lost.

“Every person challenged by high-impact, persistent pain needs to read this book to discover if past traumas pose a shrouded barrier to their wellness.” - Cynthia Toussaint, Author of Battle for Grace

“Anyone seeking healing can follow Maria Socolof’s personal journey . . . into the light of wellness by better understanding the mind-body connection.” - Steve Ozanich, Author of The Great Pain Deception

6a] [Healing From Chronic Myofascial Pain](#) - Support for Chronic Pain Sufferers

Maria Socolof - Health Scientist, Pain & Trauma Survivor, Author, Speaker

To help your recovery from chronic pain - If you're in chronic pain and your doctor has ruled out underlying diseases or acute injuries, and maybe you've tried everything your doctor has prescribed and are still suffering, I encourage you to review the information on this website. If you're in the early stages of chronic pain, take advantage of this information before trying expensive and invasive treatments. Wherever you are in your healing journey, my hope is that my words here (and in my memoir) will provide you with useful information and give you hope.

On this site you'll find:

- [my story](#) of healing from years of chronic pain, a description of and links to my [memoir](#), plus links to stories of others who have healed or are healing in similar ways;
- what [chronic myofascial pain](#) is;
- how [trauma](#) can be linked to this and other chronic pain conditions; and
- the many [treatments](#) I've tried or considered trying, and which ones have worked best for me;
- lists of [resources](#), including links to outreach activities such as interviews and talks; and
- my [blog](#).

Some people who experience chronic pain may gain immediate relief from just one treatment approach. But everyone is different. What works for some doesn't work for others. And for those of us who fall into the category of “difficult to heal,” relief rarely, if ever, comes from one magic pill or therapy. It usually requires a combination of therapeutic approaches.

When my doctors couldn't “fix” me, I set out to learn everything I could about my condition and every possible way to get better. The most important things I discovered were that healing involves our inextricably linked body and mind and that we have an amazing ability to heal ourselves. This knowledge led me to the healing approaches that, over time, brought me miraculous relief from pain. I sincerely wish the same for you.

For full disclosure, I still live with daily pain. But it is far less intense and more manageable than it once was. I am still working on healing and have undying hope that I can eventually attain full freedom from pain.

[Empower TV - Unlocking chronic pain](#): Interview with Maria Socolof – YouTube 56:18 minutes

“No one is useless in this world who lightens the burdens of another.” - Charles Dickens

“Thousands of candles can be lighted from a single candle, and the life of the candle will not be shortened. Happiness never decreases by being shared.” - Buddha

7] [Music Is Just as Powerful at Improving Mental Health as Exercise, Review Suggests](#) by [David Nield](#) @ [ScienceAlert](#)

The next time you're not able to get out to the gym, maybe spin some records instead: new research suggests the positive impact on mental health from singing, playing, or listening to music is around the same impact experienced with exercise or weight loss.

That's based on a [meta-analysis](#) covering 26 previous studies and a total of 779 people. The earlier research covered everything from using [gospel music as a preventative measure against heart disease](#) to how [joining a choir can help people recovering from cancer](#).

A growing [number of studies](#) are finding links between music and well-being. However, the level of the potential boost and exactly why it works are areas that scientists are still looking into – and that's where this particular piece of research can be helpful.

"Increasing evidence supports the ability of music to broadly promote well-being and health-related quality of life ([HRQOL](#))," write the researchers in their [published paper](#).

"However, the magnitude of music's positive association with HRQOL is still unclear, particularly relative to established interventions, limiting inclusion of music interventions in health policy and care."

All of the 26 studies included in the new research used the widely adopted and well regarded [36-Item Short Form Survey](#) (SF-36) on physical and mental health, or the shorter alternative with 12 questions (SF-12), making it easier to collate and synthesize the data.

The results of the studies were then compared against other research looking at the benefits of "non-pharmaceutical and medical interventions (e.g., exercise, weight loss)" on well-being and against research where medical treatments for health issues didn't include a music therapy component.

According to the study authors, the mental health boost from music is "within the range, albeit on the low end" of the same sort of impact seen in people who commit to physical exercise or weight loss programs.

"This meta-analysis of 26 studies of music interventions provided clear and quantitative moderate-quality evidence that music interventions are associated with clinically significant changes in mental HRQOL," [write the researchers](#).

"Additionally, a subset of 8 studies demonstrated that adding music interventions to usual treatment was associated with clinically significant changes to mental HRQOL in a range of conditions." At the same time, the researchers point out that there was substantial variation between individuals in the studies regarding how well the various musical interventions worked – even if the overall picture was a positive one. This isn't necessarily something that's going to work for everyone.

The researchers hope that studies such as this one will encourage health professionals to prescribe some kind of music therapy more often when it comes to helping patients recover from illness or maintain

good mental health.

For many of us, listening to music or singing are pleasurable activities and perhaps wouldn't feel as challenging as getting out for exercise or sticking to a diet – further reasons why they could be helpful as forms of therapy.

"Future research is needed to clarify optimal music interventions and doses for use in specific clinical and public health scenarios," [write the researchers](#).

The research has been published in [JAMA Network Open](#).

7a] Related article from the same study - [Music Just as Powerful at Improving Mental Health as Exercise, Research Suggests](#) by [Arielle Weg @ Prevention](#)

- A review of 26 studies suggests singing, playing an instrument, or listening to music can improve mental health and overall well-being.
- Researchers found music can have just as much of a positive impact on mental health as exercise or weight loss.
- Study authors note that additional research needs to be done to see exactly why music can benefit our health.

“Music is the divine way to tell beautiful, poetic things to the heart.” – Pablo Casals

“Music washes away from the soul the dust of everyday life.” – Berthold Auerbach

8] [How women are duped into believing they're mentally ill](#) by Jessica Taylor Ph.D

“In my 12 years of work in this field, I've never suggested that a single one of the women I treat is mentally ill, and yet I've had incredible success in supporting them through their traumas.”

I don't know about you, but each time I scroll through social media, it feels like I see a new advert for a T-shirt, mug or phone case emblazoned with the words 'Cute but psycho'. Just the other day, I saw a crop top that simply had the word 'Borderline' spelt out in a sexy, lipstick font across the chest. Often, it's women who lightheartedly buy these items, who laugh along when a friend calls them crazy. And so, my question is this: why are we fetishising women as psychotic, deranged, mad? Why do the lyrics of hit songs yell out 'Oh, she's sweet but a psycho'?

Today, millions of women and girls in the UK are living with mental health issues, disorders and syndromes. Women and girls are seven times more likely to be diagnosed with borderline personality disorder than men and boys and being female positively correlates with every single psychiatric diagnosis. We are more likely to be diagnosed with depression, anxiety and somatic disorders, panic disorder, phobias, suicide ideation and attempts, postpartum depression and psychosis, eating disorders and PTSD.

At the same time, we are regularly told that our emotions and thoughts are irrational, unstable, hysterical, dangerous, delusional, psychotic, manic, and most of all, abnormal – by everyone from GPs

to ex-boyfriends.

I know this from both personal and professional experience. I'm a chartered psychologist who has been working with women and girls for over 10 years. In recent years, I've come to specialise in the ways women and girls are blamed for having normal responses to trauma – and then gaslit into believing they're mentally ill because of it. I've worked in charities, courtrooms, rape centres, police forces, children's services and mental health. No matter where I was or what I was doing, the pattern of women and girls as young as 10 disclosing abuse, trauma and violence and then being sent to a mental health team or a psychiatrist was impossible to ignore. I had to do something.

But to understand why women are in this situation, we have to first look at the origins of psychiatry itself – and the closer you look, the more its links to racism, misogyny, homophobia, classism and capitalism become apparent.

Its roots stretch as far back as the witch trials between the 14th and 17th centuries, when unruly women were branded as 'evil' and 'hysterical' in one steady swoop – and literally killed for it. This period saw a genocide of 600,000-1,000,000 women and girls who didn't do as they were told. You were at risk of being accused of witchcraft if you were too intelligent, too opinionated, too knowledgeable, knew too much about your biology or your menstruation, read too many books, questioned politics and religious elders, didn't want to marry men, or couldn't have children. Midwives were thought to be witches because they understood how to help women conceive and give birth.

And so when the witch trials ended in 1735, a new method of containing and controlling women and girls was born – asylums. The Quakers (Protestant Christian church) moved from accusing women and girls of being satanic to mentally ill, with their suggested, 'humane' cure being time in an asylum and converting to Christianity. Within a few decades, the first 'lunatic asylum' was opened by The Quakers and the next century saw thousands more religious 'lunatic' asylums spring up all over Europe, USA and UK.

Women were diagnosed with 'hysteria'; a made-up illness only diagnosed in females. Hysteria (also called 'Wandering Womb Syndrome') was diagnosed in women who didn't conform in some way. The theory at that time was that female mental illness was caused by a displaced womb floating up to the brain and attacking it, making them insane. Amazingly, women were still being diagnosed with this until the 1960s.

Inside these asylums were women who didn't conform, asked too many questions, and didn't behave in a socially acceptable way – they were different in some way, or were from marginalised and oppressed minorities. This continued for centuries and is the foundation of modern psychiatry.

Throughout the 19th and early 20th century, educated men and community leaders who claimed to be doctors and 'physicians', would observe, medicate, experiment on and torture women and girls in these asylums under the guise of 'medical research'. They were subjected to treatments and interventions that sound like they are fresh out of an 18-rated horror movie. They were injected with malaria. They were spun around until they passed out. They were made to ingest toxic lead. They were injected with insulin until they were in fatal diabetic comas. They were forced to have their wombs extracted and their brains lobotomised. They were shocked with electrical currents sent through their brain until they had brain damage and concussions. They were given dangerous levels of lithium that injured or killed them.

None of this was as long ago as we often imagine, either – these treatments were all used in the last 120 years. Some of them are used to this day. I still encounter women and teenage girls being given lithium, receiving electroshock therapy, being medicated with strong tranquillisers and painkillers they may not need. I still meet women and girls who have found themselves sectioned and labelled mentally ill after disclosing childhood abuse, rape, domestic abuse or other traumas. I am still working on cases where women and girls are being discredited and humiliated in the courtroom when they have been raped or abused. Defence barristers love to suggest that she is mentally ill or delusional.

You can see, then, why I'm concerned by the increase in women and girls receiving psychiatric diagnoses. While the mental health movement seeks to destigmatise the process of diagnosis, this is not possible while we are pathologising women for having normal reactions to events in their lives – be it anger, sadness or heartache. Stigmatising women as different or irrational or too emotional or abnormal in some way has always been the point of psychiatric diagnosis. And so, to 'end mental health stigma', we must also end the constant labelling of women and girls as mentally ill; as 'cute but psycho'. We need urgent reform.

I am suggesting an alternative. We need to move away from the now widely debunked theory that mental illness is caused by brain chemical imbalances again and deepen our understanding of our mental distress and trauma. [Read the entire article](#)

8a] [Sexy But Psycho: How the Patriarchy Uses Women's Trauma Against Them](#) by Dr Jessica Taylor

Angry, opinionated, mouthy, aggressive, hysterical, mad, disordered, crazy, psycho, delusional, borderline, hormonal . . . Women have long been pathologized, locked up and medicated for not conforming to whichever norms or stereotypes are expected of them in that time and space. *Sexy But Psycho* is a challenging and uncomfortable book which seeks to explore the way professionals and society at large pathologize and sexualise women and girls.

Utilising decades of research, real case studies and new data from her own work, Dr Taylor's book will critically analyse the way we label women with personality disorders. Why are women and girls pathologized for being angry about oppression and abuse? How have so many women been duped into believing that they are mentally ill, for having normal and natural reactions to their experiences? *Sexy But Psycho* argues that there is a specific purpose to convincing women and girls that they are mentally ill, **as the world avoids addressing violence against women and their centuries of ignored trauma.**

[Dr Jessica Taylor](#) – FRSA is a British psychologist,[1] feminist author, and campaigner. She was a Senior Lecturer in Forensic and Criminological Psychology at the [University of Derby](#). Taylor is the author of the 2020 book *Why Women Are Blamed For Everything*. She has made appearances on British television, including [BBC Two](#) documentary *Womanhood*,[2] and in the true crime documentary *My Lover, My Killer*, which aired on [Channel Five](#). [3]

"It's not enough to have lived. We should be determined to live for something. May I suggest that it be creating joy for others, sharing what we have for the betterment of person-kind, bringing hope to the lost and love to the lonely." – Leo Buscaglia

"If you get, give. If you learn, teach." – Maya Angelou

9] [St. Louis-Based Photographer Calls Attention to Veteran Homelessness With New Exhibition](#) by [Andrea Smith](#) @ Ladue News [please note, photos posted at the website]

Jerry Tovo's art compels those who see it to no longer turn away from people who are homeless, but rather to acknowledge them as individuals. The St. Louis-based portrait photographer has focused his talents on a particular population needing visibility and support: U.S. veterans experiencing homelessness.

The National Coalition for Homeless Veterans has estimated that on any given night, a total 40,000 veterans are unhoused or housed in a shelter. According to the latest data available, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development reported that 19,750 veterans in the U.S. were experiencing sheltered homelessness in January 2021. The report notes that this estimate "could be artificially depressed compared with non-pandemic times, reflecting reduced capacity in some communities or safety concerns regarding staying in shelters."

This week, the nonprofit International Photography Hall of Fame and Museum in St. Louis opened Tovo's "In the Faces of Patriotism: The Homeless Veterans Project" exhibition to call attention to this issue.

"My goal is to raise national awareness about the plight of homeless veterans," Tovo says in an IPHF press release. "I yearn to give these veterans a face. I want to pay them tribute."

Tovo has worked as a commercial photographer in the metro area since the early 1970s and has partnered with businesses such as Bloomingdale's, Anheuser-Busch and others. "As a fine artist, Jerry has developed a unique artistic style incorporating the long tone imagery of the photographic masters with the technology of digital photography to produce evocative, starkly-beautiful and visually arresting portraiture," the IPHF website states.

"In the Faces of Patriotism: The Homeless Veterans Project" demonstrates Tovo's artistry while illuminating the struggles of individuals living in poverty.

"They once were our heroes," Tovo says of his subjects. "What if people of means could unite, pull together and prod those who can make a difference in eliminating this blight on our discarded patriots?"

["In the Faces of Patriotism: The Homeless Veterans Project"](#) demonstrates Tovo's artistry while illuminating the struggles of individuals living in poverty.

"They once were our heroes," Tovo says of his subjects. "What if people of means could unite, pull together and prod those who can make a difference in eliminating this blight on our discarded patriots?"

"The soul always knows what to do to heal itself. The challenge is to silence the mind." – Caroline Myss

"All healing is first a healing of the heart." – Carl Townsend

10] [The Nordic way to stop bullying](#) By David Robson @ [BBC Future](#)

Bullying can make children's lives a misery and cause lifelong health problems – but scientists are discovering powerful ways to fight it.

Lady Gaga, Shawn Mendes, Blake Lively, Karen Elson, Eminem, Kate Middleton and Mike Nichols – these are just a few people who have spoken about their experiences of being victims of bullying at school, and the pain that it has caused them in childhood and later life. My own nemeses were a pair of Daniels from rural Yorkshire. They had the habit of mimicking and mocking everything I said, so that I barely dared to speak in class.

Anyone who has been victimised as a child will understand the feelings of shame that these kinds of experiences can bring. And the consequences do not stop there. Recent research suggests that the effects of childhood bullying can linger for decades, with long-lasting changes that can put us at a greater risk of mental and physical illness.

Such findings are leading an increasing number of educationalists to shift their views of bullying – from an inevitable element of growing up, to a violation of children's human rights.

"People used to think that bullying is a normal behaviour, and in some instances, that it could even be a good thing – because it builds character," explains Louise Arseneault, a professor of developmental psychology at King's College London in the UK. "It took a long time for [researchers] to start considering bullying behaviour as something that can be really harmful."

With this change of mind, many researchers are now testing various anti-bullying schemes – with some exciting new strategies to create a kinder school environment.

Inflamed mind, inflamed body - There can be little doubt that bullying is a serious risk to children's mental health in the short term, with the most notable consequences being elevated anxiety, depression and paranoid thinking. While some of these symptoms may naturally vanish after the bullying stops, many victims continue to suffer from a higher risk of mental illness.

According to a recent paper in the [Harvard Review of Psychiatry](#), a woman who has been bullied as a child is 27 times more likely to have a panic disorder as a young adult. Among men, childhood bullying resulted in a 18-fold increase in suicidal ideation and action. "There are all these associations, which are robust and replicated across different samples," says Arseneault.

Bullying will also have [protracted consequences for people's social lives](#): many victims find it harder to make friends in later life and are less likely to live with a long-term partner. One possibility is that they struggle to trust the people around them. "Kids who've been bullied, might interpret social relationships in a more threatening way," says Arseneault. Finally, there are the [academic and economic costs](#). Bullying harms people's grades, which in turn reduces their job prospects – meaning that they are more likely to experience financial instability and unemployment in young adulthood and midlife.

Arseneault's research suggests that the resulting stress can take a toll on the body for decades after the event. Analysing data from a 50-year-long longitudinal study, she found that frequent bullying between

the ages of seven and 11 was linked to [markedly higher levels of inflammation at age 45](#). Importantly, the link remained even after she had controlled for a host of other factors, including their diet, physical activity, and whether they smoked. That's important, since elevated inflammation can disrupt the immune system and contributes to the wear and tear on our organs that leads to conditions like [diabetes](#) and [cardiovascular disease](#).

Safety nets - Taken together, these findings suggest that attempts to eliminate bullying are not only a moral imperative to alleviate children's immediate suffering; they may bring long-term benefits for a population's health.

When I was at school in the UK in the 90s and early 2000s, there were no systematic campaigns to tackle the wider problem of bullying. Teachers would chastise certain behaviours – if they were observed. But the responsibility was on the student to report the problem, which means that many cases were ignored. Some teachers would tacitly endorse bullying by turning a blind eye to obvious issues, while others – a rare but toxic minority – actively sided with the bullies.

Certain types of bullying may also be tolerated because they reflect broader social prejudices. For example, a significant proportion of children of lesbian mothers in a longitudinal study reported [teasing or bullying because of their family type](#), though parental support buffered the impact. LGBTQ youth are also [more likely to experience bullying and other aggression in school](#). Schools, however, have [tended to ignore homophobic](#) bullying in the past.

Fortunately, ongoing research can now provide some proven anti-bullying strategies that are known to help.

The [Olweus Bullying Prevention Program](#) is one of the most widely tested schemes. It was developed by the late Swedish-Norwegian psychologist, Dan Olweus, who spearheaded much of the early academic research on child victimisation. The programme is based on the idea that individual cases of bullying are often the product of a wider culture that tolerates victimisation. As a result, it attempts to tackle the entire school ecosystem so that bad behaviour can no longer flourish.

Like many interventions, the Olweus Program starts with a recognition of the problem. For this reason, schools should set up a survey to question the students about their experiences. "Knowing what is going on in your building is really important and can guide your bullying prevention efforts," says Susan Limber, a professor in developmental psychology at Clemson University in South Carolina.

“Every adult in the school needs some basic training about bullying: the people who work in the cafeteria, the bus drivers, the custodian” – Susan Limber [Read the entire article](#)

David Robson is a science writer and author based in London, UK. His latest book is [The Expectation Effect: How Your Mindset Can Transform Your Life](#) (Canongate/Henry Holt). He is [@d_a_robson](#) on Twitter.

10a] *The Expectation Effect* is a journey through the cutting-edge science of how our mindset shapes every facet of our lives, revealing how your brain holds the keys to unlocking a better you. It is published by Canongate in the UK (Jan 2022) and Henry Holt in the USA (Feb 2022).

People who believe ageing brings wisdom live longer.
Lucky charms really do improve an athlete's performance.
Reappraising stress as energising increases your creativity under pressure.
Cultivating an indulgent attitude to food helps you lose weight.
Taking a placebo, even when you know it is a placebo, can still improve your health.

In this book David Robson takes us on a tour of the cutting-edge research that reveals the many profound ways that our expectations shape our experience. Bringing together fascinating case studies and evidence-based science, *The Expectation Effect* uncovers new techniques that we can all use to improve our fitness, productivity, intelligence, health and happiness.

“You don't have to suffer continual chaos in order to grow.” - John C. Lilly

“When you know who you are; when your mission is clear and you burn with the inner fire of unbreakable will; no cold can touch your heart; no deluge can dampen your purpose. You know that you are alive.” - Unknown

11] [How to Stop Catastrophizing: An Expert's Guide](#) by Linda Blair @ [The Guardian](#)

A clinical psychologist suggests a three-pronged plan for tackling anxiety and approaching each day logically and positively.

Let us start by considering why some people catastrophize – that is, on hearing uncertain news, they imagine the worst possible outcome. After all, it is not uncommon and those who catastrophize seem to do it a lot. Catastrophizers tend to be fairly anxious people. Whether this characteristic is principally genetic or more the result of learning is unknown. High levels of [anxiety](#) are extremely unpleasant, so we look for ways to discharge those unpleasant feelings as quickly as possible. If a catastrophizer is told something inconclusive – for example, if they go to a doctor and are asked to have tests – they look for a way to feel in control again immediately. They learn to choose the worst possible outcome because it allows for the greatest sense of relief when they are reassured.

Considering all possibilities is not a bad strategy if you examine them logically. However, unable to bear their distress, catastrophizers rush to external sources to calm themselves down: checking whether anyone else has “come through” the same problem; matching symptoms online to obtain a diagnosis and treatment options; asking a professional to tell them that they will survive. Once they are reassured, they feel better – in psychological jargon, they have “rewarded” this seeking behavior. The next time they feel uncertain or threatened, they will ratchet up their anxiety with a catastrophic thought, then look outwards for reassurance even faster than before. In this way, catastrophizing soon becomes a well-entrenched habit. The greatest problem with seeking others to alleviate anxiety is that it offers only temporary relief. There is always another source to check or another opinion to be had; as a result, catastrophizers feel anxious again increasingly quickly. The only way to break this cycle is to tame anxiety. After this, you can still seek advice. So, if you are a catastrophizer and you would rather not be, how do you go about making changes?

Accept yourself. [Anxiety](#) is energy: if you are an anxious person, celebrate! However, why waste that energy feeling uncomfortable and preparing yourself for circumstances that will almost certainly never occur? Look for enjoyable ways to challenge yourself and use your energy more positively: taking

regular aerobic exercise; learning something new; taking up a creative passion.

Take control. Establish a regular “worry time”. Start by setting aside half an hour every day. Write down all your concerns in specific terms. For example: “I felt nauseated this morning. Do I have stomach cancer?” Assign a score on a scale of 0 to 100% to estimate how distressed this possibility makes you feel. Next, list all the possible explanations for your concern, then rank each one according to how likely it is to be correct. Make use of external sources if necessary, but stick with reputable websites and professionals. Finally, score your worry for the level of distress it is causing you now. Gradually, you will be able to reduce the amount and frequency of worry time.

Use the “best friend test”. Ask yourself what you would advise your best friend to do about each concern, and take that action.

Learn to self-soothe. Whenever you are overwhelmed by anxiety and feel you must seek reassurance, give yourself permission to do so – but not straight away. Establish an interval before you are allowed to act. Even two minutes is enough at first, because you are still exerting self-control. Breathing slowly in through your nose and out through your mouth, or taking some gentle exercise, will help. Gradually, you will find you can wait longer. When you get to the point where you can wait more than 20 minutes, most people find they no longer need to be reassured by others.

This three-pronged approach – using your “worry energy” to carry out new and enjoyable challenges, approaching your tendency to catastrophize logically and systematically, and learning to wait through discomfort – takes time. But if you invest the necessary time, you will start looking forward to each day knowing you can deal with uncertainty in a more positive, balanced way.

“He who would do great things should not attempt them all alone.” – Seneca

“Everything on the earth has a purpose, every disease an herb to cure it, and every person a mission. This is the Indian theory of existence.” – Mourning Dove Salish

12] [Free Online Therapist & Counseling](#) - 7 Cups

Need Someone to Talk to? Our Counselors and Listeners Are Standing By.

7 Cups connects you to caring listeners for free emotional support

Grow at Your Own Pace - Explore self help guides & growth paths for proven tips and advice on how to feel better

Free 24/7 Chat - Be heard by volunteer listeners and chat with others who understand in support chat rooms

About 7 Cups - We live in a world where you can be surrounded by people, but still feel lonely, with nobody to turn to when things get rough.

But being heard is an important part of being human. Psychologist, Glen Moriarty saw that there was great power in listening, but he knew not everyone had someone to talk to. He started to wonder. "How

can I make being heard a reality for everyone?"

That's why 7 Cups was born. - Thanks to thousands of volunteer listeners stepping up to lend a friendly ear, 7 Cups is happy to say, "We're here for you!"

No matter who you are or what you're going through, this is a place where you'll be heard and cared for. We might be strangers on the surface, but underneath we're just the friends you haven't met yet.

Anonymous virtual chat with caring listeners - Need to talk to someone? Our trained volunteer listeners are available 24/7 to give emotional support over online chat.

It's anonymous and completely free. - You can find support and friendship in chat rooms and forums for many issues, like depression, anxiety, relationships, LGBTQ+ and more.

We're here for teens too - Are you 13-17 years old?

We have listeners available especially for teens, so you can chat confidentially whenever you need to.

You can also join our lively teen community forums and chat rooms to share with peers who understand what you're going through. Get support and make new friends along the way.

[7 Cups Community Q&A](#)

"If you can't fly then run; if you can't run then walk; if you can't walk then crawl, but whatever you do you have to keep moving forward." – Martin Luther King Jr.

"At the end of the day, tell yourself gently: 'I love you, you did the best you could today, and even if you didn't accomplish all you had planned, I love you anyway.'" – Anonymous

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 "By My Side", "Joy", "Brush Away Your Tears" & more @ [Michael Skinner – You Tube](#)

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