



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 2023

Hi folks,

May is Mental Health Awareness Month and the Surgeon General's Report on Loneliness is quite timely:

[Loneliness poses risks as deadly as smoking: surgeon general](#) by Amanda Seitz @ AP News

The National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors [NASMHP] is presenting these three Town Halls that tie in with the Surgeon General's Report:

Cultivating a Culture of Connection through Community-Designed Initiatives

Surgeon General Dr. Vivek Murthy has called for action to address the public health crisis and devastating impact of the epidemic of loneliness and isolation in the United States.

Dr. Murthy explains that disconnection fundamentally affects our mental, physical, and societal health. He also states that loneliness and isolation increase the risk for individuals to develop mental health challenges in their lives. Through funding from SAMHSA's Technology Transfer Initiative, NASMHPD has partnered with peer-run and community-designed initiatives to serve diverse populations, including those experiencing trauma in their daily lives and individuals struggling with serious mental health challenges. This Town Hall series will provide an opportunity for discussion and implementation of the six foundational pillars outlined by Dr. Murthy's important report. [Click here to view the report.](#)

To register for our Town Hall Series, you can use the following link:

https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZErc-uhpzlsGNZVtcmJ_w4th5w2IOG_UTXN

Town Hall One: Faith Communities Respond

Date: Monday, June 12, 2023 from 2 – 3:30 PM ET

Description: Deepening trauma-informed knowledge, faith leaders are providing innovative programs that restore connection to self and others. The TAMAR program, originally funded by SAMHSA,

provides weekly groups focused on understanding the impact of trauma on all aspects of our lives, offering connection, healing, community, and hope.

Resources:

- Triumph Over Trauma – <https://www.triumphovertrauma.info/>
- Friendship Benches - <https://www.friendshipbenchzimbabwe.org/>

Town Hall Two: Peer-Led Inclusive Approaches Designed to Support, Unify, and Prevent Isolation

Date: Monday, June 26, 2023 from 2 – 3:30 PM ET

Description: Understanding the impact of isolation and loneliness on emotional well-being and health, survivors of trauma, labels of mental illness, and substance use challenges have long-established healing communities designed to advance healing through connection and shared experience. Join us as we explore these examples, that range from open-access wellness centers to 24/7 peer phone lines and peer-run respites, which create an alternative to hospitalization during mental health crises.

Town Hall Three: Combating Loneliness and Isolation in Diverse Communities

Date: Monday, July 10, 2023 from 2 – 3:30 PM ET

Description: Creating relevant connections requires engagement of community members in development and implementation of culturally relevant initiatives. Discussion led by youth leaders, LGBTQ+ advocates, and Indigenous people representatives will share innovative approaches and resources developed to enhance connection and reduce loneliness for individuals experiencing isolation and emotional pain.

Resources:

- Making Relatives: A Guide for Healing the Soul Wound for Tribal Communities - https://www.nasmhpd.org/sites/default/files/2022_NASMHPD_Making_Relatives.pdf
- Making Relatives Video - <https://youtu.be/gC5qoWFA-lw>
- Who I Am - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BMhD_r2BmYE

A song of mine to share - [The Warrior {c} - song by Michael Skinner](#) - YouTube

This is a song I wrote back in 1976 when touring Great Britain with the hard rock band, "American Train." I was the drummer in the band but I wrote some of the tunes we performed.

Decades later I decided to do a stripped down version with me on acoustic guitar.

If you'd like to hear the original demo recording from 1976, send me an e-mail and I'll forward an MP3 of the tune.

Thank you & take care, Michael

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

“Wounding and healing are not opposites. They're part of the same thing. It is our wounds that enable us to be compassionate with the wounds of others. It is our limitations that make us kind to the limitations of other people. It is our loneliness that helps us to find other people or to even know they're alone with an illness. I think I have served people perfectly with parts of myself I used to be ashamed of.” — Rachel Naomi Remen

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“The humanity we all share is more important than the mental illnesses we may not” — Elyn R. Saks

“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

1] [Raised by addicts, abused, neglected, broke: how Katriona O’Sullivan escaped her fate](#) by Emine Saner @ The Guardian

Pregnant at 15, and soon to be homeless, O’Sullivan never expected to succeed – but became a leading academic. The author of *Poor* talks about everything that conspired to keep her down – and her ‘miraculous and rare’ ascent

[Poor](#) by Katriona O’Sullivan - Grit, courage, and the life-changing value of self-belief

There is hope, even when your brain tells you there isn’t.” — John Green

“Just remember, you are not alone, in fact, you are in a very commonplace with millions of others. We need to help each other and keep striving to reach our goals.” — Mike Moreno

2] [How to overcome social anxiety](#) by Fallon Goodman @ [Psyche](#)

When even everyday social situations make you feel self-conscious and afraid, it’s time to try these well-tested techniques

2a] [The stress secret: 12 ways to meditate – without actually meditating](#) by Amy Fleming @ The Guardian

Many people struggle with classic forms of meditation, but its benefits are still available. From writing and drawing to pottery or singing, here are everyday ways to find peace

The advice I’d give to somebody that’s silently struggling is, you don’t have to live that way. You don’t have to struggle in silence. You can be un-silent. You can live well with a mental health condition, as long as you open up to somebody about it, because it’s really important you share your experience with people so that you can get the help that you need.” — Demi Lovato

3] [To improve kids' mental health, some schools start later](#) by Brooke Schultz @ AP News

The idea of later school start times, pushed by many over the years as a way to [help adolescents get more sleep](#), is getting a new look as a way to address the [mental health crisis](#) affecting teens across the U.S.

“I found that with depression, one of the most important things you can realize is that you’re not alone. You’re not the first to go through it, you’re not gonna be the last to go through it,” — Dwayne “The Rock” Johnson

“Mental health problems don’t define who you are. They are something you experience. You walk in the rain and you feel the rain, but, importantly, YOU ARE NOT THE RAIN.” — Matt Haig

4] [‘For a second, I don’t know who I am’: Ruby Wax on her stay in a mental health clinic](#) by Ruby Wax @ The Guardian

In this extract from her new book, *I’m Not As Well As I Thought I Was*, the comedian and writer gives a Zoom talk about depression from her hospital room

[I’m Not As Well As I Thought I Was](#) – author Ruby Wax - From the Number One Bestselling Author of *A Mindfulness Guide for The Frazzled*

“It is during our darkest moments that we must focus to see the light.” — Aristotle

“There is a crack in everything, that’s how the light gets in” — Leonard Cohen

5] [Choosing Between Authenticity and Attachment](#) by Fern Schumer Chapman @ Psychology Today

Many abandon their true selves to hold onto relationships, even toxic ones.

[Fern Schumer Chapman](#) is the author of books including [Brothers, Sisters, Strangers: Sibling Estrangement and the Road to Reconciliation](#) and [The Sibling Estrangement Journal: A Guided Exploration of Your Experience through Writing](#).

“Increasing the strength of our minds is the only way to reduce the difficulty of life.” — Mokokoma Mokhonoana

“Not until we are lost do we begin to understand ourselves” — Henry David Thoreau

6] [Gardening is a great form of exercise, according to experts](#) by Melanie Radzicki McManus @ CNN

Gardening has taken off. Here’s why the popular activity can replace your gym workout

“I am not afraid of storms for I am learning how to sail my ship.” — Amy March

“Sometimes you climb out of bed in the morning and you think, I’m not going to make it, but you laugh inside — remembering all the times you’ve felt that way.” — Charles Bukowski

7] [Ukraine war: Taking steps to tackle the mental scars of conflict](#) By James Waterhouse @ BBC News

“Sometimes, you don’t know what to talk about with old friends... Something has changed, even snapped” - Pavlo, Ukrainian drone pilot

“If you’re going through hell, keep going.” — Winston Churchill

“I am bent, but not broken. I am scarred, but not disfigured. I am sad, but not hopeless. I am tired, but not powerless. I am angry, but not bitter. I am depressed, but not giving up.” — Anonymous

8] [Nature Sacred BenchTalk](#) - "BenchTalk: Wisdoms Inspired in Nature" is a beautifully bound, limited edition book composed of anonymous journal entries collected in publicly accessible green spaces. From the whimsical to the profound, these entries are a poignant, powerful and personal reminder of our common humanity.

"You are more precious to this world than you'll ever know." - Lili Rhinehart

Your present circumstances don't determine where you go; they merely determine where you start." - Nido Quebein

9] [Past obesity can have lasting effects on mental health, study finds](#) by Tobi Thomas @ The Guardian

History of obesity increases risk of early death by a third regardless of current weight, according to study on 'weight scarring'

Previous studies have shown that people with obesity can experience "weight-shame" and stigmatisation by healthcare professionals including doctors and nurses, leading to feelings of anxiety and depression.

"You are not alone. You are seen. I am with you. You are not alone." — Shonda Rhimes

"Just because no one else can heal or do your inner work for you doesn't mean you can, should, or need to do it alone." Lisa Olivera

10] [What doctors wish patients knew about trauma-informed care](#) by Sara Berg @ American Medical Association

Trauma experienced from surviving or witnessing car accidents, natural disasters, [mass-casualty events](#), racism, global pandemics, violence or any distressing experience can shake up a person's life. It can also challenge a person's core beliefs and views of the world. But sometimes patients may not realize they have experienced trauma in their life, which could account for their behavior or physical symptoms. That is where [trauma-informed care](#) can help.

"Many survivors insist they're not courageous: 'If I were courageous I would have stopped the abuse.' 'If I were courageous, I wouldn't be scared' ... Most of us have it mixed up. You don't start with courage and then face fear. You become courageous because you face your fear." — Laura Davis

"I keep moving ahead, as always, knowing deep down inside that I am a good person and that I am worthy of a good life." — Jonathan Harnisch

11] ['It's a failure of the system': before Jordan Neely was killed, he was discarded](#) by Wilfred Chan @ The Guardian

The young New Yorker, who lived with severe mental illness, was known to hospitals, police and social services. Why did the city fail him?

“I would say what others have said: It gets better. One day, you’ll find your tribe. You just have to trust that people are out there waiting to love you and celebrate you for who you are. In the meantime, the reality is you might have to be your own tribe. You might have to be your own best friend. That’s not something they’re going to teach you in school. So start the work of loving yourself. — Wentworth Miller

12] [The secret to why exercise is so good for mental health? ‘Hope molecules’](#) by Devi Sridhar @ The Guardian

What we long suspected is now scientific fact: there’s a magic chemical connection between mood, strength and longevity

Being able to be your true self is one of the strongest components of good mental health.” – Dr. Lauren Fogel Mersy

“My dark days made me stronger. Or maybe I already was strong, and they made me prove it.” — Emery Lord

12a] [5 healthy habits that are easy to add to your day](#) by Dana Santas @ CNN

If you feel like you don’t have enough time for daily self-care beyond the basics, you aren’t alone. Many people cite their busy schedules as barriers to having healthier lifestyles.

But what if you only needed five minutes?

“This feeling will pass. The fear is real but the danger is not.” — Cammie McGovern

“The experience I have had is that once you start talking about [experiencing a mental health struggle], you realize that actually you’re part of quite a big club.” — Prince Harry

12b] [The walking cure: why we should all be putting one foot in front of the other](#) by Anna Fielding @ The Guardian

Walking is the simplest and most natural thing to do, but its impact on our health and wellbeing is dramatic and far-reaching

“Sometimes the people around you won’t understand your journey. They don’t need to, it’s not for them.” — Joubert Botha

“You don’t have to be positive all the time. It’s perfectly okay to feel sad, angry, annoyed, frustrated, scared and anxious. Having feelings doesn’t make you a negative person. It makes you human.” — Lori Deschene

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