



*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 November 2025**

Hi folks,

Welcome to the November newsletter...I've been away for a few months due to some health hiccups, a new computer and operating system to learn and work associated with the publication of my memoir.

I'm in the homestretch with the book; I've made my choice for the sample page proof design, then it will be one more round of proofreading and then 'advanced reader' copies will be printed for me to send to those who have graciously agreed to write a blurb or foreword for the book. The publisher said this will all happen in a few weeks.

Very excited that Casemate [the book distributor] has already made the book available in all of the major book retailers. I see it and feel like, *'pinch me I'm dreaming.'*

FYI - The Lunchbox Theory: Lessons Learned from Trauma and Abuse - Casemate - <https://www.casemateipm.com/9781963714098/the-lunchbox-theory/>

Barnes & Noble - <https://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/the-lunchbox-theory-michael-skinner/1148078694>

Amazon - <https://www.amazon.com/Lunchbox-Theory-Lessons-Trauma-Abuse/dp/1963714091>

Books-A-Million - <https://www.booksamillion.com/p/Lunchbox-Theory/Michael-Skinner/9781963714098>

Overview:

The Lunch Box Theory is a deeply personal memoir that confronts the devastating impact of childhood abuse, including being sexually trafficked. The book ultimately delivers a message of resilience and hope. Written in a voice that is both raw and compassionate, Michael Skinner recounts his journey from successful musician and father to a man unraveling from the weight of long-buried abuse. As an advocate for survivors of

childhood trauma for over twenty years, he is both an award-winning speaker and joyful musician again. The Lunch Box Theory gives professionals a rare opportunity to learn about their systems from the inside out. His book details his hard-earned mental health injuries while also giving all abuse survivors the courage to stare down their own demons. With unflinching honesty, the author invites readers to sit with him on the “front porch of life,” to bear witness to his story, and to reflect on the societal silence that surrounds the many forms of child abuse. His book is more than a personal narrative. It is a call to action for trauma-informed awareness for professionals and a message of compassion for all.

*Thank you & take care, Michael*

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

*Whatever you can do, or dream you can, begin it. Boldness has genius, power and magic in it. – Goethe*

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*You make a living by what you get, but you make a life by what you give. —Winston Churchill*

*It is no measure of health to be well adjusted to a profoundly sick society. – Jiddu Krishnamurti*

1] [The Guardian view on art and health: the masterpiece can cure the body as well as the soul](#) - Editorial @ The Guardian

**Article excerpt** - From a Van Gogh self-portrait to Gauguin’s dreamscapes, new studies show that seeing original art can calm stress and boost health. In an era characterized by burnout and doomscrolling, a therapeutic alternative is hanging on a gallery wall. When volunteers at London’s Courtauld Gallery stood before [Van Gogh’s Self-Portrait With Bandaged Ear, Manet’s Bar at the Folies-Bergère, and Gauguin’s Te Rerioa](#), their stress and inflammation levels dropped compared with those of volunteers viewing reproductions. Science suggests that original art is a medicine that one can view rather than swallow.

That art can lift spirits is well known. But that it calms the body is novel. [A study by King’s College London](#) asked participants to look at masterworks by 19th-century post-impressionists – Van Gogh, Toulouse-Lautrec, Manet and Gauguin – while strapped to sensors. Half the group saw the originals in the gallery, half viewed copies in a lab. The [results](#) were clear: going to art galleries is good for you – relieving stress and cutting heart disease risk, as well as boosting the immune system.

There’s growing evidence to support that opinion. Earlier this summer, a team of Cambridge psychologists conducted a [similar project](#) at Kettle’s Yard Gallery to show how appreciating artistic beauty helps us escape the “mental trappings of daily life”. These experiments follow [research published last year by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport](#), to quantify the improvements to

physical and mental health from taking part in creative activities, as well as the economic gain – estimated to be [an average of £1,000 per person a year](#), as a result of improved work productivity and fewer trips to the GP. Nature Magazine's [review](#) of the current science suggests that art can play a role in public health, especially in the prevention of chronic diseases. And for the first time in its 202-year history, The Lancet recently ran a photo essay showcasing how art can enhance lives.

*Have a heart that never hardens, and a temper that never tires and a touch that never hurts. –Charles Dickens*

*Your vision will become clear only when you can look into your own heart. Who looks outside, dreams; who looks inside, awakes. - Carl Jung*

2] [As a homeless street kid, Peter Mutabazi asked a stranger for food. The man responded with a question that changed his life forever](#) By John Blake @ CNN

**Article excerpt:** "He was shoeless and hopeless," Jacques Masiko says of the youth he encountered on a Ugandan street. "He wanted somebody to give him a meaningful life."

Peter Mutabazi spotted his target one evening as the man walked through a crowded marketplace.

The man was alone and smartly dressed in a button-down shirt, khaki pants and professorial eyeglasses. He sauntered through the food stalls, oblivious to Mutabazi getting closer with each step.

*This guy doesn't have a clue, Mutabazi, then 15, thought as he closed in on the man. Not once did he check over his shoulder or put his hand to his wallet to make sure it was there. Easy marks like this don't come along very often.*

Mutabazi needed all the luck he could muster at that moment. It was 1988 in Kampala, Uganda, and he had been living alone on the streets for five years. He was just one of thousands of homeless kids trying to survive in his country's capital city during a perilous time. Uganda's economy had been devastated by a civil war, coups and an HIV epidemic.

Young Peter survived by theft and by begging. He'd typically approach a shopper to ask for a handout while offering to carry their grocery bags — only to swipe some food from the bags as he ferried their groceries to their cars. Before he could do the same with this stranger, though, the man wheeled around and faced him.

The man then smiled and asked him a question that was so unexpected that the teenager involuntarily took several steps backward. It represented a danger that the streetwise Mutabazi had not anticipated. That question, and the answer he gave in return, would change his life forever.

*Ours is not the task of fixing the entire world all at once, but of stretching out to mend the part of the world that is within our reach. – Clarissa Pinkola Estes*

*The butterfly does not look back at the caterpillar in shame, just as you should not look back at your past in shame. Your past was part of your own transformation. – Anthony Gucciardi*

3] [Relationship of Childhood Abuse and Household Dysfunction to Many of the Leading Causes of Death in Adults](#) - American Journal of Preventive Medicine

**Study excerpt** - Background: The relationship of health risk behavior and disease in adulthood to the breadth of exposure to childhood emotional, physical, or sexual abuse, and household dysfunction during childhood has not previously been described.

Methods: A questionnaire about adverse childhood experiences was mailed to 13,494 adults who had completed a standardized medical evaluation at a large HMO; 9,508 (70.5%) responded. Seven categories of adverse childhood experiences were studied: psychological, physical, or sexual abuse; violence against mother; or living with household members who were substance abusers, mentally ill or suicidal, or ever imprisoned. The number of categories of these adverse childhood experiences was then compared to measures of adult risk behavior, health status, and disease. Logistic regression was used to adjust for effects of demographic factors on the association between the cumulative number of categories of childhood exposures (range: 0–7) and risk factors for the leading causes of death in adult life.

Results: More than half of respondents reported at least one, and one-fourth reported  $\geq 2$  categories of childhood exposures. We found a graded relationship between the number of categories of childhood exposure and each of the adult health risk behaviors and diseases that were studied ( $P < .001$ ). Persons who had experienced four or more categories of childhood exposure, compared to those who had experienced none, had 4- to 12-fold increased health risks for alcoholism, drug abuse, depression, and suicide attempt; a 2- to 4-fold increase in smoking, poor self-rated health,  $\geq 50$  sexual intercourse partners, and sexually transmitted disease; and a 1.4- to 1.6-fold increase in physical inactivity and severe obesity. The number of categories of adverse childhood exposures showed a graded relationship to the presence of adult diseases including ischemic heart disease, cancer, chronic lung disease, skeletal fractures, and liver disease. The seven categories of adverse childhood experiences were strongly interrelated and persons with multiple categories of childhood exposure were likely to have multiple health risk factors later in life.

Conclusions: We found a strong graded relationship between the breadth of exposure to abuse or household dysfunction during childhood and multiple risk factors for several of the leading causes of death in adults.

*This is why people who have experienced severe abuse and trauma often have difficulty explaining their experiences. They have a problem because clinicians, friends, and family often don't have the concept of an immobilization defensive system in their vocabulary. - Stephen W. Porges, Ph.D.*

*Childhood trauma can lead to an adulthood spent in survival mode, afraid to plant roots, to plan for the future, to trust, and to let joy in. It's a blessing to shift from surviving to thriving. It's not simple, but there is more than survival. – Unknown*

4] [Turning the Tide: Parenting in the Wake of Past Trauma @ The National Child Traumatic Stress Network](#) by Jana Pressley, Psy.D & Kaitlyn Marie Wilson, LICSW

Gives voice to the struggles of parents and caregivers who experienced trauma growing up in their own families. For adults who are living with the painful effects of their own childhood environment, becoming a parent may introduce a variety of new emotional and functional challenges. As an adult moving into the role of parent, it is common to reflect and implement that which we absorbed from our own caretakers. For some of us, those lessons learned were not nurturing, consistent, or safe, but rather involved fear, abandonment, inconsistency, or other challenging circumstances.

A note from the authors:

Our inspiration for creating this resource stemmed from the stories we have witnessed in the lives of our clients, our peers, and within our own families of origin. Stories and experiences of deep insecurities and countless questions about the ability to nurture and protect children, due to the impact of surviving childhood trauma.

As trauma therapists working with individuals with complex histories, we found we were lacking a resource which provided accessible information about the impact of childhood trauma on parenting. In the pages below, it is our goal to illuminate some of the challenges inherent in parenting as a survivor of past trauma and adversity. We offer suggestions to support parents in building increased self-awareness and self-compassion, as well as skills to better care for ourselves and our children. It is important to note some parents may experience one or several of the challenges we describe, while others may have additional experiences that are not explicitly named

**Free download at website.** <https://www.nctsn.org/sites/default/files/resources/resource-guide/turning-the-tide-parenting-in-the-wake-of-past-trauma.pdf>

*Healing from childhood trauma can be a very lonely journey. Your friends, family, and significant other may never fully understand it. Understand that you do not need to apologize for who you become after you survive. – Nisha Patel*

*The human mind always makes progress, but it is a progress in spirals. – Madame de Stael*

5] [My Slow Journey to Health](#) by Caroline Abbott

**Blog excerpt:** Many abuse victims and survivors suffer from physical ailments. These are often a direct result of the abuse they've experienced though we don't often realize it. Some of these might include: fibromyalgia, chronic fatigue syndrome, diabetes, eating disorders, addictions to drugs and alcohol, migraine headaches, obesity, Alzheimer's disease, diabetes, depression, gastrointestinal problems, and asthma. Some say that the stress from being abused even causes heart disease and cancer.

A couple of years after I left my abuser I found I had: depression, anxiety, IBS (irritable bowel syndrome), IC (interstitial cystitis) – which is constant pain in the bladder, migraines, and intense pain in my hips.

Besides my regular general practitioner, I began seeing one specialist after another: neurologists, chiropractors, back specialists, acupuncturists, urologists, massage therapists, counselors and psychiatrists. I was taking seven prescriptions a day – over sixteen pills total.

On top of all that, last summer I was diagnosed with macular degeneration, an ailment usually found only in people at least 20 years older than me. This required me to get a *SHOT IN MY EYE* once a month – I don't wish that on anyone! For all the pills I was taking, I still had migraine headaches eight or more days a month, and was still struggling with daily hip pain. I often went to six doctor appointments a week. This cost me thousands of dollars a year, as well as an immense amount of time.

*Let people tell their story, tell of their pain. And let others listen. We discovered that in telling, that people begin to experience a healing. – Archbishop Desmond Tutu*

*Only love can heal. Start by healing yourself. LOVE! - Abhishek Kumar*

6] [In their darkest moments, too many Australians are being met with lethal force instead of love and care](#) by Lorena Allam @ The Guardian

**Article excerpt:** Police are often not equipped to deal with mental health callouts. Alternative first responders are better placed to de-escalate tension and reduce harm.

A New South Wales police internal review in 2024 found that officers attending mental health incidents are often 'an escalating factor' and it would be better if experts were deployed instead.

When police tasered and killed Clare Nowland – a 95-year-old aged care resident with dementia – after her nursing home called triple zero for help managing her behavior, her family were devastated and the public was shocked.

How could a frail and elderly woman on a walking frame, albeit grasping a steak knife, die in such a violent way?

[Nowland's death](#) intensified calls to explore alternatives to police officers as first responders, especially when people are experiencing mental health crises, and especially among vulnerable communities who have historically had a justified fear of the police.

She was one of at least five people who died in 2023 after interactions with New South Wales police, including “gentle soul” [Steve Pampalian](#), shot in his driveway suffering a psychotic episode; beloved son [Jesse Deacon](#), shot by police after a concerned neighbour called triple zero when seeing Jesse had self-harmed, and Newcastle mother [Krista Kach](#) who died after officers forced their way into her apartment after a nine-hour standoff and shot her with beanbag rounds.

“The only person in danger when the police broke into our mother’s home, and the many hours leading up to that moment, was our mother,” her family said in a statement at the time.

The toll continues. There have been five deaths involving police in similar circumstances since the start of this year.

*I swore never to be silent whenever human beings endure suffering and humiliation. We must always take sides. Neutrality helps the oppressor, never the victim. Silence encourages the tormentor, never the tormented. - Elie Wiesel*

*Illness is a condition, not an act. – Courage To Change – Al-Anon*

7] [“Understanding ADHD: A Brain That Works Differently, Not Less”](#) by Carey MacCarthy @ LinkedIn

**Article excerpt:** Have you ever met someone who feels everything *a little louder* than others? Someone whose mind is always busy, curious, creative, and constantly jumping from idea to idea? That’s how many people with ADHD experience the world — and I’ve had the honor of working with many of them over the years.

Today, I want to talk about ADHD in a way that feels human... not clinical, not shameful, not misunderstood. Because behind every label is a person with a story.

What ADHD Really Feels Like

ADHD isn't just a "kid who can't sit still" or a student who "doesn't listen." It is a different way of thinking and processing life.

Many of my clients describe ADHD like:

"My brain has 100 tabs open." "I act before I even realize what I'm doing." "I want to focus... but my brain pulls me somewhere else."

And here's something important: none of that means someone is broken.

ADHD can make things harder — yes. But it also comes with gifts like creativity, humor, determination, and the ability to see possibilities others might miss.

### **Why So Many Students Struggle Silently**

School can be tough for students with ADHD, not because they lack intelligence — but because the system isn't built for their kind of brilliance.

*There is not one big cosmic meaning for all; there is only the meaning we each give to our life, an individual meaning, an individual plot, like an individual novel, a book for each person. – Anais Nin*

*It is not the bruises on the body that hurt. It is the wounds of the heart and the scars on the mind. – Aisha Mirza*

8] [Mad in America Arts Corner](#) - Here you will find all the latest arts content on Mad in America including the latest submissions to the [Art](#), [Poetry](#), [Humor](#) and [Meme](#) galleries, the latest Song of the Week, calls for art, and articles on the topic of art and mental health.

Mad in America's galleries are always open for submissions! Submit your original art, poetry, humor and memes [here](#).

*Music has healing power. It has the ability to take people out of themselves for a few hours. - Elton John*

*The great power of the arts is to activate, renovate, and transform. Indeed, the arts, as the process of grief, can thaw what trauma and suffering freezes, or at least can help us better endure the sorrows and appreciate the joys of life. – Sandra Bertman*

9] [PWU: Peer Workers Connecting with Peer Workers Online](#) - Peer Workers United (PWU) Empowers Mental Health Advocates Through Community Mental Health Support Groups for Peer Pros

**Website excerpt:** *Are you a certified peer specialist in NYC or beyond? A peer recovery coach? Or maybe you're offering peer-led support in community mental health? No matter your role, we're here for you. Peer Workers United (PWU) is one of the best*

virtual peer worker support groups for peer advocates like you. It helps you with your work's unique challenges.

Being a peer worker is like walking a tightrope. You must balance others' needs with your own well-being. So, where can you find your balance? At PWU, we've created a safe space for you to reconnect, recharge, and refocus.

Join us for gatherings online, resource sharing, and heartfelt talks. It's a space to decompress, share stories, and flourish. As someone who pours so much of yourself into helping others, it's time to ask: Who supports you when things get tough? At PWU, we want to help you. We want to keep your passion alive and your spirit strong. So, we offer care, tools, and encouragement.

**Ready to unlock new possibilities in your peer support journey? Read [‘Putting “Career” into Peer Career Development.’](#) It offers tips to grow professionally.**

As a peer support worker, you are the heart of mental health advocacy and care. Your lived experiences allow you to provide empathy and connection in ways others can't. But the weight of your role can be heavy.

Challenges You May Face:

- **Emotional Labor:** Supporting others through their mental health or addiction struggles can leave you emotionally drained.
- **Financial Strain:** Many peer specialists earn low wages and face job insecurity despite a high demand for peer services. This makes it hard to focus on their work.
- **Stigma:** Despite your unique insights, you may encounter bias or lack of recognition.
- **Trauma Exposure:** Helping others can trigger your own past wounds or create new ones.
- **Limited Support:** Career peers often feel unsupported in the systems they help.

That's where PWU comes in. We aim to tackle these challenges. Our peer-led programs will provide a space to feel seen, heard, and uplifted.

**Feel undervalued or overlooked? Read [‘Stop Discounting Our Workforce!’](#) to learn how to advocate for fair recognition, better pay, and respect in your job.**

PWU celebrates the often-overlooked champions of mental illness support—people like you. We are one of the few mental health peer support groups dedicated to peer support for peer professionals. You deserve care, encouragement, and the recognition you've

earned! Ready to connect, grow, and ignite change together? PWU is your sanctuary. [Contact us](#) today!

*We don't heal in isolation, but in community. - S. Kelley Harrell*

*I define connection as the energy that exists between people when they feel seen, heard, and valued; when they can give and receive without judgment; and when they derive sustenance and strength from the relationship. - Brene Brown*

10] [My Shame: How My Anxiety Keeps Causing Me to Quit](#) by Daniel Gaughan @OC87 Recovery Diaries – Stories of mental health, empowerment, and change.

**Article excerpt:** I feel [shame](#) when I think about what I did today.

I quit another [job](#).

I am a thirty-year-old man (yes, as you might have guessed, I am a millennial) who lives at home with his mum and, *again*, I am [unemployed](#).

This, unfortunately, is a recurring theme throughout my life. I waltz into a job because, somehow, the people who interview me must think I am employment material. I guess, over the years, I have become a good [actor](#), somebody able to hide his internal conflicts.

This isn't to say I take advantage of my employers' good nature. No. Each time I attain a job, I tell myself that, this time around, things will be different, that, this time around, I will get my act together, and not mess the company about.

And, for the first few months, this is (mostly) true. I turn up. I work hard. I prove myself a valuable employee. But there is one thing I cannot overcome during my time there. In fact, those first few months are always the hardest in regards to this.

Aye. My old friend, [anxiety](#), that consistent, insistent parasite which never stops draining my energy, takes control of my thoughts and, it is within *this* environment—a new social environment—where he thrives the most.

Every innocuous-appearing interaction with my [colleagues](#) becomes a monumental challenge. I cannot focus on what they are saying because my [mind is racing](#). I sweat. My heart pounds. I overanalyze every facial expression wondering if they think I'm strange. And it is because of this that I probably *do* come across as strange. I respond without thinking, verbal diarrhea spews out of my mouth.

Then, when each shift has thankfully finished, I leave work, go home, and overthink every one of those dreadful interactions.

Often, this has resulted in me [drinking](#) or using [drugs](#) to ease the pain, to block those thoughts out but for a moment, until the next day when the hangover arrives and my

anxiety amplifies. This vicious cycle then starts to consume my life. My [sleep](#) suffers. My home life suffers. My productivity suffers. My mental and physical health declines.

*As any good therapist will tell you, you cannot heal what you do not acknowledge, and what you do not consciously acknowledge will remain in control of you from within, festering and destroying you and those around you. – Richard Rohr*

*Before sunlight can shine through a window, the blinds must be raised. - American Proverb*

11] [How to Stop Chasing Chemistry and Start Choosing Compatibility](#) by Jennifer McDougal @ The Good Men Project

*Chemistry can spark a fire. Compatibility builds a home. The question is — are you dating for thrill or for peace?*

**Article excerpt:** When Chemistry Isn't Enough

You lock eyes. There's a pull. Your body hums with desire and familiarity. You can't stop thinking about them. Every moment apart feels too long.

You tell your friends, *"I don't know what it is, but I just feel this intense connection."*

You think: *This must be it.*

But weeks later, the magic becomes anxiety.

They confuse you, keep you guessing, disappear then reappear with charm. And still, you chase the feeling, like an addict craving the high of those early sparks.

This is what we've been taught to seek — chemistry over compatibility.

But here's the truth: *Chemistry is what draws you in. Compatibility is what keeps you there.*

If you're tired of mistaking adrenaline for alignment, let's break down what's actually happening when you're chasing intense chemistry — and why compatibility is the missing ingredient to lasting, soul-expanding love.

Chemistry is often a cocktail of:

- **Familiar emotional patterns (often from childhood)**
- **Physical attraction**
- **Subconscious trauma responses**
- **Uncertainty and unpredictability**

Research from Dr. Helen Fisher, biological anthropologist, shows that when we're around someone we find attractive or exciting, our brain floods with **dopamine** — the same neurochemical involved in addiction.

This explains why you can feel *hooked* on someone who isn't emotionally healthy, consistent, or aligned with your long-term vision. Your brain isn't processing red flags — it's chasing rewards.

In trauma bonding scenarios, chemistry is often a **chemical reenactment of past emotional wounds**.

*Until we learn to love others as ourselves, it's difficult to blame broken people who desperately try to affirm themselves when no one else will. - Richard Rohr*

*Hope is a bridge that keeps healing alive. You are healing every moment, even if you can't see the progress. Hope gives your body the encouragement it needs to heal. It's the storms that bring the rain to help us to grow and heal. – Unknown*

12] [Childhood Trauma Tied to Psychosis Risk Across Three Countries](#) by Richard Sears @ Mad in America

**Article excerpt:** New study in Brazil, China, and Turkey finds higher trauma among people at clinical high risk, with patterns that differ by country.

A new [article](#) set to appear in the *Asian Journal of Psychiatry* finds that clinical high risk for psychosis (CHR) is linked to childhood trauma in Brazil, China, and Turkey.

The current work, led by Ana Caroline Lopes-Rocha from the University of São Paulo, additionally finds cultural differences in the relationship between CHR and childhood trauma. Chinese CHR participants reported higher levels of emotional neglect, physical neglect, and physical abuse, while those from Brazil reported higher levels of physical neglect.

This article is currently in pre-proof, meaning it has not yet been through peer review. The authors write:

**“Our cross-cultural study brought important findings about differences in childhood trauma in 253 CHR individuals from three different low- and middle-income countries. CHR subjects as a whole had significantly higher levels of childhood trauma when compared to controls. Addressing the specific types of childhood trauma in CHR subjects, sexual abuse was related to subject’s gender and marital status. Neglect (physical and emotional) was significantly different between countries. Physical abuse was different between countries and was related to lower level of education.”**

The authors compared 253 CHR participants with 281 controls and found higher trauma scores in the CHR group across most categories. This study highlights social adversity as an essential part of the story in the development of symptoms associated with psychosis, and it does so in three countries that are often underrepresented in early psychosis research.

*Trauma in a person, decontextualized over time, looks like personality. Trauma in a family, decontextualized over time, looks like family traits. Trauma in a people, decontextualized over time, looks like culture. – Resmaa Menakem*

*The worst crime, being expected not to tell. - Darrell Hammond*

13] [Expanding Your Comfort Zone Without Overwhelming Your System](#): Small Steps for Career Growth by Cyndi Bennett @ Complex-PTSD Foundation

**Article excerpt:** *A trauma-informed approach to sustainable professional development*

For trauma survivors navigating career development, the phrase “step outside your comfort zone” can feel overwhelming or even threatening. While growth requires stretching beyond familiar boundaries, there’s a crucial difference between gentle expansion and overwhelming our nervous system. Let’s explore how to nurture career growth while honoring our need for safety and regulation.

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### ***Why Expanding Your Comfort Zone Matters***

*Balancing safety with professional development*

As professionals navigating the modern workplace, we often hear about the importance of pushing boundaries and taking risks. However, for trauma survivors, this conventional wisdom needs to be approached with nuance and care. This section explores why expanding our comfort zone matters while acknowledging the delicate balance between growth and personal safety.

Our comfort zone represents the professional space where we feel secure, capable, and regulated. While this zone provides essential safety, staying exclusively within it can limit our career potential and prevent us from:

- Accessing new opportunities
- Developing leadership skills

- Building professional relationships
- Increasing our earning potential
- Contributing our unique gifts
- Achieving meaningful goals

However, the key lies in expanding this zone gradually and sustainably rather than forcing ourselves into overwhelming situations.

While understanding the importance of growth is crucial, it's equally vital to recognize when this growth becomes detrimental. Let's explore the signs that indicate we might be pushing ourselves too far, too fast.

*We must let go of the life we have planned, so as to accept the one that is waiting for us.*  
– Joseph Campbell

*Life can only be understood backwards, but it must be lived forwards.* – Soren Kierkegaard

14] [My Story and Other Books](#) by Elizabeth Woods

### ***The Sex Offender's Daughter***

Sexual abuse is one of the worst tortures an individual can be exposed to but for an innocent child it is completely traumatizing! A developing child has not had any life experience of sex and has no idea as to what is happening to them and why. It is terrifying and soul-destroying!

In this book Elizabeth tells her story of a world of brutal sex-offenders, murderers and inconceivably neglectful adults. Her so-called father loaned her out to vicious sexual predators for their enjoyment. She suffered sexual abuse throughout her childhood and desperately tried to seek help from the adults around her, who chose to ignore her. A girl deeply traumatized and forgotten by everyone in society - even doctors and psychologists turned her away when the evidence of abuse was obvious. She was forced to witness several brutal murders believing she was next.

Elizabeth survived in an environment where most people would not and she is now able to reveal her childhood, hoping for the world to change.

### ***Living with Complex PTSD***

Complex PTSD is not the same as the term PTSD. PTSD is a condition that can manifest itself after a single traumatic event like a car accident. Complex PTSD is a condition that can develop when a human being has been exposed to repeated trauma like childhood abuse, a kidnapping or being a prisoner of war.

In this book, I endeavor to show you what life has been like for me as a survivor of

childhood abuse. If you are a survivor like me, this may resonate with you as you recognize my struggles with certain aspects of life with your own. For those of you who are therapists and psychologists out there, I hope my book will help you with a deeper insight into the world of living with Complex PTSD.

*The most authentic thing about us is our capacity to create, to overcome, to endure, to transform, to love and to be greater than our suffering. - Ben Okri*

*There's really no such thing as 'voiceless'. There are only the deliberately silenced or the preferably unheard. – Arundhati Roy*

***Thank you & Take care, Michael***

PS. Please share this with your friends & if you have received this in error, please let me know – [mikeskinner@comcast.net](mailto:mikeskinner@comcast.net)

***Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter.  
Martin Luther King, Jr.***

***A diagnosis is not a destiny***

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[mikeskinner@survivingspirit.com](mailto:mikeskinner@survivingspirit.com) 603-625-2136 38 River Ledge Drive, Goffstown, NH 03045

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