



Healing the Heart Through the Creative Arts, Education & Advocacy

Hope, Healing & Help for Trauma, Abuse & Mental Health

“Out of suffering have emerged the strongest souls; the most massive characters are seared with scars”. Kahlil Gibran

The Surviving Spirit Newsletter August 2018

Hi folks,

Hard to believe that we are at the end of August, I swear the older I get, the faster time flies by, even when I have purposely slowed down my life, at least I think I have. Oh well, as they say, “C'est la vie”.

One thing is for sure, lots of great information and resources out there. I compile all of these resources, and then, when I go to put the newsletter together, I once again realize, oops, that's way too much info. The good news to that dilemma, I get to read a lot things I normally might not encounter.

The article by Sarah Kilch on brain injury and domestic violence gave me lots to ponder. Truth be told, I've been thinking about that for the last year and connecting the dots as to how my own head injuries, concussions/traumatic brain injuries over the years have impacted my own life. Not complaining, just mindful of how the majority of my head injuries were the result of violence inflicted upon me as a young boy and then later as a man by several thugs. So confusing at times in trying to sort out what I was struggling with, was it the post traumatic stress, the depression or the mild traumatic brain injuries? They make one hell of a combination to cause confusion in your life. Someday when I finish that memoir of mine, *which is still a work in progress*, I will delve into more of the details. The accidental head injuries I can understand, the ones that came about because of violence, still leaves me sad...and angry. Grateful for neuroplasticity and healing....

I hope that everyone has had time to sit back and enjoy their summer....& always wishing everyone, *hope, healing & help*.

Take care, Michael

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1] [Brain injury & domestic violence: a significant public issue](#) by Sarah Gaffney

As members of the brain injury community, it is important to be aware of the intersection of brain injury and domestic violence. Traumatic brain injury [TBI] as a result of domestic violence is often under-reported and under-recognized, and screening, identification, prevention, treatment, and supports are extremely important for this population. These vulnerable individuals, however, often receive neither diagnosis nor proper interventions. The lack of identification and subsequent support frequently leaves these survivors with significant health and social challenges and puts them at elevated risk for repeat injury.

Domestic violence is itself a pervasive issue in the United States and anyone can be affected. "Broadly defined, domestic violence is the use of physical or other psychological harm in a domestic setting against a romantic partner, child, parent, relative, or other cohabitant. Domestic violence may include a combination of physical, sexual, emotional, and verbal abuse. In many cases, this pattern of domestic violence emerges as a systematic attempt to control another person's actions and life. Domestic violence affects individuals regardless of age, gender, sex, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion, or socioeconomic status...One of the most common types of domestic violence is intimate partner violence [IPV], which occurs when the domestic violence is perpetrated by an individual against their romantic partner." 1 - Brown, et al [2018]

Each year, women and men in the United States are the victims of approximately 4.8 million and 2.9 million IPV-related physical and sexual assaults respectively, and these numbers are likely to be underestimated. According to the Centers for Disease Control [CDC], in the United States it is estimated that at least 156,000 TBI-related deaths, hospitalizations, and emergency department visits are related to assaults. In addition, blows to the head or strangulation may occur in 50 to 90 percent of IPV physical assaults against women, putting them at risk for both traumatic and anoxic brain injuries. Across the lifetime, studies have estimated that 33 percent of women and 25 percent of men are victims of IPV at some point in their lives.2 - Brown, et al [2018] [Read the entire article](#)

[Sarah Kilch Gaffney](#) lives on a little piece of land in central Maine with her family.

Sarah attended Knox College, where she received a B.A. in creative writing & environmental studies. Over the years, she has done a stint on a back-country trail crew, worked a couple of seasons with a sea kayak tour company in Bar Harbor, and spent several years in the conservation/volunteer management fields. She currently works as a program coordinator conducting brain injury advocacy, outreach, and education.

She loves the woods, lives too far away from the ocean, and finds microbiology and the art of homemade caramels equally fascinating. She is a member of the [Maine Writers and Publishers](#)

[Alliance](#) [with a [profile](#) on MWPA's Find Maine Writers site] and is also a reader for both [Hippocampus](#) and [Atlas & Alice Literary Magazine](#).

“Treat people as if they were what they ought to be and you help them to become what they are capable of being.” Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

“Be not afraid of going slowly, be afraid only of standing still.” Chinese Proverb

2] [Rae Luskin - Speaker Showcase: Scribble Your Way to Health, Happiness and Success](#) - YouTube
13:18 minutes

Every single person has creativity inside them. It might be buried under years of people telling you that you are not that creative. It is my passion to help you rediscover your unique creative gifts. Scribbling is one easy strategy to unlock your imagination and build your creative confidence. It will help you tap into your heart, process emotions, and heal. It will help you push past limited thinking and open to new possibilities. It might even save your life.

[Rae Luskin](#) a Chicago, artist, author and community activist. Rae received her BFA from Roosevelt University and an MA in Urban Planning from Loyola University. Rae is a true leader in using creative expression to nurture self worth, resilience, healing and social change. Known to many as the Healed Heart Expert, her clients say, “If you want to make peace with your past and stand in your power work with Rae. If you want loving support, inspiration and tools that will take you from feeling worthless or broken to owning your magnificence work with Rae. If you are tired of feeling nobody knows the true you, work with Rae and experience authentic, loving, rich relationships.”

Rae is a gifted artist and teacher. Her art work is featured in Shine the Light by Rachel Lev and can be found in numerous private collections. In 1999, she founded Art & Soul Connections which is dedicated to providing easy to follow creative experiential workshops and tools, for self-discovery, personal growth and healing. Rae has led various enrichment programs and creative retreats for schools, not-for profit foundations, professional organizations and social service agencies. Her clients have said “Rae takes the fear out of art. If you can use scissors, a glue stick and crayons you will be successful. We learned that the process is more important than the product.”

Always finding ways to balance her artistic side with her desire to improve the lives of women and children, Rae has been a community activist for the last 16 years with National Council of Jewish Women and J-CARES [Jewish Community, Abuse, Response, Education and Solutions]. In January of 2010, she founded Survivor SOULutions to educate communities, empower survivors, and encourage those who love them, to end the “silent epidemic” of childhood sexual abuse. Sharing her personal story, art work and her innovative art and soul programs, she has changed the lives of hundreds. According to community partners, Rae is “passionate about her work as an advocate for healthy children and families. She is strong and articulate and can lead her cause. Her work has the potential to prevent abuse and broken hearts across the world.”

Rae published Art From My Heart, a creative self discovery journal in October, 2010. Rae believes, “If we want to raise successful, resilient and happy children, we need to create opportunities for play, creativity and exploration. If we want to build character and confidence, we need to engage in experiences that cultivate communication, strengths and gifts. If we want children to be compassionate,

respectful and generous then we need to model for them, how they can make a difference in the world.” Don’t be an observer in your child’s life; participate in a little Art From My Heart!

[Rae Luskin Digital Press Kit](#)

“I have learned that some of the nicest people you’ll ever meet are those who have suffered a traumatic event or loss. I admire them for their strength, but most especially for their life gratitude - a gift often taken for granted by the average person in society.” Sasha Azevedo

3] [Fear Shrinks Your Brain and Makes You Less Creative](#) by Carolyn Centeno - Forbes

Neuroscientists are studying what is happening in our brains when we are fearful and how we can shift out of that mindset into a more abundant place. Recently, I sat down with one of the most inspiring female minds in neuroscience today, Dr. Wendy Suzuki, NYU Neuroscientist, professor and author of Healthy Brain Happy Life to discuss how. Dr. Suzuki has famously studied long-term memory, creativity, anxiety, and how exercise affects our brain and overall health.

What is Abundant Thinking? - Abundance really starts with appreciation and gratitude for what you have because everyone has abundance of some kind.

How does gratitude affect our brain? - If you have a mindset of gratitude and abundance, you basically help eliminate the fear that comes in all too easily when you say the words taxes or Washington or any other fear-inducing word. You are actually protecting your brain if you can come from gratitude and abundance. In neuroscience speak, you are decreasing the activity in an area of your brain which processes fear called the amygdala. It not only is a sensory area for fear but most dangerously, has motor outputs to those areas that make your heart beat faster, make you sweat and contribute to that feeling of anxiety. So, you want to counter that activity with other thoughts and activity. Having an “attitude of gratitude” allows you to do that.

Are there any implications of fear and long-term stress? - We have a lot of knowledge about what happens when we are in a constant state of fight-or-flight. And those examples come from syndromes like PTSD, experiencing terrible situations for a long period of time. Here we come to a concept of brain plasticity, which basically means that what you’re experiencing can change your brain. It can make your brain grow so that it’s nice and fluffy and strong or it can shrink it down. So, guess what PTSD does? It can shrink the size of your temporal lobe and increase the size of the amygdala structure that is processing fear information. It also shrinks the size of a key brain area that I’ve studied for the last 25 years called the hippocampus, which is critical for long-term memory. The hippocampus has been more recently implicated in creativity and imagination. Because what imagination is, is taking those things you have in your memory and putting them together in a new way. So just in the way that the hippocampus allows us to think about the past and memory, it also allows us to imagine the future. Long-term stress is literally killing the cells in your hippocampus that contribute to the deterioration of your memory. But it’s also zapping your creativity.

How can we get out of that feeling of anxiety? - [Read the entire article](#)

[Carolyn Centeno](#) - Tools to redefine success, shift in mindset and lead as your best self

I am a brand strategy consultant and Founder of The We Age. In my work, I look to connect business

and brand with human truths to move the world forward and shift the conversation. I work with agencies and Fortune 500 leaders on how to shift their business and brand in a changing world through bespoke offers - brand strategy, innovation, insight generation, leadership development and internal and external activation. The We Age conversation series assembles some of the most inspiring female leaders in neuroscience, business and wellness today to explore collaboratively how we can lead as our best selves and positively impact the world. I have worked at Wolff Olins, IDEO, and Dragon Rouge and co-built Form&, an award-winning brand and innovation consultancy. I have had a lifelong interest in wellness, neuroscience and positive psychology, lead Sound meditations and am a Certified Sound Practitioner and Meditation Teacher.

“Sometimes a breakdown can be the beginning of a kind of breakthrough, a way of living in advance through a trauma that prepares you for a future of radical transformation. Cherrie Moraga

4] [WAR-TOYS Project](#) - In every warzone and refugee camp, there are countless stories that go untold, locked behind the anguished faces of the children who have survived. These girls and boys are the ones most affected by the fighting yet the least heard from when discussing the costs of war. Pointing a camera at them makes a powerful, emotional connection, but it’s not the same as seeing war from the children's perspective, learning firsthand what they have experienced. To do that, it takes a subjective approach and a willingness to speak their language – to play.

Since 2011, toy photographer [Brian McCarty](#) has worked with children from Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Israel, the West Bank, and Gaza Strip on a photo series titled WAR-TOYS. Boys and girls are invited to become art directors for Brian's photographs of locally found toys, recreating their experiences through a deconstructive and disarming filter of play. The project invokes principles and practices of expressive art therapy to safely gather and articulate children's unseen accounts of war.

The goal, above all else, is to responsibly engage potentially traumatized children in the storytelling process. This begins through carefully designed art-based interviews, conducted in group settings and organized in partnership with NGOs and UN agencies. Sessions are run by a specialized art therapist who travels with Brian. WAR-TOYS has provided many children their first opportunity to begin processing their experiences in a controlled setting.

In the sessions, boys and girls ages 8-12 are introduced to the project and invited to draw a story from their life that they want shared. The drawings that the children create are the beginnings of longer conversations with the onsite therapist. Her interaction with the children is key to understanding the true meaning behind their artwork. Some important elements are buried – as if to protect them – in seemingly chaotic or even innocuous scenes. Others are shown directly in stark images of daily life in a warzone.

Toy soldiers are as ubiquitous as AK-47s

All of the toys used in the project are sourced from nearby vendors, borrowed from the community, or created through group activities with the children. The use of locally found toys and toy-objects is meant to provide subtle commentary on socioeconomic conditions and the parallel distribution of arms and consumer goods around the world. In every war zone in which Brian has worked thus far, toy soldiers are as ubiquitous as AK-47s.

[This war photographer uses toys to tell child survivors' stories](#) - PBS NewsHour - In our NewsHour Shares moment of the day, Brian McCarty chronicles the horrors of war through the eyes of children, using art therapy and toys to direct his photographs.

Brian McCarty's photographs focus on conflict zones as seen through the eyes of children. A 5-year tour of an exhibition of his work has already made stops in Houston, Texas, and Little Rock, Arkansas, and he shows no signs of slowing down.

[You Tube](#) - 4:21 minutes - This war photographer uses toys to tell child survivors' stories - PBS NewsHour

"Anything that's human is mentionable, and anything that is mentionable can be more manageable. When we can talk about our feelings, they become less overwhelming, less upsetting, and less scary. The people we trust with that important talk can help us know that we are not alone." Fred Rogers

"What is to give light must endure burning." Victor E. Frankl

5] [The Food That Helps Battle Depression](#) – By Elizabeth Bernstein - Wall Street Journal

The right kind of diet may give the brain more of what it needs to avoid depression, or even to treat it once it's begun

You're feeling depressed. What have you been eating?

Psychiatrists and therapists don't often ask this question. But a growing body of research over the past decade shows that a healthy diet-high in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, fish and unprocessed lean red meat-can prevent depression. And an unhealthy diet-high in processed and refined foods-increases the risk for the disease in everyone, including children and teens.

Now recent studies show that a healthy diet may not only prevent depression, but could effectively treat it once it's started.

Researchers, led by epidemiologist Felice Jacka of Australia's Deakin University, looked at whether improving the diets of people with major depression would help improve their mood. They chose 67 people with depression for the study, some of whom were already being treated with antidepressants, some with psychotherapy, and some with both. Half of these people were given nutritional counseling from a dietitian, who helped them eat healthier. Half were given one-on-one social support-they were paired with someone to chat or play cards with-which is known to help people with depression.

After 12 weeks, the people who improved their diets showed significantly happier moods than those who received social support. And the people who improved their diets the most improved the most. The study was published in January 2017 in BMC Medicine. A second, larger study drew similar conclusions and showed that the boost in mood lasted six months. It was led by researchers at the University of South Australia and published in December 2017 in Nutritional Neuroscience.

And later this month in Los Angeles at the American Academy of Neurology's annual meeting, researchers from Rush University Medical Center in Chicago will present results from their research

that shows that elderly adults who eat vegetables, fruits and whole grains are less likely to develop depression over time.

The findings are spurring the rise of a new field: nutritional psychiatry. Dr. Jacka helped to found the International Society for Nutritional Psychiatry Research in 2013. It held its first conference last summer. She's also launched Deakin University's Food & Mood Centre, which is dedicated to researching and developing nutrition-based strategies for brain disorders. [Read the entire article](#)

"It's always hard to deal with injuries mentally, but I like to think about it as a new beginning. I can't change what happened, so the focus needs to go toward healing and coming back stronger than before." Carli Lloyd

"Every artist dips his brush in his own soul, and paints his own nature into his pictures." Henry Ward Beecher

6] SAMHSA's Six Key Principles of a Trauma-Informed Approach – Videos

A trauma-informed approach reflects adherence to six key principles rather than a prescribed set of practices or procedures. These principles may be generalizable across multiple types of settings, although terminology and application may be setting- or sector-specific:

1. **Safety** - Leah Harris - <https://vimeo.com/107476472> (4:22 minutes)
2. **Trustworthiness and Transparency** - Pat Risser - <https://vimeo.com/107478500> (6:16 minutes)
3. **Peer support** - Cicely Spencer - <https://vimeo.com/107478502> (4:53 minutes)
4. **Collaboration & Mutuality** - William Kellibrew - <https://vimeo.com/107476474> (4:03 minutes)
5. **Empowerment, Voice & Choice** - Michael Skinner - <https://vimeo.com/107476470> (2:45 minutes)
6. **Cultural, Historical, and Gender Issues** - William Kellibrew - <https://vimeo.com/107488464> (6:58 minutes)

[SAMHSA's Trauma-Informed Approach: Key Assumptions and Principles](#) - Trauma Curriculum Instructors Guidance

Videos posted above are included in the training PDF

[Guiding Principles of Trauma-Informed Care](#) – SAMHSA News

"Happiness is not something you postpone for the future; it is something you design for the present." Jim Rohn

"My mission in life is not merely to survive, but to thrive; and to do so with some passion, some compassion, some humor, and some style." Maya Angelou

7] [Telephone Hotlines & Helplines](#) - By [John M. Grohol, Psy.D.](#) - PsychCentral

Looking for a telephone hot-line or helpline because you're in emotional distress [such as [depression](#)]. or are in a bad situation that you need help getting out of?

We've got you covered. If you don't see what you need below, please see our more extensive [common hotline phone numbers list](#) that covers the most common topics of people in need. It also lists online ways of reaching out for help, such as text chat.

Remember - you are not alone. Others are here to help you get through this difficult time. Please take a moment to reach out and call someone. If not one of the telephone numbers below, then a friend or someone you can talk to in order to take the next steps in your life. [Learn more](#)

“Clouds come floating into my life, no longer to carry rain or usher storm, but to add color to my sunset sky.” Rabindranath Tagore

“No act of kindness, no matter how small, is ever wasted.” Aesop

8] [Why Mandating Mental Health Education in Schools is a Band-Aid on a Gaping Wound](#) by Leah Harris – ACEs Connection

“Oh, the conversations to be had to undo the ‘mental health education’ my son is likely to get at school.” I posted these words on Facebook in response to [recent news](#) that mental health education will now be required in the Virginia and New York public school systems. I have a child in the Virginia public schools, where this education will be mandated for 9th and 10th graders.

I am guessing some readers might ask: “What’s wrong with teaching young people about mental health? Shouldn’t we bring this issue out of the shadows and talk about it at school?”

I understand the the desperate desire to do something-anything. The statistics are horrifying and getting worse: the number of American children contemplating or attempting suicide has tripled between 2008 and 2015, according to a study published in the journal Pediatrics. In 2016, suicide rose from the 3rd to the 2nd leading cause of death for young people in the U.S. Recent statistics show [Black youth taking their lives at twice the rate](#) of their white counterparts. Studies indicate that as many of [fifty percent](#) of trans and gender non-conforming youth have attempted suicide.

Given this state of emergency, isn't it our *responsibility* to educate youth about their mental health?

Don't get me wrong: of course I care deeply about the mental and physical health of children, including my own son's. I don't want students to suffer in silence and shame. But I am very concerned about just how this topic will be taught in schools.

Currently, there is a master narrative about mental health and suicide that dominates in our society. According to this medical model narrative, mental illnesses are genetically-based, biological brain diseases caused by “chemical imbalances” in the brain. Suicide is often said to be caused by these “brain diseases.” But this master narrative has been debunked [time and again](#), even within the medical profession itself.

In an insightful talk called "[Capitalism Makes us Crazy](#)," physician and internationally-renowned trauma expert Gabor Mate provides the best deconstruction of the medical model that I've yet in encountered. In this talk, he notes: "What we see is a society that literally makes people sick...What the medical model does, whether with mental illness or physical illness, it makes two separations. It separates the mind from the body, so that what happens emotionally is not seen to have an impact on our physical health...and number two, it separates individuals from their environment. So that we try to understand individuals in separation from their actual lives." He goes on to say that "those separations are socially imposed, they're culturally defined, and scientifically they are completely invalid..."

I am afraid that it is this invalid and shaming narrative that students will be taught-a medicalized, individualistic view that locates "brokenness" completely in their "chemically-imbalanced" brains and not at all in the world that shapes those developing brains and the bodies that house them.

I come at this issue not just as a suicide prevention advocate, and not even just as a concerned parent. I myself was a suicidal young person, having made several attempts to take my life before the age of 18. When I think about what would have helped me, it would not have been a message that something was wrong with my brain. Or that my intense anger, fear, and sadness were simply "disorders" and not understandable responses to the world I inhabited, the trauma that I had experienced. I already felt bad, wrong, and flawed enough. My mental health diagnoses only served to pathologize my pain instead of helping me to make sense of it and to find ways to heal. [Read the entire article](#)

[Leah Harris](#) - I am a mother, survivor, and a storyteller working for cultural shift in how we understand and respond to emotional distress, mental health, trauma, addiction, homelessness, incarceration, and suicide. I believe in redefining health as a social justice issue.

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

"Healing is a matter of time, but it is sometimes also a matter of opportunity." Hippocrates

9] [What Do You Put in Your Mind?](#) by [Sister True Dedication](#) a Buddhist teacher and former BBC journalist

Just as you consume food, you consume media. And like food, some media is wholesome and some is unhealthy. Sister True Dedication on why you need to pay attention to what nourishes your mind.

You may take care of your body with a healthy and ethical diet, and perhaps a balanced program of exercise. But do you have a similarly intentional diet for your mind?

We all want to master our mind, to tame its monkey-mind aspects. That's why we practice meditation and mindfulness. But it's not just a question of willpower or skill. Our mind is made of what we feed it, so we need to know how to nourish and protect it.

I was a young journalist working for BBC News when I first heard Thich Nhat Hanh teach that when you read a newspaper, magazine, or website, watch films or television, or even engage in conversation, you are engaged in consumption. I'd never thought of it like that before. I'd thought of TV, magazines,

radio shows, and music as ephemeral and optional. It was up to the viewer, reader, or listener to do with them what they will.

I heard Thich Nhat Hanh speak with a fierce and solemn voice as he declared in a talk, “When we watch television and movies we consume, when we browse the internet we consume, when we listen to music or a conversation, we consume.” I remember his soft words booming through the loudspeakers: “And what we consume every day may be highly toxic. It may contain violence, craving, fear, anger, and despair.”

I was shocked. Suddenly websites, radio shows, movies, music-and even conversations with close friends-struck me as strangely substantive and not so ephemeral after all. Maybe I wasn’t as free from them as I thought.

I realized that it’s true: once those images, sounds, ideas, and feelings come into your mind, they stay there. There are disturbing scenes from movies I watched as a teenager that still come up in my consciousness twenty years later. There are conversations I walk away from feeling queasy. If I’m mindful and honest enough, I recognize how a single news bulletin can touch off seeds of fear, despair, anger, hatred, or helplessness deep in my consciousness. Or how a movie can nourish my baseline anger and aggression. Or how one riff from a music track in a supermarket or escalator can spark sorrow, craving, or nostalgia, just as easily as it can trigger joy or delight.

I remember meeting a practitioner who wore earplugs when she did her weekly shopping so she didn’t have to hear the Muzak. “It’s my mind!” she announced. “I’ll choose what to put into it, thank you very much.”

There’s a kind of freedom in choosing what you will let into your mind and what you won’t. But how many of us allow ourselves that kind of freedom? When you stick with a TV show or news article, is it because you really want to? Or is it because you’re afraid to confront what comes up inside when you switch it off or put it down? In the newsroom, we were trained in the art of “sticky” news-the kind of news that’s hard to turn off.

“We have more than enough information,” says Thich Nhat Hanh, “but is it the right kind of information?” How many hours a day do we spend receiving input? What is coming into our consciousness along with it? Is it violence, fear, anxiety, craving, and despair that feed negativity, or something that helps positive seeds grow? [Read the entire article](#)

“Creativity is allowing yourself to make mistakes. Art is knowing which ones to keep.” Scott Adams

“Art is the only way to run away without leaving home.” Twyla Tharp

10] [Lisa Zarcone](#) - author of *The Unspoken Truth*, is one remarkable woman. Her childhood was nothing less than hideous. Her ability to survive in her silent world of treachery is truly astonishing. Writing this novel is her way of giving back.

A wife, mother of three and grandmother of two; Lisa is the everyday woman with extraordinary gifts. She has worked with the disabled teaching life skills and writing. Lisa has also mentored young women teaching journaling, poetry and art therapy.

Lisa has a passion for working with those who have mental illness. What her past has taught her about mental illness cannot be read in a textbook. This is life experience and watching it through the eyes of a young child puts a whole new understanding to it.

[The Unspoken Truth: A Memoir by Lisa Zarcone](#) @ Good Reads

[Meet Lisa Zarcone of Lisa Zarcone](#) - Author/Advocate/Public Speaker/Inspirationist/Blogger - I am from Western Massachusetts - Boston Voyager Magazine

Today we'd like to introduce you to Lisa Zarcone.

So, before we jump into specific questions about the business, why don't you give us some details about you and your story.

I am the author of The Unspoken Truth A Memoir. My story is raw, riveting and real. I grew up in a very dysfunctional household as I describe in my book as the house of horrors. My mother was severely mentally ill and the abuse I sustained by her hands as well as others is nothing short of hideous. Unfortunately, my mother did not get the proper help and support and her poor judgment let me down a path that opened me up as prey for others who came to claim what was never theirs to take in the first place. I write my story through the eyes of a child giving the reader the child's perspective of abuse right in the moment. My story starts out at the tender age of 6 years old losing my brother to Leukemia. That is when my little world came crashing down around me. I was young, innocent, scared and confused, with only loss of innocence and blind faith leading me through this unbelievable journey.

I decided to write my story about 8 years ago after the death of my father, with his passing it brought up a lot of old memories and feelings that I had buried so many years ago. I lived with this silent pain for far too long the emotional damage burst into overdrive. I did seek counseling and during that time I began to write down my story, and as I made it through the process I not only began to heal but I wrote my memoir! I became dedicated to seeing it through to publication, which I did on my own. I had to learn everything from soup to nuts. What a huge task, and learning experience, as this is my first book. I read, researched and studied everything that I could to help me through the process, and I made it happen. I am now a published author and with this accomplishment under my belt I pushed forward becoming a public speaker and Child Advocate/Massachusetts Ambassador through NAASCA (national association of adult survivors of child abuse). I use my title as a platform to share my story and raise awareness to these strong subjects that need to be talked about repeatedly until change can happen. My motto is "Embrace The Journey" because you never know what life may throw in your path. [Read the entire article](#)

"Just like there's always time for pain, there's always time for healing." Jennifer Brown

"do not look for healing at the feet of those who broke you" Rupi Kaur

11] [Michael Skinner @ Survivor Knights Event](#), Philadelphia, PA – live performance of "The 9:30 Train" - YouTube 4:06 minutes

"The 9:30 Train", from the '[Waitin' for a Train CD](#), performed at the Survivor Knights event: a great

cause, great people & a great time.

“The 9:30 Train” © Michael Skinner Music

She wants my love, but she pushes away
She wants my love, but she gives it away

She’s leavin’ town, she’s leavin’ today
Packed all her bags to catch an early train
She’s leavin’ town on the 9:30 train
No matter what I say I can’t get her to stay

Tried so hard to get her to stay
She says it’s not me, but she won’t explain
Tells me there’s things inside causing her pain
So she wants my love but she pushes away
So much love inside but she runs away
No matter what I say I can’t get her to stay

Middle

She’s leavin’ town on the 9:30 train
No matter what I say I can’t get her to stay
She’s leaving town, she’s leavin’ today
No matter what I say I can’t get her to stay

.....”she’s leavin today..... on the 9:30 train”

“Music is the literature of the heart; it commences where speech ends.” Alphonse de Lamartine

12] [PRAISES FOR THE TRAUMA SPEAKERS](#) by Jeff Brown

Let Them Whisper Your Heart Back To Life

A world where success is not measured by our ability to out-achieve our neighbor, but by our ability to remain heartfully connected to each other.

I can’t possibly know what the most traumatized among us have experienced, nor do I have some simple healing solution that will transform their suffering. We are only just beginning to understand the nature of trauma on this planet. We are only just beginning to understand that we are ALL trauma-survivors, to one degree or another. We are only just beginning to listen to the real story of our lives, after generations of denial, victim-bashing, ungrounded attempts to ‘rise above’ it.

But I do know that we need their voice, more than ever, to save this species.

In the survivalist world that we come from, the most traumatized individuals were the most shamed and shunned. It was survival of the ‘fittest’, authenticity and healing be damned. If you could punch your way through the pain and accumulate, you were deemed a success. It didn’t matter what your inner

world or personal life looked like, so long as you championed the material world.

But that way of being is coming to an end. It is no longer serving us. Those in denial around their pain, those focused exclusively on mastery and material achievement, those who imagine themselves ‘self-determined’ (while negating all who have contributed to their ‘success’), are actually destroying our species and the planet that houses us. We can no longer live in a world that defines success in comparative terms. We can no longer inhabit a reality where our greatest success stories are those who fled their pain the fastest, hiding their unhealed brokenness behind an over-compensatory materialism. I am not fooled by the egoic accumulators of the world. They are merely lost children, confusing their bottomless quest for worldly validation with healthy self-regard. They will never find peace, in this way. It is a soulless path.

It is time for a world that champions the survival of the truest. That stands down the accumulators and elevates the authenticators. A world where success is not measured by our ability to out-achieve our neighbor, but by our ability to remain heartfully connected to each other. That honors those who have the courage to feel and acknowledge their victimhood, to share their painful story, to invite all of us to self-reveal. That celebrates those who are brave enough to own their uniqueness in the face of judgment and ridicule. This is the only world that can last.

In this next-step world, those who have suffered the most will be our greatest teachers. It has been so artificial for so long, that we need the trauma-speakers to save us. Because they are the closest to the truth of all of our lives. Because they are reminders of our misplaced humanness. Because they are the most connected to the feelings that we are all burying- the individual cries for relief, the ancestral unresolveds that thread through each generation. It may seem counter-intuitive in this armored world, but those who have the courage to own their pain, are actually the ones we need the most.

So next time you feel tempted to turn away from someone who wants to share their horribly painful story, stop. Just stop. Ask yourself why you are so eager to go- are they reminding you of something you don’t want to feel within yourself?

Then listen close to them, and let them whisper your heart back to life.

Jeff is the author of [*Soulshaping: A Journey of Self-Creation*](#) , [*Ascending with Both Feet on the Ground: Words to Awaken your Heart*](#) and [*An Uncommon Bond*](#).

“Did I offer peace today? Did I bring a smile to someone's face? Did I say words of healing? Did I let go of my anger and resentment? Did I forgive? Did I love? These are the real questions. I must trust that the little bit of love that I sow now will bear many fruits, here in this world and the life to come.”
Henri Nouwen

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

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