



*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 2022**

Hi folks,

Welcome to the November issue of The Surviving Spirit Newsletter.

Honored to have been a guest on Salima Jadavji's podacst - '*Dare To Share Your Untold Story*'.

['Dare To Share Your Untold Story'](#) has been brought to you with the intention to break down the barriers of mental stigma, embrace mental beauty and invite guests to a safe place to share with vulnerability, without holding back, their true and full story - no matter what part of the journey that they are in, beginning, middle or end. As a society we are conditioned to keep some of our most painful stories a secret. No matter what we each have suffered with - whatever the struggle, hurdle or strife we face there is always a part of our story that remains untold. The 'untold story' has a lot to do with the impact on mental health which we shy away from sharing. So let's expose what we suppress and embrace the invitation of mental beauty. The notion of embracing 'mental beauty' is the next way to see mental health...and when you dare to share...you break the silence, speak your truth, use your voice, and inspire others to do the same. TOGETHER – we can dare and share...so let's take a vow to 'dare to share our untold stories'!

[Dare To Share Your Untold Story: Episode 58](#) with Michael Skinner: Trauma Accumulated, Misperception of Illness and Finding his way to be Impactful

Michael openly speaks out about physical, emotional, and sexual abuse he endured from childhood. He has suffered through post-traumatic stress disorder, major depressive disorder, among other painful experiences. Michael emphasized that he was leading a regular life, until an encounter he had with a mental health facility, at a time when he underwent a nervous breakdown, he attempted to seek help, as he sought to make sense of the flashbacks. He shares that his story is deeply rooted in stigma and shame he suffered, carrying the label of 'mentally ill'. He shares his experienced of being invalidated by the healthcare system and being told 'it's all in your head' after struggling with a mild traumatic brain injury. Michael's story in its entirety is about the cumulative effect of all these events that had taken place in earlier parts of his life and how he had to cope and find his way with each experience. Michael was heavily medicated at times, and at times, uncertain if treatment was in alignment with his diagnoses, in addition to not feeling that the medical and mental health teams were deriving any of their practices from a trauma-informed space. Michael talked about other rejections he faced in later parts of

his life, reprimands he felt he withstood once people found out about his mental health background, and how trying it was with many new starts he had to undertake. His key message to the listeners is that: there's a wealth of resources to look at, to listen to, to read; find your path and keep trying different things, even if you must keep at it; borrow ideas and create your own healing; healing happens on all levels.

Or at Apple Podcasts - [Dare To Share Your Untold Story: Episode 58](#) with Michael Skinner: Trauma Accumulated, Misperception of Illness and Finding his way to be Impactful

**To be a guest on the show - [I dare to share!](#)**

*“My entire life can be described in one sentence: it didn't go as planned, and that's okay.” Hugh Raye*

*“You either get bitter, or you get better. You either take what's been dealt to you and allow it to make you better, or you allow it to tear you down.” - Iona Mink*

*“Sometimes it takes an overwhelming breakdown to have an undeniable breakthrough.” - Don Keigh*

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*“Everyone may agree upon the diagnosis, but not everyone may consent to the therapy. Indeed, for healing, things have to be sacrificed at times and separation or loss might always be heartbreak and leave scars of remorse or regret. (“Sorrow”)” - Erik Pevernagie*

*“Though no one can go back and make a brand new start, anyone can start from now and make a brand new end.” As We Understood - Al-Anon*

1] [Trauma During Childhood Triples the Risk of Suffering a Serious Mental Disorder in Adulthood](#) – Neuroscience News

**Summary:** *Childhood trauma significantly increases the risk of being diagnosed with a mental health disorder later in life. For children who experienced emotional abuse, the most prevalent disorder reported was anxiety. Trauma also increased the risks for psychosis, OCD, and bipolar disorder. Significantly, those who experience trauma during childhood were 15 times more likely to be diagnosed with borderline personality disorder later in life.*

**A study led by researchers at the Hospital del Mar Medical Research Institute links psychological trauma in childhood with an increased risk of developing some kind of mental disorder years later.**

Suffering psychological trauma during childhood significantly increases the risk of developing a mental disorder in adulthood. Specifically, as much as three times, according to a recent study led by researchers at the Hospital del Mar Medical Research Institute, published in the journal *European Archives of Psychiatry and Clinical Neuroscience*.

The study analyses the fourteen reviews and meta-analyses published to date in specialized journals on this issue, and is the first to take into account the full range of existing mental disorders.

In total, the studies analyzed incorporate more than 93,000 cases, revealing a direct link between suffering psychological trauma at a pediatric age and the risk of developing a mental pathology later in life.

“It is the strongest evidence to date that psychological trauma really is a risk factor for suffering a mental disorder later on,” says Dr. Benedikt Amann, lead author of the study, a researcher in the Mental Health Research Group at the IMIM-Hospital del Mar and the CIBER on Mental Health (CIBERSAM).

The most common childhood traumas are emotional, physical and sexual abuse, as well as emotional or physical neglect and bullying, although there are many others.

Suffering one of these situations damages the brain, causing physical as well as psychological consequences in the form of various disorders. In the case of emotional abuse, the most frequent trauma is associated with the most prevalent disorder in the population, that of anxiety.

But there is also a relationship between childhood trauma and other pathologies, such as psychosis, which is linked to all traumas, obsessive-compulsive disorder or bipolar disorder.

The risk of suffering from borderline personality disorder increases up to fifteen times in the case of having experienced trauma during childhood.

Trauma in adulthood is also associated with a four-fold increase in the risk of a later mental disorder. The researchers point out, however, that there is less evidence for this type of pathology.

### **Study the history of the sufferer**

Given these results, Bridget Hogg, a researcher at the IMIM-Hospital del Mar, psychologist and first author of the study, believes that patients need an approach that not only takes into account physical factors, but also their history.

In this sense, “It is necessary to guide the patient through their life history, to really review what has happened to them. Currently, we question what isn’t working, but not what has happened in their life, because this requires opening up potentially painful subjects, and it is avoided.”

The study also highlights the fact that other traumas such as catastrophes, violent deaths or family abuse can affect people, generating structural and functional changes in the brain that open the door to future mental disorders. - [Read the entire article](#)

*“If people are doubting how far you can go, go so far that you can’t hear them anymore.” - Michele Ruiz*

*“Don’t forget in the darkness what you have learned in the light.” - Joseph Bayly*

### 2] [Take Control of Fear and Anxiety](#) - A Layman's Guide to Managing Fear

Hello!

My name is Stan Popovich, and I am a Penn State graduate who struggled with fear and anxiety for over 20+ years!

There were many times in my life I felt like giving up. During these difficult times, my anxieties and fears were so powerful that I had trouble getting through each week. It was very scary for me because I did not know what to do and where to turn for help. I felt alone and unsure about my future.

I took an active approach in getting my life back on track. My first step was to admit I needed some

help, and I then made the effort to talk to various mental health counselors over the years. My main goal was to learn as much as I could in dealing with fear and anxiety by reading a lot of books, taking notes from many counselors, and learning which techniques worked in managing fear and anxiety.

The most difficult thing I faced when struggling with my mental health was finding the answers that would take away my anxieties and fears. The books I read were several hundred pages long and talked about fear and anxiety rather than focusing on effective techniques in managing your mental health.

Although I was able to talk to many counselors over the years, some of them were expensive. I also had to change counselors over the years due to staff changes. This disrupted my progress because I had to start over in getting to know a new mental health counselor. In addition, many mental health programs in my area had a waiting list of around 6 months which was frustrating because I needed help right way.

As a result, I made it a habit to write down every technique I learned in managing my fears and anxieties into a small notebook. I documented all my sessions with various mental health counselors and everything I learned from my 20+ years of personal experiences with fear and anxiety.

Over the years my notebook expanded with all kinds of techniques that many people found helpful in managing fear and anxiety. My notebook also included interviews from many mental health counselors and personal insights from those who struggle with their mental health on a regular basis.

I organized my notes into a book titled, *A Layman's Guide to Managing Fear*, which is less than an hour's read and goes into great detail on the variety of techniques and approaches that are effective when managing your fears and anxieties.

I know that you may be struggling with your mental health. As a result, I have put a lot of free and valuable advice on this website that can help you right now!

All you have to do is go to [my blog, my articles](#), or get [some quick advice](#) and start finding out what techniques you can use to manage your fears, anxieties, and other mental health issues. There is no cost to read this information on my website.

If you find my advice helpful, then you will want to read my managing fear book which contains a lot more information than what is on this website!

[A Layman's Guide to Managing Fear](#) offers you multiple techniques and various approaches in managing fear and anxiety. This book gives you the opportunity to pick and choose which techniques work for you regarding your current situation. You can also work with your counselor if you need additional assistance.

Reading *A Layman's Guide to Managing Fear* will reduce your learning curve when it comes to finding ways to manage your fears and anxieties. This book will also save you a lot of money in expensive counseling sessions.

Your Friend,  
Stanley Popovich

P.S. I understand that we all go through rough times. If you are struggling financially and can't get my book, please email me and we can work something out! <https://managingfear.com/order>

– [Learn more](#) – Articles

2a] [More Than a Feeling: 12 Stories About the Science of Anxiety](#) - A deep dive into how and why we experience anxiety-as well as science-backed ways to ease the burden.

*“Life isn't about finding yourself. Life is about creating yourself.” - George Bernard Shaw*

*“Nothing in life is to be feared, it is only to be understood. Now is the time to understand more, so that we may fear less.” - Marie Curie*

3] [How this Minnesota County is moving thousands of homeless off the streets](#) By [Katie Lobosco](#) @CNN

On a breezy morning in July, Fabian Jones rode his new bike to the homeless shelter where he lived earlier this year.

“Here’s one of our success stories,” said Michael Goze, head of the nonprofit that runs the emergency shelter, known as Homeward Bound, located in the heart of Minneapolis’ large Native American community.

Jones, 52, was spending the day moving his things from a storage unit and into a new apartment he found earlier in the summer, with some help provided by case workers at Homeward Bound.

“My bike is like a U-Haul,” Jones said with a laugh, while showing off the key fob to his new place.

Jones said that he’s spent time at every shelter in Minneapolis over the years. But things turned around for him at Homeward Bound, where a person is treated “like a human being,” according to Jones. As a culturally specific shelter, it holds American Indian rituals like smudging, a ceremony meant to drive away negative energy. A variety of support services for physical and mental health are offered, and there are lockers so individuals can store their possessions safely.

“It’s hard being homeless every day. You can’t take a day off, or rest for a bit. You gotta eat, you gotta figure out where you’re going to sleep and shower. It’s a constant thing you’re doing in survival mode,” he added.

Jones is one of hundreds of people that Hennepin County – the largest in Minnesota and the place where George Floyd was murdered by police – has moved off the street and into permanent housing since the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020.

The Homeward Bound shelter, which opened at the end of 2020, is located not far from where a large tent encampment, known as the Wall of Forgotten Natives, once stood, drawing attention to the homelessness problem and kick-starting Hennepin County’s efforts to address the affordable housing crisis.

With financial help from the [federal pandemic aid packages](#) passed by Congress, Hennepin County has been able to move at lightning-fast speed to implement a multilayer plan addressing housing and homelessness – work that usually moves at a snail’s pace.

Over the past two years, the county has opened three new emergency shelters, including Homeward Bound, and upgraded several others. It has purchased five properties that are being converted into affordable housing and is helping finance 16 other new projects driven by private developers. Twenty-six new social workers were hired to help those experiencing homelessness move into their own housing.

### **Pandemic emergency leads to a housing opportunity**

Soon after Minnesota’s pandemic-related [stay-at-home order took effect in March 2020](#), metro transit buses were rolling up to emergency shelters to pick up people who were over 60 years old and may have been more at risk of contracting Covid-19.

They were moved into one of several hotels that Hennepin County – like other places across the country – decided to lease so that some of the most at-risk people in the community could move out of congregate shelters, reducing their chances of contracting Covid-19.

But Hennepin County quickly pivoted to a longer-term strategy. Instead of leasing the properties, it bought them with the intent of eventually converting them into housing for very low-income, single adults – or what’s known as single-room occupancy housing. It’s the kind of housing that is sorely missing in not just Minneapolis but across the country.

By the end of 2020, Hennepin County owned four properties: Three were smaller, older motels long past their prime, and one was a treatment facility. The latter is already filled with residents, and the former motels are currently being renovated. The county recently purchased an additional motel and is eyeing another.

### **From homeless to hotels to housing - [Read the entire article](#)**

*“The purpose of life is a life of purpose.” - Robert Byrne*

*“How far you go in life depends on your being tender with the young, compassionate with the aged, sympathetic with the striving and tolerant of the weak and strong. Because someday in your life you will have been all of these.” - George Washington Carver*

### **4] [Mass School Shootings Are Not Caused by Mental Illness](#) - Neuroscience News**

*Summary: Most perpetrators of mass school shootings do not suffer from severe mental illness, a new study reports. When psychosis is present, mass murderers in an academic setting use means other than firearms to commit their crimes. Consistent with previous findings, the majority of mass school shooters are male and caucasian, and almost half of school shooting episodes end with the perpetrator’s suicide.*

Source: Columbia University

**A research team at Columbia University Irving Medical Center and the New York State Psychiatric Institute (NYSPI) examining 82 mass murders that occurred at least partially in academic settings throughout the world, found that most mass murderers and mass shooters did not have severe mental illness.**

The study, led by Ragy R. Girgis, MD, and Gary Brucato, PhD, associate research scientist, also found that most mass murderers used firearms, and semi- or fully-automatic firearms most commonly. Among incidents of mass school murder not involving firearms, stabbing was the most common method.

The research, published online Oct. 27, in the *Journal of Forensic Sciences*, according to study authors, is largest analysis ever conducted on mass school shootings.

“Our findings suggest that mass school shootings are different from other forms of mass murder, and that they should be looked at as a distinct phenomenon,” said Dr. Girgis, director of the Center of Prevention and Evaluation (COPE), a research clinic at Columbia/NYSPI specializing in the study and treatment of young adults at high risk for schizophrenia and other psychoses.

“To prevent future mass school shootings, we need to begin to focus on the cultural and social drivers of these types of events, such as the romanticization of guns and gun violence, rather than on individual predictors.”

To conduct their study, the researchers analyzed data from the Columbia Mass Murder Database (CMMD), developed by the COPE team to gain much-needed insight into the relationship between serious mental illness and mass shootings. Creating the CMMD involved extensive review of 14,785 murders publicly described in English in print or online, occurring worldwide between 1900 and 2019.

For the mass school shooting study, the researchers isolated cases of mass murder perpetrated at least in part at schools, colleges, and universities and categorized them by location (within or outside of the US), and whether firearms were used.

Of the 82 incidents of mass murder involving academic settings:

- Nearly half (47.6%) and most involving firearms (63.2%) were U.S.-based
- Consistent with previous reports, perpetrators of mass shootings involving academic settings are primarily Caucasian (66.7%) and male (100%)
- Severe mental illness (e.g., psychosis) was absent in the majority of perpetrators; when present, psychotic symptoms are more associated with mass murders in academic settings involving means other than firearms
- About half (45.6%) of mass school shootings ended with the perpetrator’s suicide

Coauthor Paul S. Appelbaum, MD, the Elizabeth K. Dollard Professor of Psychiatry, Medicine and



Law at Columbia, said that identifying mental illness as a primary cause of violence is misleading.

“The findings strongly suggest that focusing on mental illness, particularly psychotic illness, when talking about mass school shootings risks is missing other factors that contribute to the vast majority of cases, as well as exacerbating the already widespread stigma surrounding severe mental illness,” said Dr. Appelbaum. - [Read the entire article](#)

*“Don't go through life, grow through life.” - Eric Butterworth*

*“Fear of something is at the root of hate for others, and hate within will eventually destroy the hater.” - George Washington Carver*

5] [Giant steps: why walking in nature is good for mind, body and soul](#) By Jessica Lee @ The Guardian

*Rather than just moving from A to B, think about your surroundings and the wider ramifications of your walk.*

six weeks after my daughter was born, I found myself on the packed dirt path that runs along the [River Cam in Grantchester Meadows](#). It was seven in the morning and cold. Frost lined every blade of grass, and my breath made clouds in front of me. But it was a bright, sunny day. After weeks of settling into motherhood indoors – unceasing night feeds, tears, and exhaustion – a walk in the sun seemed like the best possible thing to do.

It's not that I hadn't been outside in all that time. Most days I'd only gone as far as the end of my neighborhood, on short strolls to give the baby some fresh air. Before parental leave, I'd been busy in my job as a nature and travel writer, often taking long walks in the name of work – and, if I was honest, I really missed it. I hadn't felt that feeling of really walking for a while: warmth in my legs, a building momentum, the repetition of each step beneath my feet. And I knew that I needed to feel, and do, something for me.

Walking was a way of connecting with places, a means of transportation. I didn't often think of it as exercise. And I rarely considered, though I often felt its impact, what it did for my mental health.

Studies of walking's benefits date back to the 1950s, with the last decade of research preoccupied with the rise of “10,000 steps a day” challenges and the use of pedometers and activity trackers. What they tell us is that while all these tools urge us towards lofty step counts, there isn't exactly a magic number to achieve. The figure 10,000 was dreamed up as part of a 1960s pedometer marketing campaign in Japan, and a [recent study](#) indicates that half that amount can be beneficial, with a plateau in benefits after about 7,500 steps. The [NHS advises](#) that just 10 minutes of brisk walking daily makes a difference. For an activity many of us do daily without thinking, this seems remarkable, but it's estimated that when walking over half our body's muscle mass is engaged. And the benefits of even a moderate pace – around three miles an hour – range from improved cardiovascular health, like lower blood pressure, to better glucose metabolism, musculoskeletal health, and mental well-being.

However, researchers distinguish between the passive steps we take going about our lives doing things like food shopping and errands (termed “secondary purpose walking”) and the act of actually going for a walk, which was the thing I really missed. On a walk, when we've laced our boots a bit more

intentionally, the benefits reach beyond a bit of exercise, and where we choose to walk can make a big difference.

There is a growing swathe of research to back up the idea that being in nature improves not simply mental but physical health. Most studies highlight a [1984 study](#) by Roger Ulrich, a professor of healthcare architecture who examined whether hospital patients with a view of nature recovered faster, and better, than those who didn't. Ulrich's research transformed how we think about healthcare settings and urban environments: the hospital where I gave birth, for example, boasted online that birthing patients could look out onto, or even walk in, the building's pleasant courtyard sensory garden. We could labor with a view.

But as the contemporary American philosopher, Arnold Berleant, argues, it is when we're actually moving through a landscape, rather than treating it simply as scenery, that we most fully connect with a place and ignite all our senses. Berleant uses the term "aesthetic engagement", but it needn't be quite so lofty: A walk along the river might count, or perhaps time spent practising [shinrin-yoku \(forest bathing\)](#), really attending to the details of the trees, the leaves, the smells and the sounds.

Over the past 20 years, research into the benefits of this kind of outdoor exercise has boomed: looking at the impact of, say, free gyms in parks or the improvement to learning outcomes for students walking in the woods. In one of the earliest studies, [researchers in 2005](#) found that while walking or jogging improved blood pressure and mental health, viewing pleasant rural and urban scenes while doing so had a better impact on wider health and self-esteem than exercising on its own.

Many studies after this replicated this laboratory model when assessing the impact of nature on our health but, in 2018, [a study of walkers in Iceland](#) took its research out of the lab setting. The benefits of walking outdoors were compared to simply viewing a video of nature while walking on a treadmill or being sedentary while watching nature. It concluded that when facing periods of stress, walking outdoors had the most impact on wellbeing, while under circumstances of profound and ongoing stress, simply resting and looking at nature did the trick. So we know that there are different and measurable benefits between simply looking at a scene and walking out into it. - [Read the entire article](#)

5a] [Two Trees Make a Forest by Jessica J. Lee](#) published by Hachette UK

Between tectonic plates and conflicting cultures, Taiwan is an island of extremes: high mountains, exposed flatlands, thick forests. After unearthing a hidden memoir of her grandfather's life, written on the cusp of his total memory loss, Jessica J Lee hunts his story, in parallel with exploring Taiwan, hoping to understand the quakes that brought her family from China, to Taiwan and Canada, and the ways in which our human stories are interlaced with geographical forces. Part-nature writing, part-biography, *Two Trees Make a Forest* traces the natural and human stories that shaped an island and a family.

5b] [Seeing or Hearing Birds Is Good for Well-Being](#) By Mary Jo Dilonardo

Positive effects of being around birds can last for 8 hours. There has been a lot of research that has explored the impact of [nature on emotional health](#). This new study looks only at exposure to birds.

*"Nature holds the key to our aesthetic, intellectual, cognitive and even spiritual satisfaction." - EO*

*Wilson*

*“A walk in nature, walks the soul back home.” – Mary Davis*

6] [Poet Ross Gay on his new book, 'Inciting Joy' and finding joy in sorrow](#) By Leah Asmelash @ CNN

In the last two years, it seems like everyone has been searching for joy.

From the success of shows like Apple TV+'s uber-positive "[Ted Lasso](#)" to dance albums like Beyoncé's "[Renaissance](#)," to books like Aimee Nezhukumatathil's "World of Wonders" -- the call to look beyond sorrow is ubiquitous.

Poet Ross Gay explores these questions -- What incites joy? And what does joy incite? -- in his new book, "Inciting Joy," an essay collection released Tuesday.

Written over the course of the pandemic, Gay ponders joy, defining it less as the absence of sorrow and rather as our response to it. Joy, he argues, has everything to do with our suffering and our sorrow; in fact, it emerges from it.

Just look at the way the gardeners share their extra vegetables, Gay notes. Or the way, in the absence of skate parks, skateboarders impart the best places in the city to shred. Or in pick-up basketball -- the way the game nurtures care; if there's a fight, you work it out.

And these are just a few of endless examples, Gay tells CNN. These methods of holding each other, of caring for each other, of inciting joy, are everywhere.

"We can talk about a garden, we can talk about skateboarding, we can talk about the dance floor," he says. "And by looking at how they function, not always but sometimes, we can be like, 'Oh, that's a practice that sort of facilitates this thing called joy.' Built into this game are all of these things that are actually about, not only about, but are ways that we are helping one another carry our sorrows."

CNN spoke with Gay prior to his new book's release. The interview has been edited for length and clarity.

**This is your third book on gratitude and joyfulness. How was your thinking about this project different from the past?**

It's funny because I don't know that I would've said at the time that I was writing about gratitude or joy or anything like that with "Catalog of Unabashed Gratitude." And I don't even know that I was. But I would say that the subject of that book and "The Book of Delights" clearly is joy among the subjects, but I don't know that I was thinking of them as efforts toward this same thing.

The question is more explicitly stated in this book ("Inciting Joy"). The question being: What incites joy? Or, what are the structures and the practices by which joy is made more available to us? And then, when it becomes more available to us, what might that incite? And so in a way I'm just looking very closely at skateboarding, and I'm looking very closely at pick-up basketball, and I'm looking very closely at teaching, with a little more depth than I was maybe able to in the previous books. But also

maybe with a more pointed question.

**Something that struck me about this book in relation to your other work was the overt anti-capitalist theme. Was there anything specific that made you want to write about this now?**

Ultimately, it's a book about noticing what you love, articulating what you love, and sharing what you love. And in a certain kind of way this book wonders how do we do that. How do we do that structurally; how do we do that in our practices?

Partly, just as I'm growing up as a person, becoming more and more aware of the ways that there are systems designed, institutions designed, structures designed, to basically enforce destitution, all kinds of destitution. Maybe an overlapping term for that, sort of imprecise, might be something like capitalism. There's probably other good terms too. It just made me want to be explicitly questioning of that, and pointing to alternatives -- how lucky we are that we don't have to invent alternatives, we can just go to the pick-up basketball court and study. Or we can watch what the skateboarders are doing. Or we can talk to the gardeners.

One of the things this book is doing is being curious about how we care for one another and carry each other's sorrows, which is one of the definitions that I offer for joy, the light that emanates from us when we help each other carry our sorrows. - [Read the entire article](#)

6a] [“Inciting Joy”](#) by Ross Gay

*“Pain is a pesky part of being human, I've learned it feels like a stab wound to the heart, something I wish we could all do without, in our lives here. Pain is a sudden hurt that can't be escaped. But then I have also learned that because of pain, I can feel the beauty, tenderness, and freedom of healing. Pain feels like a fast stab wound to the heart. But then healing feels like the wind against your face when you are spreading your wings and flying through the air! We may not have wings growing out of our backs, but healing is the closest thing that will give us that wind against our faces.” - C. JoyBell C.*

*“Grief never ends... but it changes. It's a passage, not a place to stay. Grief is not a sign of weakness, nor a lack of faith... it is the price of love.” - Horace Cope*

7] [Tamil Nadu: The India couple who found love at mental health institute](#) - BBC News – video 2:08 minutes

Mahendran and Deepa were strangers when they met at the Institute of Mental Health (IMH) in the southern Indian city of Chennai in 2020.

But over months, they got to know each other better and fell in love.

Now the couple is happily married - marking the first wedding between patients at the 228-year-old mental health center.

The ceremony, which took place in October at a temple inside the institute, was attended by ministers and lawmakers of Tamil Nadu state.

Dr Poorna Chandrika, the director of IMH, says it was like a "family marriage" for them. "This was their decision and we are very happy."

also @ - [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i4KUEtAV\\_i0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i4KUEtAV_i0)

*Video by Jayakumar Sudandhirapandiyam for BBC Tamil*

*"My entire life can be described in one sentence: it didn't go as planned, and that's okay." Hugh Raye*

*"Sometimes it takes an overwhelming breakdown to have an undeniable breakthrough." - Don Keigh*

8] [Meditation as effective as medication for anxiety, study finds](#) By [Erika Edwards](#) @ NBC News

The first study ever to directly compare medication to [meditation](#) for anxiety finds the two methods work equally well at reducing symptoms.

The finding, published Wednesday in the journal [JAMA Psychiatry](#), suggests that people struggling with anxiety could be helped either by a daily pill (which could come with side effects) or a daily practice of mindfulness (which requires a substantial time commitment).

"For both treatments, we had people who said, 'This really worked,'" said study author Dr. Elizabeth Hoge, director of the Anxiety Disorders Research Program and associate professor of psychiatry at Georgetown University Medical Center in Washington, D.C.

About 6.8 million adults in the U.S. have generalized anxiety disorder, but less than half receive treatment, according to the [Anxiety & Depression Association of America](#).

The two-month study included 276 patients diagnosed with [generalized anxiety](#) disorder. Half were given a common antidepressant — escitalopram (brand name: Lexapro) — and the other half participated in a mindfulness-based stress reduction program.

Both groups reported moderate improvements: a 20% reduction in symptoms at the end of the study, regardless of their treatment.

That kind of benefit is consistent with other studies of medications to treat anxiety, said Craig Sawchuk, a psychologist at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota, who was not involved with the new research.

The study "shows there are alternative options that don't involve medicine to help treat anxiety, that are just as effective," said Lindsey McKernan, an associate professor of psychiatry and behavioral sciences at Vanderbilt University Medical Center in Nashville, Tennessee, who was also not involved with the study. - [Read the entire article](#)

*"You either get bitter, or you get better. You either take what's been dealt to you and allow it to make you better, or you allow it to tear you down." - Iona Mink*

*"Transformation is my favorite game and in my experience, anger and frustration are the result of you*

*not being authentic somewhere in your life or with someone in your life. Being fake about anything creates a block inside of you. Life can't work for you if you don't show up as you." - Jason Mraz*

9] [Will Milwaukee ever break its addiction to forced psychiatric care?](#) By Leah Harris @ Milwaukee Journal Sentinel

In November 1971, when West Allis schoolteacher [Alberta Lessard](#) found herself facing a lifelong commitment to a Milwaukee County psychiatric institution, she fought back with a class-action lawsuit on behalf of all adults committed to mental health facilities against their will. Her victory in federal court, which turns 50 years old this week, initiated a transformation in mental health law.

The Lessard v Schmidt decision found Wisconsin's civil commitment law unconstitutional. It ruled that people facing involuntary commitment to mental health facilities deserved the same due process rights as those facing prison time. Lessard established that people could not be deprived of their liberty unless proven dangerous to themselves or others, beyond a reasonable doubt.

As impactful as the Lessard decision was, it didn't address the root problem that persists to this day: our society's continued overreliance on carceral, institutional forms of mental health care while neglecting the survival needs of people, families and communities in crisis.

Alberta Lessard and my mother both entered the revolving door of Milwaukee's public mental health system in the early 1970s. While neither woman was dangerous, both were forcibly institutionalized numerous times at the Milwaukee County Mental Health Complex over decades. They were subjected to unwanted interventions like [seclusion and restraint](#), and forced medication, which they both experienced as traumatizing and dehumanizing. My mother's lifetime of mistreatment in Milwaukee's public mental health system fuels my advocacy for holistic, community-based solutions grounded in social justice.

Fifty years after the Lessard decision, it appears that much has changed, but much remains the same: Wisconsin [leads the nation](#) in forced psychiatric treatment, with [tragic outcomes](#). In fact, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) classifies [forced treatment](#) as a human rights violation.

Some say that nonconsensual treatment and medication are necessary because patients may lack capacity or insight into their condition. But the CRPD suggests using more collaborative ways of engaging with patients who resist care, such as [supportive decision-making](#), that do not violate trust and bodily autonomy.

For decades, my mother was legally coerced into taking antipsychotic medications that have now been proven to [increase mortality](#). She died when she was only 46, from comorbidities caused by these medications, poverty and trauma. Alberta Lessard also lived in poverty, but she was able to refuse psychiatric medication, and lived to be 94. While neither woman's life was an easy one, Lessard's much longer life was lived largely on her own terms.

Alberta Lessard and my mother were both white, but research shows that coercive treatment is racialized nationally: Black and Brown [youth](#) and [adults](#) are disproportionately subjected to both [involuntary inpatient hospitalization](#) and restrictive interventions like [restraint, seclusion and forced](#)

[medication](#). This racial inequity parallels the overrepresentation of African-Americans in jails and prisons; yet another reason to reconsider our approach to mental health care.

The Behavioral Health Division's decade-long [redesign process](#) includes new psychiatric facilities that have opened to much [fanfare](#). A more [centrally located crisis center](#) has replaced the long-troubled Milwaukee County Mental Health Complex in Wauwatosa, and [Granite Hills](#), a privately operated mental hospital opened this year in West Allis.

*For 50 years, we've been asking what to do with people with psychiatric disabilities — people like my mother and Alberta Lessard. It's the wrong question. A better question is: How can we break our addiction to forced treatment and institutional care by reallocating resources to meet basic human needs for community, connection and survival? - [Read the entire article](#)*

*Leah Harris is a Milwaukee-born mental health advocate, writer, and educator.*

*"Darkness cannot drive out darkness: only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate: only love can do that." - Martin Luther King Jr*

*"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*

10] [Presence - Just Hold On](#) - a song for anyone suffering with depression or anxiety - YouTube 3:20 minutes

*"We are healed of a suffering only by experiencing it to the full." - Marcel Proust*

*"Be who you are and say what you feel, because those who mind don't matter, and those who matter don't mind." - Bernard M. Baruch*

11] [The Making Of An 'Artivista': How Martha Gonzalez Became The Latest MacArthur Genius Grant Winner](#) By [Adolfo Guzman-Lopez](#) @ Laist

This is how the MacArthur Foundation describes Martha Gonzalez [on its awards page](#): "musician, cultural theorist, and activist developing collaborative methods of artistic expression that build community and advance social justice principles."

Gonzalez says that leaves out a lot.

"I am a Chicana Artivista, musician, feminist music theorist, academic, mother, sister, daughter of the world," she said.

The term *artivista* is key to understanding her work in the last three decades and why her local and international impact put her on the radar of the MacArthur Foundation, which last week awarded her a coveted MacArthur Fellowship and its accompanying monetary award, an \$800,000 annual prize better known as a "genius grant."

While Gonzalez's name is the only one on the award, in singling out her work, the MacArthur Foundation recognized a network of activists using various forms of art to combat racism by creating cultural bridges between people of different ethnicities, races, and social classes.

An artista is someone who, in her case, uses music "not just for their own sole expression, but they utilize their skill sets to pull other people into an actual process," she said.

The recognition of Gonzalez's and these activists' decades-long work against the dehumanizing forces of capitalism and colonialism comes at a time when people of color in Los Angeles are hearing hateful racial rhetoric come out of their very own halls of political power.

**Crossing Race, Ethnicity, And Borders** - Gonzalez has created an artistic practice that balances singing, songwriting, national touring with her band, scholarly field study, and grassroots organizing.

"She's been a great gift to the people of Los Angeles and the people of the world," says George Lipsitz, research professor emeritus of Black studies and sociology at UC Santa Barbara and one of the nation's most renowned ethnic studies scholars. "And this is a fitting recognition not only of her genius but of the effectiveness of her work."

Here are some of the things Lipsitz highlights:

- [She wrote a book](#) about East LA artistas who were shaped by the anti-immigrant rhetoric of the 1990s
- She's helped produce [Fandango Obon](#), a participatory dance and music event in Los Angeles that melds West African, Japanese, and Mexican traditions
- She produced [Entre Mujeres](#), a musical collaboration of women artists from Veracruz and Southern California
- She's contributed to [the popularization in the Southwest United States of traditional son jarocho](#) music from Veracruz through concerts, workshops, and community music making
- She's working with [Fideicomiso Comunitario Tierra Libre](#), a Los Angeles based group helping people who are unhoused by "taking land out of the speculative market... to begin to think about land, not as a commodity, but as a human right," she said.
- She's been the lead singer, percussionist, and songwriter for [Quetzal](#), the Los Angeles-based band that's recorded eight albums, won a Grammy in 2013, and counts The Smiths, Rubén Blades, and Stevie Wonder as musical influences. - [Read the entire article](#)

*"Hearts rebuilt from hope resurrect dreams killed by hate." - Aberjhan*

*"Three routes to healing:*

*1. You must let the pain visit.*

*2. You must allow it teach you*

*3. You must not allow it overstay." - Ijeoma Umebinyuo*

12] [Taking a break from the news can improve mental health, study finds](#) By [Erika Edwards](#) @ NBC News

*Switching away from a 24/7 cycle of news - along with a healthy diet - is beneficial to mental health, a*



*new study finds.*

A constant influx of bad news — pandemic, shootings, inflation, natural disasters, political turmoil — can feel, at best, soul-crushing. Now, a new study from Spain confirms the negative toll constantly being plugged into the news cycle can take.

The researchers looked at how people were best able to manage feelings of anxiety and depression at the height of the pandemic, finding that one of the most effective methods was to take breaks from the barrage of bad news.

"The best predictor for having lower anxiety and depressive symptoms," said lead study author Dr. Joaquim Radua, a psychiatrist in Barcelona, was to "avoid watching too much news." Radua is also affiliated with King's College London and the Karolinska Institute in Sweden.

The research will be presented this weekend at a meeting of the European College of Neuropsychopharmacology in Vienna. It has not yet been published in a peer-reviewed journal.

Radua cautioned that because the research was conducted in 2020 and 2021, it was unclear how the results would apply as coronavirus cases continue to decline.

Others note that there's only so much negative news coverage a person can take before it affects their [mental health](#).

"There's an endless availability of information," said Lindsey McKernan, an associate professor of psychiatry and behavioral sciences at Vanderbilt University Medical Center in Nashville who was not involved with the new study. "Without putting the brakes on it yourself, you can just keep going and keep reading and become more stressed."

Radua's research looked at 942 adults in Spain who filled out an [online questionnaire](#) every two weeks for a year during the pandemic. The participants reported whether they were feeling despondent, and if so, how they were coping with such feelings. The analysis factored in whether participants had been previously diagnosed with anxiety or depression.

The study found that those who avoided "too much stressful news" had fewer symptoms of anxiety and depression.

Also key to feeling better? Maintaining a healthy diet.

"Taking care of our body is something we can control," McKernan said. "That develops a sense of what's predictable and can help with stress."

Time outdoors, getting exercise and drinking enough water were also found to be linked with lower levels of stress, anxiety and feelings of depression. - [Read the entire article](#)

*"My depression is cyclical. When feeling down, I must remember each episode has a beginning, middle, and end." - Larry Godwin*

*“I will close my mind to what I hear and see when it tempts me to quarrel or resent. I will receive anger with gentleness to guard my peace of mind.” - Al-Aanon*

***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*

[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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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***