



*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 October 2023**

Hi Folks,

Welcome to the October issue of the Surviving Spirit Newsletter. As always I strive to share a balance of resources that offer Hope, Healing & Help. In the past several years I have found it gets harder to share from a wider variety of news outlets due to the increase in paywalls.

I'd like to share two musical videos - the first one is a duet with my daughter Michelle singing Jolene. We've had the good fortune to perform together in several venues recently including a drug & alcohol treatment facility. All the gigs have been fun - *Have Guitars & Voices Will Travel!* It is always a great feeling to touch hearts and minds with music.

[Jolene performance by Michelle Skinner & Michael Skinner](#) @ YouTube

Music has been a joy, fun and a great outlet for healing for both of us.

This second video is a little more poignant for me...a song I wrote that addresses the loss of those we love and care for from suicide - [Follow The Light by Michael Skinner](#) - YouTube

I share the lyrics and resources in the Content Section below the video.

*All the best, Michael*

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*“You can't go back and change the beginning, but you can start where you are and change the ending.” - C.S. Lewis*

*“Still time to change the road you're on.” - Unknown*

1] [‘The climate is visiting a mental unravelling on all of us’](#): Charlie Hertzog Young on the dangers of activism – and staying sane on a dying planet - Climate crisis by Patrick Barkham @ The Guardian

**Article excerpt** - The teenage campaigner took politicians to task about the environment – but their apathy contributed to a devastating decline in his mental health. He talks about his recovery and the radical ideas we need to save the Earth.

Precisely how he got there, and why, he does not remember, but Charlie Hertzog Young knows that in the autumn of 2019, aged 27 and at the height of his despair, he jumped from a high building in London. He landed on concrete, split open his pelvis like a book and demolished his legs. He was bleeding out – dying – and yet managed to have a pleasant conversation with a resident of the neighboring building who thought he was a burglar. He survived, thanks to the speedy arrival of a paramedic with specialist trauma skills. Even so, he spent a month in a coma and six months in hospital. Eventually, he was discharged with legs so damaged that they both had to be amputated. He lost his job as a researcher and his rented flat.

The years leading to this moment are a searing story of personal and planetary pain. Aged 12, Hertzog Young worried about global heating and became a climate activist. He won a national award for founding a green council in his school. Gradually, he became a British Greta Thunberg, without the international fame or internet trolls. As the voice of youth, he was invited to global summits, including the 2009 World Economic Forum in Davos and, later that year, the UN climate summit in Copenhagen. “There are young people in communities all across the world who are trying to facilitate change,” he told the elders of Davos. “We’d like you to help us to help you.” Then, at just 17, he accosted the likes of Bill Gates and Barack Obama in corridors between events and harangued them about the urgency of taking action to stop global heating.

Billed as the last chance to save the world, the Copenhagen summit failed to produce a commitment to cut carbon emissions and restrict global heating to 2C. Furious environmental groups called the summit a “crime scene”; even Obama admitted the limited agreement was “not enough”. Hertzog Young was distraught. He slipped into a deep depression. Around the same time, he began hallucinating that he was being stalked by a chimerical, constantly changing wolf. Eventually, aged 20, he was diagnosed with bipolar disorder and sent to a psychiatric unit. A cycle of breakdowns and treatment intensified. His family were in agony; he was given every treatment from psychoanalysis to electroconvulsive therapy (ECT). And then he jumped.

[Spinning Out - Book by Charlie Hertzog-Young](#) - Official Publisher Page - Simon & Schuster

**Spinning Out** is an urgent, eye-opening study by leading climate change activist, researcher and writer that draws on the latest research and evidence to unravel systemic ways that climate change is driving people mad - and show how we can find inspiration in that madness.

In 2019, climate activist Charlie Hertzog Young attempted suicide, following a succession of breakdowns. He jumped off a six-story building, resulting in the loss of both legs. He spent a month in a coma, lost his flat and woke up without a job. In rebuilding his life physically and emotionally, Charlie saw that the climate crisis and mental illness are inextricably linked and, equally, little understood.

*“Those who danced were thought to be quite insane by those who could not hear the music.” - Angela Monet or Friedrich Nietzsche?*

*“At times our own light goes out and is rekindled by a spark from another person. Each of us has cause to think with deep gratitude of those who have lighted the flame within us.” UUC*

2] [How to cope with a loved one’s suicide](#), from someone who’s been through it by Kristen Rogers @ CNN

**Article excerpt** - Coping with losing a loved one to suicide is intense, but there are ways you can get through it.

When Alexandra and Shawn Wyman met in December 2017, they said they instantly felt a “soul connection.”

Two months later they were engaged, and they married in August 2018. In October, Alexandra learned she was pregnant, giving birth to a baby boy in July 2019.

“We were in our late 30s at the time,” said Alexandra, who is now 41. “You have those ideas of what a successful life looks like, and so we both felt like we were finally checking off those boxes.”

Then the coronavirus pandemic hit as the couple was navigating how to juggle a baby, home and marriage, on top of discord with extended family — a blend of stressors that put unexpected strain on their generally happy life.

Shawn was a present, hardworking and fun partner and father, Alexandra said. He had served in the US Navy and enjoyed Sunday football and barbecues. Alexandra felt safe talking to him about anything, she said, and he made their son laugh so hard by singing and dancing.

“He could make me laugh like no other, and he was such a good storyteller,” she said. “At the same time, some of his stressors and some of the experiences he had as a kid were being triggered or activated (during the pandemic).”

Shawn also struggled with self-doubt. He “never felt like he was as good of a father as he (really) was,” Alexandra said.

Shawn’s distress came to a head on August 18, 2020, and he agreed to start therapy since his stress was building up. Over dinner two days later, the couple fantasized about adventures they would embark on once the pandemic ended. The next evening, he attended a friend’s birthday party and unexpectedly didn’t return home until morning.

When they argued over this, Shawn seemed “really off,” she said. “I was waiting to go take my son for a walk. He and I left, and then I got the first of the goodbye texts.”

[The Suicide Club: What to Do When Someone You Love Chooses Death](#) – Book by Alexandra Wyman

***In The Suicide Club: What to Do When Someone You Love Chooses Death***, Alexandra explores her journey of mourning and healing after losing her husband. She makes sense of her grief through three phases—Shock and Awe, Now What?, and Finding the Collateral Beauty—to offer a road back to peace and joy for anyone who has lost someone close to them to suicide.

The aftermath of suicide leaves loved ones in a mess of emotions. The Suicide Club shows a way forward through any anger, blame, or judgment, toward acceptance and peace.

*“Until and unless you know that you are enough just the way you are, you will continue to look for more. Until you wholeheartedly believe in your own value, worth, and worthiness, in spite of your accomplishments and possessions, or lack thereof, there will always be a void in your spirit.” Author unknown*

*“There is hope, there is help, and I have an inalienable right to human dignity.” - In All Our Affairs-Al-Anon*

2a] [World Mental Health Day: When talking about suicide, avoid using these words](#) by Kristen Rogers @ CNN

**Article excerpt** - When it comes to [reducing stigma around suicide](#), not treating it as the elephant in the room is helpful, say mental health experts.

But it’s not just talking about it that matters, it’s also about what you say and how you say it — which is why some have moved away from saying “committed suicide” and other phrases that can have harmful consequences.

Social stigma around suicide can amplify shame for people experiencing suicidality - which includes suicidal thoughts, plans and attempts - making seeking help or talking about it more difficult, said Urszula Klich, a clinical psychologist in Atlanta.

“When we’re stigmatizing those aspects of mental health, and then those individuals don’t get help,” Klich added, “very often, that’s the slippery slope into some of the key factors that wind up increasing risk for death by suicide.”

[Debunking myths about suicide helps encourage compassion and understanding](#)

Stigmatizing language about suicide can also cement ideas that people who attempted or died by suicide, when compared with everyone else, are broken, disabled, less than or different in some way, experts said.

This “us and them” mindset can detract people from feeling empathy or being compassionate, fragmenting our ability to connect with others’ struggles and developing strategies that might help prevent suicides, Klich said - which is why experts have suggestions for ways you can discuss suicide without potentially worsening the problem.

*“What we know matters, but who we are matters more.” Brene Brown*

2b] [US surgeons are killing themselves at an alarming rate](#). One decided to speak out by Christina

Frangou @ The Guardian

Article excerpt - The grueling profession has long kept silent about mental distress. After losing a friend and quietly grappling with illness, Carrie Cunningham found a new way to save lives.

Carrie Cunningham puffed out her cheeks and exhaled. She looked out at the audience filled with 2,000 of her peers, surgeons who were attending the annual meeting of the Association of Academic Surgery, a prestigious gathering of specialists from universities across the United States and Canada.

Cunningham, president of the organization, knew what she was about to reveal could cost her promotions, patients and professional standing. She took a deep breath.

“I was the top junior tennis player in the United States,” she began. “I am an associate professor of surgery at Harvard.

“But I am also human. I am a person with lifelong depression, anxiety, and now a substance use disorder.”

The room fell silent.

Cunningham knew others in the room were struggling, too. Doctors are dying by suicide at higher rates than the general population. Somewhere between 300 to 400 physicians a year in the US take their own lives, the equivalent of one medical school graduating class annually.

Surgeons have some of the highest known rates of suicide among physicians. Of 697 physician suicides reported to the CDC’s national violent death reporting system between 2003 and 2017, 71 were surgeons. Many more go unreported.

*“You haven’t even met the best version of yourself – not yet. The most healed. The most fulfilled. The most content. And meeting that “you” is worth fighting for. So keep learning and growing.” – Topher Kearby*

*“There is no better way to keep our spiritual benefits than by giving them away with love, free of expectations, and with no strings attached.” Al-Anon*

3] [‘My self-worth plummeted every month’](#): the hidden disorder that can ruin women’s lives - Health & well-being by Chloe Aslett @ The Guardian

**Article excerpt** - PMDD is a little-known condition that causes depression, anxiety and suicidal thoughts for a significant proportion of women. Sufferers and experts talk about its devastating effects, and the fight to improve diagnosis

By the time Emily got her diagnosis, she was under 24-hour supervision by her mum, suffering with anorexia and routinely self-harming. Her suicide attempts had numbered “too many to count”. She had seen doctors, was working with a therapist and “doing everything everyone said, but the emotions were exhausting and relentless and stayed there”.

Then she would get her period, and everything would change. “I couldn’t understand how I was in complete distress, and then OK a few days later,” she says.

In 2016, Emily, now 33, was diagnosed with premenstrual dysphoric disorder (PMDD), a little-known hormone-based condition that affects a staggering number of women: about one in 20 of those who have periods suffer with it worldwide. Symptoms include depression, anxiety and irritability, as well as reduced motivation, focus and libido. It can also be life-threatening: 34% of women with PMDD have attempted suicide, according to the [International Association for Premenstrual Disorders](#) (IAPMD).

Emily’s symptoms began when she started her period aged 13. It would take until she was 26 to get a diagnosis. This is not uncommon – the average wait for a diagnosis is 12 years, according to the IAPMD. Emily spent three years on hormone treatments such as triptorelin, goserelin, progesterone and oestrogen, until 2019, when she was offered a hysterectomy as a last resort.

“I had always wanted children,” she says. “When I made the decision and came to terms with it, I cried for a week solid. I was grieving for the life I had envisaged for myself and was never going to have. On the other hand, it didn’t feel like a choice because I didn’t have a life. I took the chance. What was there to lose?”

In very simple terms, PMDD is a “glitch”, says Laura Murphy, who works for the IAPMD, and has also had PMDD (she waited 17 years before she received her diagnosis). “A malfunction in the brain causes an abnormal negative severe reaction to those fluctuating hormones,” she says.

*“Part of the healing process is sharing with other people who care.” - Jerry Cantrell*

*“Healing may not be so much about getting better, as about letting go of everything that isn't you – all of the expectations, all of the beliefs – and becoming who you are.” - Rachel Naomi Remen*

4] [What do homeless people do with cash aid?](#) A new study found out by Rick Paulas @ The Guardian

**Article excerpt** - The results of the study also suggest that cash transfers may actually reduce government spending.

In 2002, the then San Francisco supervisor Gavin Newsom proposed legislation to cut welfare assistance to nearly 3,000 homeless people living in the city from \$395 a month to \$59 a month, and divert the budgetary savings toward shelters and other services. It was promoted with the name “Care Not Cash”.

Newsom’s campaign [tied the unconditional payments to drug and alcohol abuse](#). As the San Francisco voter’s guide [spelled out](#): “[H]omeless people who are addicted to drugs or alcohol end up spending their welfare checks on their addictions instead of meeting their basic needs.” The framing worked. The measure passed with nearly 60% of the vote, and Newsom used the publicity to propel his political career to San Francisco mayor and, ultimately, California governor.

Newsom’s framing was just a different iteration of an old message: it doesn’t help to give poor people money. As that thinking goes, the unhoused, [Ronald Reagan’s “welfare queens”](#) and those with substance abuse issues will just waste it.

The results of a [new study in Vancouver](#), Canada, test this stereotype. Through its [New Leaf Project](#), the charitable organization Foundations for Social Change gave people who have been homeless for less than two years a one-time deposit of \$7,500 in Canadian dollars (about US\$5,600). They also received coaching and workshops about spending. Other groups received the money and workshops with no coaching, while some received the training but no cash and no resources at all.

The foundation then analyzed the program's effect on the 115 participants, who were identified through local shelters. Not only did its findings contradict the conventional wisdom about giving poor people money, the results also suggest that cash transfers may actually reduce government spending.

Those who received money in the trial increased their spending on rent, food and clothing. They didn't buy so-called "temptation goods" like alcohol, drugs and cigarettes.

None of this is surprising to those who work in homeless advocacy. "Every individual has different needs, and cash allows them to be addressed," said Jennifer Friedenbach, executive director of the Coalition on [Homelessness](#) in San Francisco. "People tend to be really resourceful and, if most of their issues are caused by lack of money, you're fixing it by providing a cash transfer. It gives people the flexibility to address their issues without bureaucratic complications."

*"The next time you want to withhold your help, or your love, or your support for another for whatever the reason, ask yourself a simple question: do the reasons you want to withhold it reflect more on them or on you? And which reasons do you want defining you forevermore?" - Dan Pearce*

*"The greatness of a community is most accurately measured by the compassionate actions of its members." - Coretta Scott King*

5] [Amplifying Native Communities Through the Power of Digital Storytelling](#) - First Nations Development Institute

Article excerpt - Native peoples have always used words to weave relevant and meaningful stories. Historically, our stories and images have endured through spoken word, and our very cultures and lifeways have lived on through the remembering and sharing of those stories. To help drive awareness and investment in Native communities, digital storytelling can be an effective and powerful tool.

**The Importance of Storytelling** - First Nations' Vice President of Research and Policy and Director of the California Tribal Fund and Nourishing Native Foods & Health program, A-dae Romero-Briones (Cochiti/Kiowa) writes about storytelling in her outreach:

*"We all begin with a story. It is through story that we are connected, not only to each other, but also to our homes, to our lands, to our communities, to our people, to our past, and to our future grandchildren.*

*It is the collection of stories that we are able to hear and witness that will make the whole of our lives and define the shape and character of our community."*

Our stories connect us to each other, and when we tell stories, we share a part of ourselves. We can



create a collective change for the people experiencing the story.

**Storytelling in a Digital World** - Recognizing the power of storytelling, First Nations works to write, produce, and share stories through our own communications channels. With support from the Bezos Earth Fund, we're elevating stories of the climate and workforce development efforts of our community partners through our [Climate Change and Environment Justice](#) project. This fall, we took a further step by providing attendees of our 2023 Leadership and Entrepreneurial Apprenticeship Development (L.E.A.D.) Conference with a newly curated resource to amplify their stories directly.

The [Digital Storytelling Toolkit](#) provides an overview of the components of stories, including the role of the storyteller and the importance of being personal, authentic, knowledgeable, and relatable. It provides examples of how stories can be captured and presented on websites through impact stories, blog posts, and videos. It also includes activities and best practices on how those stories can gain more exposure through digital press releases, email, and social media.

*"It is a grave injustice to a child or adult to insist that they stop crying.*

*One can comfort a person who is crying which enables him to relax and makes further crying unnecessary; but to humiliate a crying child is to increase his pain, and augment his rigidity.*

*We stop other people from crying because we cannot stand the sounds and movements of their bodies.*

*It threatens our own rigidity. It induces similar feelings in ourselves which we dare not express and it evokes a resonance in our own bodies which we resist." - Alexander Lowen*

6] [Report on Improving Mental Health Outcomes](#) by Jim Gottstein, JD @ Mad In America

Article excerpt - Dr. Peter Gøtzsche, Dr. David Cohen, Dr. Chuck Ruby, Faith Myers and I just published our [Report on Improving Mental Health Outcomes \(Report\)](#). It is intended to be used to advocate for the elimination of unwanted psychiatric interventions and to promote the humane, effective, **voluntary** approaches we know work, such as Peer Respite, Soteria Houses, Open Dialogue, Hearing Voices Network, & eCPR. It has extensive citations to support its case for fundamental changes to the mental health system.

**Executive Summary** - The mental health system's standard treatments are colossally counter-productive and harmful, often forced on unwilling patients. The overreliance on psychiatric drugs is reducing the recovery rate of people diagnosed with serious mental illness from a possible 80% to 5% and reducing their life spans by 20 years or so. Psychiatric incarceration, euphemistically called "involuntary commitment," is similarly counterproductive and harmful, adding to patients' trauma and massively associated with suicides. Harmful psychiatric interventions are being imposed on people without consideration of the facts about treatments and their harms, and are a violation of International Law.

The most important elements for improving patients' lives are People, Place and Purpose. People—even psychiatric patients—need to have relationships (People), a safe place to live (Place), and activity that is meaningful to them, usually school or work (Purpose). People need to be given hope these are possible. Voluntary approaches that improve people's lives should be made broadly available instead of

the currently prevailing counterproductive and harmful psychiatric drugs for everyone, forever, regime often forced on people. These approaches include Peer Respite, Soteria Houses, Open Dialogue, Drug-Free Hospitals, Housing First, Employment, Warm Lines, Hearing Voices Network, Non-Police Community Response Teams, and emotional CPR (eCPR).

By implementing these approaches, mental health systems can move towards, and even achieve, the 80% possible recovery rate.

*“The prevailing expectation is for one therapy model to emerge as the therapy for trauma. This attitude is cause for concern, because it does a disservice to our clients. Each available therapy helps some clients, and each of them also fails at times. Every modality has strengths as well as weaknesses. Just as there is no one medication to treat anxiety or depression, there is no one-size-fits-all trauma therapy. In fact, sometimes it is the therapeutic relationship, not any technique or model, that is the primary force for healing trauma.” - Babette Rothschild*

7] [Adults shouting at children can be as harmful as sexual or physical abuse, study finds](#) by Issy Ronald @ CNN

Article excerpt - A new analysis of existing literature highlighted the long-term impact of verbal abuse on children.

Parents, teachers, coaches and other adults shouting at, denigrating or verbally threatening [children](#) can be as damaging to their development as sexual or physical [abuse](#), a new [study](#) finds.

The study, published in the journal Child Abuse & Neglect, reviewed 166 earlier studies to produce a detailed analysis of the existing literature on the topic.

The authors called for childhood verbal abuse to be ascribed its own category of maltreatment to facilitate prevention.

Child maltreatment is currently classified into four categories - physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, of which verbal abuse is a part, and neglect - and this study can inform strategies for prevention and treatment.

Unlike other forms of emotional abuse, including indifference, silent treatment and witnessing domestic violence, researchers categorized verbal abuse as more “overt” and said it “warrants special attention.”

Commissioned by Words Matter - a British charity that aims to improve children’s health by ending verbal abuse — the study was carried out by researchers at Wingate University in North Carolina and University College London.

“Childhood verbal abuse desperately needs to be acknowledged as an abuse subtype because of the lifelong negative consequences,” said professor Shanta Dube, the study’s lead author and director of Wingate University’s Master of Public Health Program, in a statement.

The study, which studied the impact of shouting by adults such as parents, teachers and coaches, cited

several papers that suggested the lasting effects of childhood verbal abuse can manifest as mental distress, such as depression and anger; externalizing symptoms, such as committing crimes, substance use or perpetrating abuse; and physical health outcomes, such as developing obesity or lung disease.

*“Just for today I will be unafraid. Especially, I will not be afraid to enjoy what is beautiful..” - Al-Anon*

*“You have dug your soul out of the dark, you have fought to be here; do not go back to what buried you.” – Bianca Sparacino*

8] [6 Easy Methods to Turn to When You’re Feeling Emotionally Overwhelmed](#) by Lauren Geall @ Pocket Worthy

Article excerpt - Struggling to keep your emotions in check? One recent study could offer some answers.

To say the last few years have been emotionally overwhelming would be a bit of an understatement. From [anxiety](#) and [loneliness](#) to [frustration](#) and [sadness](#), the [coronavirus pandemic](#) has certainly been one hell of an emotional roller-coaster.

It’s why the concept of ‘emotional plurality’ is expected to be so prominent over the next couple of years – the world is moving so fast that our [emotions](#) are struggling to keep up, leaving many people dealing with a whirlwind of different emotions all at once.

However, while it’s clear that we’ll all need to learn to adapt to the experience of emotional plurality over the next couple of years, there are things you can do to work through your emotions and take some of the weight off your shoulders – and that’s where a new study comes in.

[The research](#), published in the academic journal *Canadian Psychology*, tackles the subject of emotional dysregulation – a term that refers to an inability to manage emotions or keep them in check.

The concept has only recently begun to be studied in the context of mental health, but researchers believe it can present in a number of ways, including when emotions are activated at the wrong time, when they’re really intense or when they last longer than necessary.

“This happens to everyone because our brains and bodies aren’t perfect,” the study’s lead author Arela Agako tells [Forbes](#).

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

*“Sometimes the most important thing in a whole day is the rest taken between two deep breaths.” – ETTY HILLESUM*

9] [What is Complex Post Traumatic Stress Disorder \(CPTSD\)?](#) by Robyn Brickel, M.A., LMFT @ PACEsConnection

The High Heels and Heartache podcast recently featured Robyn Brickel, M.A., LMFT, the founder and

clinical director of Brickel and Associates. In this episode, *What is Complex Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (CPTSD)?*, Robyn delves into complex Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (CPTSD) while sharing what it is, outlining best practices for recovery, and examining how it is both similar and different to PTSD.

Robyn's expertise in the field of mental health and trauma helps to shed light on CPTSD, making it more accessible for those who may be struggling with CPTSD or know someone who is to get the care they deserve.

Podcast links - [Apple](#)      [Google Podcasts](#)

[High Heels and Heartache Podcast](#) - Featuring interviews with experts on the topics you're curious about and stories of extraordinary people who are changing the world.

*"One of my primary responsibilities is to take care of myself. I will find a small way to do something for my mind, body, and spirit today."* - *Courage to Change – Al-Anon*

*"...part of my recovery is respecting my need and my right to let go and relax."* - *In All Our Affairs – Al-Anon*

10] [Top of the Zinc Roof](#): poems observed from behind the veil with a glimpse of the light by Mitzy Sky @ Goodreads

Mitzy Sky's debut collection of poetry takes the reader on a journey through her life—from her childhood growing up on the island of Jamaica, her tumultuous move to the United States, and her struggles and self-reflection as an adult and parent. Tackling universal experiences such as faith and body image, mental health and motherhood, racism and love, her collection of deeply revealing and emotional rhymed and freestyle verse will touch a place in every reader's heart.

Mitzy Sky is an award-winning poet who writes to transmute pain to love. She's consciously unlearning messages that hindered her from living wholeheartedly. She focuses on the intersections of race and gender, particularly the theme of letting go of internalized oppression to move from shame to presence beyond labels. She enjoys spaces of creativity, traveling, and meeting people, and is just as joyful on the couch listening to the rain. Her debut book of poetry, *Top of the Zinc Roof: Poems Observe from Behind the Veil with a Glimpse of the Light*, takes the reader on a journey through her life—from her childhood growing up on the island of Jamaica, her tumultuous move to the United States, and her struggles and self-reflection as an adult and parent. Her work has appeared in *Scribes\*MICRO\*Fiction*, *The Good Men Project*, *Inner City News*, *Mad in America*, and elsewhere.

[Top of the Zinc Roof: Poems Observe from Behind the Veil with a Glimpse of the Light](#) @ Amazon

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

*No need to hurry. No need to sparkle. No need to be anybody but oneself."* – *Virginia Woolf*

11] [Bluebird's Poetry & Discussion](#) Hosted by City Voices @ YouTube

Bluebird is a pioneer in the peer support movement as well as a poet and artist. Fact: In her youth, Bluebird was the babysitter of Martin Luther King's children

I have been a crusader to change the mental health system for almost 40 years. I have worked in many peer related positions in the state of Florida, Georgia and in Delaware. To witness the progress and be part of it is truly amazing. As a nurse I have been able to combine my nursing background with my peer background and have been a consultant to many state hospitals to develop peer roles. I have written guidebooks on the subject of peer specialists and for inpatient peers. I am now retired as of January 2015 and much enjoying less stress but not less activity. I am concentrating on being a writer and just completed a published memoir, "You're Pretty When You Smile". I write a "poem for the day" on FACEBOOK and am actively promoting the arts at peer conferences and to develop an arts festival. My Goal: to keep going as long as possible, to dream, implement and sit back a few years from now and smile at History in the past and History in the making.

[City Voices: Making Mental Illness Fun Again!](#) – Media and Community-building Projects

**Our mission** is to give our peers the power to live life to the fullest by equipping them with valuable information, essential resources, and a platform to engage actively with their community.

**Our vision** is for a dynamic community of individuals who have faced mental health and/or substance use struggles, where mindfulness and artistic expression come together to cultivate a sense of inner peace, happiness, and self-love.

*“Almost everything will work again if you unplug it for a few minutes, including you.” – Anne Lamott*

*“If you don’t like something, change it. If you can’t change it, change your attitude.” – Maya Angelou*

12] [Can states ease homelessness by tapping Medicaid funding? Oregon is betting on it.](#) By Katia Riddle @ NPR [& audio podcast – 5 minutes posted at website]

Article excerpt - When Ben Norris was living on the street, he had many things to worry about: authorities sweeping his tent, people stealing his belongings, the perils of weather and the hardship of hygiene. There was no room on the list for maintaining his health.

That's how he ended up in the emergency room, unaware he was suffering from diabetes. Norris' toes already had gangrene, and he quickly lost both his feet to the disease. Despite everything, he's been in good spirits lately. Norris has a new apartment, and as he gives a quick tour of the building, he gestures toward the gym he says he doesn't have much use for. "I don't do a lot of tread-milling," he jokes before navigating his wheelchair to his unit.

Norris, 65, is part of a pilot project in Oregon that taps into Medicaid funds. Typically used to pay for things like medical procedures and appointments, Medicaid provides health care for tens of millions of low-income people – more than 1 in 5 Americans. Now, for the first time, it's being used for housing and rent for people who are homeless or in danger of becoming so.

With a \$1 billion dollar investment in coming years, Oregon is one of several states betting big on

programs like this. Officials hope that by keeping people out of medical crises that lead to repeated and expensive emergency room visits, Oregon will save enough money to pay for increased housing costs.

The money will flow from the state to nonprofit organizations and outreach workers, who will then partner with people like Norris to find and keep housing. Several pilot projects are already underway, and Oregon has the next three years to scale up the effort.

*“I am larger, better than I thought, I did not know I held so much goodness.”- Walt Whitman*

*“Sometimes the smallest step in the right direction ends up being the biggest step of your life. Tiptoe if you must, but take a step.” - Naeem Callaway*

12a] [How States Can Use Medicaid to Address Housing Costs](#) By Dori Glanz Reyneri @ Shelterforce [& audio podcast – 11 minutes posted at website]

Article excerpt - New federal guidance enables states to use Medicaid dollars to support housing needs.

Amid a growing body of evidence demonstrating housing’s impact on health outcomes, the Biden administration has been creating new opportunities for state Medicaid agencies to partner with organizations and providers that address housing insecurity and homelessness. The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) has issued new guidance on [Medicaid waivers](#) and use of the [“in lieu of services” \(ILOS\) authority](#), giving states increased flexibility to use Medicaid dollars to directly support housing expenses, including rent and temporary housing, and invest in community capacity building (for example, in providers and partnerships) to support housing services at a scale that is unprecedented in the program’s history.

Housing people is beneficial to the Medicaid program because it improves health outcomes and reduces the use of high-cost, high-intensity services such as hospitalizations and emergency department visits. For example, a [program](#) providing rental subsidies and case management supports to homeless individuals in Los Angeles was found to improve patient-reported mental health and to reduce inpatient days by 76.7 percent, emergency department visits by 67.5 percent, and the use of crisis stabilization services by 59.5 percent. A similar program in New York State reduced inpatient days by 40 percent, emergency department visits by 26 percent, and inpatient psychiatric admissions by 27 percent.

**Shelterforce: The Original Voice of Community Development** - *Shelterforce* is the only independent, non-academic publication covering the worlds of community development, affordable housing, and neighborhood stabilization.

Dedicated from the beginning to everyone working to empower and support low-income communities, *Shelterforce* provides a venue for conversations that need to be had on topics from community planning to racial equity, housing affordability to home-ownership, and the future of community development.

*“The best way out is always through,” - Robert Frost*

*“If you stumble, make it part of the dance.” - Unknown*

13] [11 Natural Depression Treatments](#) by R. Morgan Griffin @ Web MD

Article excerpt - Being depressed can make you feel helpless. You're not. Along with therapy and sometimes medication, there's a lot you can do on your own to fight back. Changing your behavior -- your physical activity, lifestyle, and even your way of thinking -- are all natural [depression treatments](#). These tips can help you feel better -- starting right now.

**1. Get in a routine.** If you're depressed, you need a routine, says Ian Cook, MD. He's a psychiatrist and director of the Depression Research and Clinic Program at UCLA.

[Depression](#) can strip away the structure from your life. One day melts into the next. Setting a gentle daily schedule can help you get back on track.

**2. Set goals.** When you're depressed, you may feel like you can't accomplish anything. That makes you feel worse about yourself. To push back, set daily goals for yourself.

"Start very small," Cook says. "Make your goal something that you can succeed at, like doing the dishes every other day."

As you start to feel better, you can add more challenging daily goals.

**3. Exercise.** It temporarily boosts feel-good chemicals called endorphins. It may also have long-term benefits for people with depression. Regular [exercise](#) seems to encourage the [brain](#) to rewire itself in positive ways, Cook says.

How much exercise do you need? You don't need to run marathons to get a benefit. Just walking a few times a week can help.

**4. Eat healthy.** There is no magic diet that fixes depression. It's a good idea to watch what you eat, though. If depression tends to make you overeat, getting in control of your eating will help you feel better.

Although nothing is definitive, Cook says there's evidence that foods with omega-3 fatty acids (such as salmon and tuna) and folic acid (such as spinach and avocado) could help ease depression.

*"Each of us has a unique part to play in the healing of the world." - Marianne Williamson*

13a] [22 Ways to Cope With Your Depression](#) @ Healthline

*"I have a happy personality with a heavy soul. Sometimes it gets weird." - Unknown*

13b] [Exercise or medication: Which is best for depression?](#) By Kristen Rogers, @ CNN

Article excerpt - [When treating depression](#) or anxiety, running may be just as effective as antidepressants, according to new research. But experts say the solution may not be so straightforward for every person.

Because of the prevalence of depression and anxiety and the consequences on health, researchers from

Amsterdam looked at the best way to mitigate these effects, and whether antidepressants [or lifestyle intervention](#) would have different effects on mental health as well as certain aspects of physical health.

The research is the first “to compare effects of antidepressants with running exercises for anxiety, depression and overall health,” according to [a news release](#) for a study presented October 6 at the European College of Neuropsychopharmacology’s annual conference. The study [published earlier this year](#) in the Journal of Affective Disorders.

“Antidepressants are generally safe and effective. They work for most people,” said study coauthor Brenda Penninx, a professor of psychiatric epidemiology at Vrije University in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, in a news release. “We know that not treating depression at all leads to worse outcomes, so antidepressants are generally a good choice. Nevertheless, we need to extend our treatment arsenal as not all patients respond to antidepressants or are willing to take them.”

*“The medical profession has come a long way in recognizing the healing benefits of art. My hope is that someday the arts will be considered as significant and essential in everyone’s lives as breathing fresh air, eating clean foods, and engaging in physical exercise.” - Renée Phillips*

*“You have trust in what you think. If you splinter yourself and try to please everyone, you can't.” - Annie Leibovitz*

14] ['Survivor wisdom' informs new book on hope after trauma](#) author Robert Jay Lifton By Joanne Silberner @ NPR - Goats and Soda

Article excerpt - What survivors of trauma have taught this eminent psychiatrist about hope

In 1968, at the age of 42, psychiatrist Robert Jay Lifton sat down to write *Death in Life*, a book about his experiences interviewing survivors of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. "I was not prepared for the things I heard," he wrote then. He spent hours with several dozen people, including a man who had been a 13-year-old shopkeeper's assistant at the time of the blast and got trapped beneath his collapsed house. He could still hear the moans and screaming of his neighbors. There was a physicist who was temporarily blinded by the blast and thought that the world was ending, a Protestant minister who at first thought everyone was dead and figured it was God's judgment on man, and several dozen more.

The interviews left Lifton “profoundly and emotionally spent” and propelled him on a lifelong journey to understand how human psychology affects and is affected by historical events.

Over the course of his career, Lifton studied not only survivors of the atomic bombings but Auschwitz survivors, Vietnam war veterans and people who'd been subjected to repression by the Chinese government. He's served on the faculty of several universities, including Harvard University and the John Jay College of Criminal Justice. The COVID pandemic prompted him to reflect on what he'd learned about mass trauma and resilience – that telling stories about trauma, and even trying to influence policy, can often help people recover. Now 97, Lifton has just published his 13th book, *Surviving Our Catastrophes: Resilience and Renewal from Hiroshima to the Covid-19 Pandemic*.

**He dedicates the book to “survivors who witness catastrophe and bring us hope.”**



**You're well beyond the retirement age for most people and you still have the passion to keep going. Why did you write this book?**

I wrote this book out of a conviction that my understanding of survivor power could contribute to surviving catastrophe in general. I tried to present a combination of the survivors' struggles and an avenue of hope because survivors can be at the center of resilience and renewal. I think what's key here is the transformation from the helpless victim to the agent of survival. In Hiroshima, for instance, I interviewed people who had undergone the most extreme kind of trauma and victimization. And yet they were partly by means of that experience able to transform themselves into life-affirming groups so that the very same people who had so suffered from trauma could make use of that trauma as a source of knowledge and power.

I interviewed people who had undergone the most extreme kind of trauma and victimization. And yet some of the very same people who had so suffered from trauma have shown what I call ***“survivor wisdom” - they transformed themselves from helpless victims to agents of survival.***

[Surviving Our Catastrophes](#) by Robert Jay Lifton @ The New Press

[Goats and Soda](#) - Stories Of Life In A Changing World

*“As my sufferings mounted I soon realized that there were two ways in which I could respond to my situation -- either to react with bitterness or seek to transform the suffering into a creative force. I decided to follow the latter course.” - Martin Luther King Jr*

*“Don't look at your feet to see if you are doing it right. Just dance.” - Anne Lamott*

***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

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