



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 December 2023

Hi Folks,

Welcome to the latest Surviving Spirit sharing...mindful that at times, life can feel overwhelming and the world in continued chaos and crisis. I find hope and a sense of peace knowing that there are so many out there trying to make the world a better place...thus one of the many reasons for this newsletter.

Music is also a saving grace for me and my daughter...we have had the good fortune to perform as a duo in several different venues over the past few weeks – fun, healing and joy all rolled into one.

Here's a recording of song that we share in some of the settings -

[Stand by Me performance by Michelle Skinner & Michael Skinner](#) - YouTube

Take care, Michael

“Music produces a kind of pleasure which human nature cannot do without.” - Confucius

“The best music is essentially there to provide you something to face the world with.” - Bruce Springsteen

Newsletter Contents:

- 1] Amid a mental health crisis, toy industry takes on a new role: building resilience By Anne D’Innocenzio @AP News
- 2] Know Yourself Better by Writing What Pops into Your Head By Christiane Gelitz @ Scientific American
- 3] One in Six: A Man's Guide to Overcoming Childhood Sexual Abuse by Russell Stagg
- 4] My mum’s depression drags me down. I feel I need to stay away by Philippa Perry @ The Guardian
- 5] How Did Adult Friendships Get So Complicated? - A collection of articles by Amy Maoz @ Pocket

- 6] The health benefits of regular naps - CNN @ YouTube
- 7] Intrusive thoughts: What they are and how to manage them By Kristen Rogers @ CNN Health
- 8] How Lifting Your Legs up Against the Wall Can Calm Your Mind and Reduce Stress by Sonam Nundoochan @ Pocket
- 9] Fire Through Dry Grass @ POV
- 10] Millionaire Builds 99 Tiny Homes to Cut Homelessness in His Community—He Even Provides Jobs On Site for Them By Andy Corbley @ Good News Network
- 11] Should Doctors Treat People with “Happy” Psychotic Delusions? By Pagan Kennedy @ Nautilus
- 12] The Concord Monitor - DHHS employee criticizes state's handling of mental healthcare by Sruthi Gopalakrishnan
- 13] As You Walk Away by Michael Skinner - A song about estrangement – You Tube
- 14] How to Reconcile With an Estranged Family Member by Belinda Luscombe @ TIME
- 14a] How to Heal From Estrangement (Four Tips) - Morin Holistic Therapy
- 14b] Estrangement – Tina Gilbertson, LPC

“As we express our gratitude, we must never forget that the highest appreciation is not to utter words, but to live by them.” - John F. Kennedy

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

1] [Amid a mental health crisis, toy industry takes on a new role: building resilience](#) By Anne D’Innocenzio @AP News

Article excerpt - As more children emerge from the pandemic grappling with mental health issues, their parents are seeking ways for them to build emotional resilience.

And toy companies are paying close attention.

While still in its early phase, a growing number of toy marketers are embracing MESH — or mental, emotional and social health — as a designation for toys that teach kids skills like how to adjust to new challenges, resolve conflict, advocate for themselves, or solve problems.

The acronym was first used in child development circles and by the American Camp Association 10 years ago and gained new resonance after the pandemic. Rachele Harmuth, head of ThinkFun, a

division of toy company Ravensburger, and resilience expert and family physician Deborah Gilboa, formed a MESH taskforce earlier this year with the goal of getting manufacturers to design toys with emotional resilience in mind and to have retailers market them accordingly.

“The best relationships in our lives are the best not because they have been the happiest ones, they are that way because they have stayed strong through the most tormentful of storms.” - Pandora Poikilos

“do not look for healing at the feet of those who broke you” - Rupi Kaur

2] [Know Yourself Better by Writing What Pops into Your Head](#) By Christiane Gelitz @ Scientific American

Article excerpt - The exercise of writing down unfiltered thoughts enhances self-knowledge

For decades, physician and author Silke Heimes has been leading groups in therapeutic exercises to put thoughts and feelings down on paper. Heimes, a professor of journalism at Darmstadt University of Applied Sciences, points to abundant evidence that [writing for five to 20 minutes a day](#) can improve health, diminish stress, increase self-confidence and even kindle the imagination. A writing routine, she argues, is a form of mental hygiene that almost anyone can benefit from.

So how do you start? What happens if-as every writer fears-the page remains blank? And how do you get rid of an overcritical inner censor? Heimes, director of the Institute for Creative and Therapeutic Writing in Darmstadt, explains how to overcome inhibitions and open up your inner world.

“There are two kinds of people, those who do the work and those who take the credit. Try to be in the first group; there is less competition there.” - Indira Gandhi

“When artists give form to revelation, their art can advance, deepen and potentially transform the consciousness of their community.” - Alex Grey

3] [One in Six: A Man's Guide to Overcoming Childhood Sexual Abuse](#) by [Russell Stagg](#)

Tens of millions of men are survivors of child sexual abuse. Studies by the [CDC](#), [NSPCC](#), and others show males experience sexual abuse at almost the same rate as females, and have mainly female perpetrators [principally mothers].

Licensed psychotherapist Russell Stagg explains that most survivors struggle with post-traumatic stress or PTSD (particularly complex PTSD), even if they don't know it. Pointing out that most addicts and alcoholics have a history of child abuse, he then addresses addictions, including those to porn and sex. He acknowledges that survivors often end up in abusive relationships, and cites reputable studies showing men are about as likely to be domestic violence victims as women.

Tackling a long list of trauma-related problems, Russell teaches topics like anger management, assertiveness, and suicide prevention. He stresses the need for therapeutic support, listing the qualities of good therapists; then he describes how to deal with the frequently-encountered hostile therapists rushing to defend female child molesters.

At least one in six men has experienced sexual abuse-including the author. Russell's book is the product of years of experience, addressing male survivors' concerns with empathy and compassion.

“Kindness can transform someone's dark moment with a blaze of light. You'll never know how much your caring matters. Make a difference for another today.” Amy Leigh Mercree

*“Our days are happier when we give people a piece of our heart rather than a piece of our mind.”
Unknown*

4] [My mum's depression drags me down. I feel I need to stay away](#) by Philippa Perry @ The Guardian

Article excerpt - The question. My 60-year-old mum has had depression all her life, which has had a profound impact on our family. Since her parents died from Covid, she's been her worst ever. She doesn't eat, has panic attacks, cries all the time, is hateful towards everyone, tries to turn everyone against each other and has frequent tantrums. But she refuses to get any help. She won't take medication nor seek therapy. And I'm exhausted. I dread seeing her number on my phone. My dad is thinking of leaving and, if he does, I'm afraid of what will happen to her. My parents retired to a rural village three hours' drive from my life.

Her mum [my gran] was also depressed and barely left the house after the age of 65, until she died at 90. She became dependent on my mother and it took a huge toll on her – she essentially became her carer for 25 years. Mum is now going the same way and seems to expect the same treatment from me. But I don't want history to repeat itself.

At last, at 34, I've got my life together, in terms of work, a flat, friendships and love. I feel I've now started living. My home life growing up was dysfunctional. She was uninterested and distant, and I felt so alone. I have worked for a long time in therapy on my mental-health issues to get to this point, it's been hard. Now it feels like Mum's problems are yet again bulldozing all my efforts.

I feel guilty if I keep my distance and I think she knows this and plays on it. What shall I do?

“Each situation is unique, and the reasons for estrangement can vary greatly.” - Unknown

“It is the privilege of wisdom to listen.” - O.W. Holmes

5] [How Did Adult Friendships Get So Complicated?](#) - A collection of articles by Amy Maoz @ Pocket

It's well documented that close friendships are good for our health and longevity. So why isn't adult life more conducive to being a good friend?

“Life truly lived is a risky business, and if on puts up too many fences against risk one ends by shutting out life itself.” - Kenneth S. Davis

“Try to be a rainbow in someone's cloud” Maya Angelou.

6] [The health benefits of regular naps](#) - CNN @ YouTube

In an [episode of Chasing Life](#), Dr. Sanjay Gupta talks with Professor Victoria Garfield on how naps impact our brains and why we should take more of them -- even while we're at the office. For more on how to build a stronger brain, [follow Chasing Life with Dr. Sanjay Gupta](#).

“The meeting of two personalities is like the contact of two chemical substances: if there is any reaction, both are transformed.” - Carl Gustav Jung

“Grief can be a burden, but also an anchor. You get used to the weight, how it holds you in place.” - Sarah Dessen

7] [Intrusive thoughts: What they are and how to manage them](#) By Kristen Rogers @ CNN Health

Article excerpt - Have you ever been hiking with your partner when you suddenly imagine pushing them off a cliff? Or on your way home from work, you can't shake the feeling that you hit someone with your car without realizing it? What about loving your colleague's cologne and fretting it must mean you don't love your husband?

These are intrusive thoughts, which are “repetitive and unwanted thoughts that can seemingly come out of nowhere,” said Dr. Sue Varma, a New York state-based psychiatrist and author of the upcoming book [“Practical Optimism: The Art, Science, and Practice of Exceptional Well-Being.”](#)

Intrusive thoughts can be about anything, but oftentimes the content is violent, sexually inappropriate, disturbing or otherwise in opposition to the person's values or character — causing the person experiencing them great anxiety, disgust or distress, experts said.

Regardless of the nature of the content, its target is often about what people care about most, said Stephanie Woodrow, clinical director of the National Anxiety and OCD Treatment Center in Washington, DC.

Most people have intrusive thoughts, but for many they come up occasionally and are inconvenient at worst, experts said. They can be more severe for people with mental health disorders — a group more likely to believe the thought has truth or relevance, Woodrow said.

“The weird, weird thing about devastating loss is that life actually goes on. When you're faced with a tragedy, a loss so huge that you have no idea how you can live through it, somehow, the world keeps turning, the seconds keep ticking.” - James Patterson

“Learn to listen, listen to learn.” - Al-Anon

8] [How Lifting Your Legs up Against the Wall Can Calm Your Mind and Reduce Stress](#) by Sonam Nundoochan @ Pocket

Article excerpt - Looking for a simple yet effective way to relax after a busy day? Tired after an intense workout or long run? Legs-up-the-wall pose may be the answer.

The legs-up-the-wall yoga pose has gone viral on [TikTok](#), racking up over 20 million views, with improved digestion and sleep quality among its proclaimed benefits. Some have even suggested that it

helps to relieve headaches.

As keen as we are to try anything that claims to reduce stress – and it’s no secret that yoga has [so many benefits](#) for mental, physical and emotional health – the question is: just how effective can lying with our legs against a wall really be for our stress levels and wellbeing?

The name says it all. Legs-up-the-wall is an ancient yoga pose also known as viparita karani, meaning ‘reversed in action’. It’s a restorative pose that simply involves lying down and stretching your legs up against the wall for a several minutes. It’s intended to promote relaxation, and although it’s usually practised at the end of a yoga class, you can practise it on its own too.

“Have enough courage to trust love one more time and always one more time.” - Maya Angelou

“Look deep into nature, and then you will understand everything better.” - Albert Einstein

9] [Fire Through Dry Grass](#) @ POV

Wearing snapback caps and Air Jordans, the Reality Poets aren’t typical nursing home residents. In *Fire Through Dry Grass*, these young, Black and brown disabled artists document their lives on lockdown during Covid, their rhymes underscoring the danger and imprisonment they feel. In the face of institutional neglect, they refuse to be abused, confined, and erased.

[Fire Through Dry Grass Documentary Film Trailer](#) – You Tube

“To experience peace does not mean that your life is always blissful. It means that you are capable of tapping into a blissful state of mind amidst the normal chaos of a hectic life.”
- Jill Botte Taylor

“Life is too short to waste time hating anyone.” – Unknown

10] [Millionaire Builds 99 Tiny Homes to Cut Homelessness in His Community](#)–He Even Provides Jobs On Site for Them By Andy Corbley @ Good News Network

Article excerpt - After selling his company for eight figures to a competitor, one Canadian entrepreneur is using his profit to build a community of tiny homes for those who need it most.

In the New Brunswick city of Fredericton, his factory is now churning out 1 tiny home every 4 business days in a bid to create the [12 Neighbours gated community](#) of 99 homes and an enterprise center to give homeless Frederictonians a real second chance.

12 Neighbours founder Marcel LeBrun had a successful social media monitoring company which he sold to an American competitor, and is now putting his new money where his mouth was—every time he used to say something needed to be done about the homelessness problem in the city.

Around 1,600 people in New Brunswick found themselves homeless for at least a day last year, reported CBC.

“I see myself as a community builder, and really what we’re doing here is not just building a little community, but we’re building a community in a city, like how do we help our city be better?” [LaBrun told CBC](#).

“Thousands of candles can be lighted from a single candle, and the life of the candle will not be shortened. Happiness never decreases by being shared.” – Buddha

“If we surrendered to earth’s intelligence we could rise up rooted, like trees.” - Rainer Maria Rilke

11] [Should Doctors Treat People with “Happy” Psychotic Delusions?](#) By Pagan Kennedy @ Nautilus

Article excerpt - several years ago, a British man named Harry picked his nose. A hidden camera recorded him in this private moment, then someone uploaded the video to the internet, and soon Harry’s pratfall exploded into a worldwide meme. Millions of people—most of them in the United States—became obsessed with the video. Everywhere Harry went, strangers shot significant looks at him and touched their nostrils, as if to say, “Hey, you’re that nose-picking guy!”

Harry loved the attention—he described his fame as a “safety blanket” and said he felt as if everyone on the street had become his friend. But there was a problem with Harry’s internet stardom: No one else could perceive it.

In a parallel reality where most of us live, Harry had been diagnosed with psychotic delusions, many of them seemingly borrowed from the YouTube videos he obsessively watched

His family convinced him to visit a mental health clinic affiliated with the University of Birmingham. There, he enthused to his clinician—Rosa Ritunnano—that he was “the happiest man in the world.” Harry told Ritunnano that he could read and control other people’s thoughts; he deployed his telepathy to battle the lizard-humans and the Illuminati at the center of a web of power. These enemies, for their part, surveilled him through hidden cameras and telepathic spies.

As nightmarish as that all might sound, Harry relished the attention from the imaginary conspirators who monitored him. “If I found out that they [were] not watching me and reading my mind, I would feel alone and crazy,” [he explained to Ritunnano](#).

“There is no greater joy, nor greater reward than to make a fundamental difference in someone’s life.” – Mary Rose McGeady

“The greatest weapon against stress is our ability to choose one thought over another.” - William James

12] [The Concord Monitor - DHHS employee criticizes state's handling of mental healthcare](#) by Sruthi Gopalakrishnan

Article excerpt - Last year’s keynote speaker at the annual conference of the state’s Suicide Prevention Council was removed by police from this year’s event for trespassing after showing up with a sign criticizing the state’s mental health system.

Wearing a sign that read, “Ask me why the mental health system is failing,” Samantha Captain stood

outside the conference at the Grappone Conference Center in Concord to draw attention to the issues she sees with the state's mental healthcare system.

“The state seems to be fine with meaningless words and further funding the same failed approaches,” said Captain, an employee at the Department of Health and Human Services. “The system is failing because it has been allowed to fail, and because the people in power feel so different from those who are relying on them to do the work. The only difference I see is indifference.”

The management at the conference center was less than receptive to Captain's message and called the police, who issued an order for her to stay off the property. She moved to the public sidewalk in front of the center, where she held her sign for hours.

“I want inclusion. I want a voice at the table for not just me but for my community and be involved in this movement, which is really all I care about,” she said in an interview later. “I care about the necessary systemic change.”

She said she tried to enter the conference, but was denied.

“Nature gets into our souls and opens doors to hidden parts of ourselves.” - Pamela Heyda

“Mental health awareness doesn't mean fighting stress, anxiety, depression and other everyday mental health issues, rather it means consciously modulating the habits that intensify those issues. Once you are in control of your habits, instead of checking your habits, you would automatically be in a much better shape, both mentally and physically.” - Abhijit Naskar

13] [As You Walk Away](#) by Michael Skinner - A song about estrangement – You Tube

“The word estrangement comes from the Latin word extraneare, meaning “to treat as a stranger.” Becoming a stranger to one's child is one of the most painful things that can happen to a parent.” – Tina Gilbertson

“Each situation is unique, and the reasons for estrangement can vary greatly.” - Unknown

14] [How to Reconcile With an Estranged Family Member](#) by Belinda Luscombe @ TIME

Article excerpt - ven as a child, Becky Ellis knew her father was not a safe guy to be around. He took her and her siblings to nude beaches when Ellis was 7. On a boating holiday, he let her 5-year-old sister drink as much champagne as she wanted and then didn't monitor her. “My brother and I made sure she didn't jump out into the lake in the middle of night and drown,” says Ellis. After her mother left him, he'd come over and bang on the door and drunkenly demand to see the kids, until the cops turned up.

For many years, she wanted nothing to do with him. “He made our lives very dangerous,” she says. “We all just want to love our parents and be loved by them, but he wasn't safe to love.” She was his fifth child, the first daughter of his second wife. He had abandoned his first wife and their three children, and as a child she feared she'd suffer the same fate. But as she grew up and he cycled through more wives, she began to realize that she wanted less and less to do with him. When Ellis had children, she moved to another state to keep them away from him.

In December 2022, [a study](#) in the *Journal of Marriage and Family* found that 26% of young adults report an estrangement from their fathers and 6% from their mothers. And [Karl Pillemer](#), a professor of human development at Cornell University, who has conducted large nationally representative and in-depth studies on family estrangement, says just under 10% of people say they are either estranged from a parent or a child and slightly more than that say they're estranged from a sibling.

In his book, *Fault Lines*, Pillemer identifies three main ways that families become estranged. One is the way Ellis lost touch with her father, because of early childhood adversity: abuse or extreme parenting. The second occurs when one family member diverges sharply from the values of the rest of the family. And the third is when a cascading series of negative interactions results in a schism, often sparked by conflicts over a person who has married into the family, or over a will or an inheritance. "It's hard to say which of those is most important," says Pillemer, "but I will say that childhood problems—people with very difficult, troubled childhoods—seem to be less likely to reconcile over time."

"Why must conversions always come so late? Why do people always apologize to corpses?" – David Brin

"These mountains that you are carrying, you were only supposed to climb." - Najwa Zebian

14a] [How to Heal From Estrangement \(Four Tips\)](#) - Morin Holistic Therapy

14b] [Estrangement – Tina Gilbertson, LPC](#)

"The emotion that can break your heart is sometimes the very one that heals it..." - Nicholas Spark

"The best relationships in our lives are the best not because they have been the happiest ones, they are that way because they have stayed strong through the most tormentful of storms." - Pandora Poikilos

Thank you & Take care, Michael

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

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

A diagnosis is not a destiny

[The Surviving Spirit](#) - Healing the Heart Through the Creative Arts, Education & Advocacy - Hope, Healing & Help for Trauma, Abuse & Mental Health

[The Surviving Spirit Facebook Page](#)

mike.skinner@survivingspirit.com 603-625-2136 38 River Ledge Drive, Goffstown, NH 03045

[@SurvivinSpirit](#) Twitter

[Michael Skinner Music](#) - Hope, Healing, & Help for Trauma, Abuse & Mental Health - Music, Resources & Advocacy

Live performances & more @ [Michael Skinner – You Tube](#)

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