



*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 January 2024**

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*“Life is too short to spend time with people who suck the happiness out of you.” – Unknown*

*“Your vision will become clear when you can look into your own heart.” - Carl Jung*

1] [Seasonal affective disorder: Self-care tips to fight the winter blues](#) By Jocelyn Solis-Moreira @ CNN

Article excerpt - Seasonal affective disorder doesn't mean you have to be SAD. Here are 6 self-care tips to fight the blues.

The start of a new year means continued short days and long nights. While some might be unhappy over the lack of daylight outside, [millions of people](#) have to worry about a more severe type of sadness: the winter blues.

Seasonal affective disorder is a type of [depression](#) that occurs in late fall and winter that has to do with the lack of sunlight.

Having shorter days and longer nights during fall and winter can disrupt a 24-hour clock inside our bodies called the [circadian rhythm](#). This clock regulates multiple bodily processes and is influenced by the day-night cycle, said circadian rhythm expert Joseph Takahashi, professor and chair of the neuroscience department at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center, via email. Disrupted circadian responses may [affect brain regions involved in mood](#), along with causing fatigue and low energy from [lack of sleep](#).

Taking care of your health is key to dealing with seasonal affective disorder. Here's what experts say you can do to manage seasonal affective disorder. Remember to talk to your medical provider before starting any new treatments.

*“Let us be grateful to the people who make us happy; they are the charming gardeners who make our souls blossom.” - Marcel Proust*

*“We need more light about each other. Light creates understanding, understanding creates love, love creates patience, and patience creates unity.” - Malcolm X*

2] [Why more men are joining the ranks of therapists: ‘We’re rushing to a place we’re needed’](#) by Daniel Duane @ The Guardian

Article excerpt - Several factors including stigma around mental health and years of low-paid work kept men away. But men's attitude toward the profession seems to be changing

Last winter, my 53-year-old sister told me she was tired of her profession and wanted to become a therapist. Nothing noteworthy there: 76% of psychotherapists are women and it's been that way for decades. I surprised my sister by confessing that, after 25 years as a journalist, I, too, wanted to become a therapist – and was already in graduate school making it happen.

My sister soon texted that she'd told her husband, Mario, and it turned out that he, too, was thinking of becoming a therapist.

Mario is a wonderful man: 52 years old, kind and funny, played football at Colorado State, great father. Mario spent the last 15 years working for major media companies and while I knew he'd been laid off, he'd be a shoo-in for another high-level job. So when he called, I said I was surprised.

"I can't see growing old in corporate America," Mario said. "I gotta do something more meaningful. Tell me the deal with graduate school. How's it work?"

I told Mario the master's degree would take two years and require 300 hours of unpaid work in a non-profit mental health clinic. Then I could start seeing clients and getting paid but only under the supervision of a licensed therapist. I'd have to work 3,000 hours that way, making anywhere from zero to \$80,000 a year, before I could get licensed myself. After that, I could charge maybe \$150 an hour. Two weeks later, Mario enrolled in my graduate program.

*"Nothing liberates our greatness like the desire to help, the desire to serve." – Marianne Williamson*

*"Shame, blame, disrespect, betrayal, and the withholding of affection damage the roots from which love grows. Love can only survive these injuries if they are acknowledged, healed and rare. If we can share our story with someone who responds with empathy and understanding, shame can't survive." - Brené Brown*

3] [New study quantifies social cost of untreated traumatic childhood experiences at \\$14 trillion](#) By Sujata Srinivasan @ Connecticut Public Radio

*Please note, there is a Listen link posted at the website*

Excerpt - The U.S. economy could be \$14 trillion larger if adult health conditions caused by [Adverse Childhood Experiences \(ACEs\)](#) are prevented, according to a [new study](#) in the Journal of the American Medical Association.

Researchers at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention surveyed more than 820,000 people to find out the direct and indirect economic impact of ACEs — childhood abuse or neglect, witnessing violence, seeing family members with substance use disorder, mental health struggles, having a parent incarcerated.

"We do see a lot of ACEs occurring," said Melissa Santos, chief of pediatric psychology, Connecticut Children's, who's not associated with the study. "And we know that that impact is going to occur in our

kids, not just in terms of their mental health, but also in terms of their physical health as well.”

In the absence of childhood intervention, ACEs have a significant impact on mental health in older adults.

Multiple U.S. and international studies have shown that adverse childhood experiences make older adults more vulnerable to cognitive decline,” said Dr. Neha Jain, associate professor of psychiatry, University of Connecticut School of Health.

“There are studies suggesting that adverse childhood experiences can negatively affect the development of resilience,” Jain said. “I often see this in clinical practice as well.”

The study’s researchers make a case for more funding in early childhood interventions.

*“We rise by lifting others.” – Robert Ingersoll*

*“All cruelty springs from weakness.” - Lucius Annaeus Seneca*

4] [The Betrayal Bond](#): Breaking Free of Exploitative Relationships by author Dr Patrick Carnes

Exploitative relationships can create trauma bonds--chains that link a victim to someone who is dangerous to them. Divorce, employee relations, litigation of any type, incest and child abuse, family and marital systems, domestic violence, hostage negotiations, kidnapping, professional exploitation and religious abuse are all areas of trauma bonding. All these relationships share one thing: they are situations of incredible intensity or importance where there is an exploitation of trust or power.

In *The Betrayal Bond*, Patrick Carnes presents an in-depth study of these relationships, why they form, who is most susceptible, and how they become so powerful. He shows how to recognize when traumatic bonding has occurred and gives a checklist for examining relationships. He then provides steps to safely extricate from these relationships.

*“You gain strength, courage and confidence by every experience in which you really stop to look fear in the face. You are able to say to yourself, 'I have lived through this horror. I can take the next thing that comes along.' You must do the thing you think you cannot do.” - Eleanor Roosevelt*

*“If a man carries his own lantern, he need not fear darkness.” - Hasidic saying*

5] [How to cope if you’re grieving](#): Q&A with a trauma therapist By Jessica DuLong @ CNN

Article excerpt - What lessons from trauma therapy can teach us about grief

Back-to-back celebrations with family and friends this December and into January — typically considered “the most wonderful time of the year,” as the classic song goes — can bring acute reminders of who’s missing from our holiday tables.

As a trauma therapist in Washington, DC, specializing in grief and loss, Meghan Riordan Jarvis counsels clients on how to get through what can be a trying time full of painful triggers. She brings to

her work not only decades of training and clinical experience but also personal perspective from her own struggles with complex post-traumatic stress disorder following her mother's sudden death.

In her new book, "[End of the Hour: A Therapist's Memoir](#)," which she calls "a love-letter to my clients," Jarvis tells the story of checking herself into the same inpatient treatment center where she'd previously referred clients, sharing insights and practices gleaned from her own embodied grief experience along with interventions that have helped people she treats. In this conversation, Jarvis explains how paying attention to your body's responses provides critical insights for helping you recover from loss — during the holidays and beyond.

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

*"Sharing experiences widens one's horizons and opens out new and better ways to deal with difficulties. There is no need to solve them alone." - Al-Anon*

6] [For Too Many With Mental Illness, Incarceration is the Default](#) By Debra A. Pinals, M.D. @ The Pew Charitable Trusts

Article excerpt - More than a million people in America's prisons and jails have behavioral health conditions. Many of them probably never needed to be there.

A man I'll call Ty is 52 years old. During his 20s, he was dishonorably discharged from the Army with a diagnosis of chronic paranoid schizophrenia. The symptoms of his illness had become evident over time. At one point he told his superiors that voices in his head were harassing him and his commanding officer was communicating with him through microchips. More recently, he has lost touch with family and slept in a cardboard box in an overcrowded tent encampment of unhoused people. For months he has been sitting in jail awaiting adjudication after allegedly assaulting a police officer. The correctional staff offer medications to quell the voices, but he usually refuses them. They offer coloring books to let him pass the time, but he has no interest. He yells so much from his cell about the microchips that he frequently is put in the "hole," an isolated cell.

A woman I'll call Teresa sits alone in a county jail cell, longing for her children. She has been in and out of jail for 10 of her 32 years on Earth, for charges related to drug dealing and drug use. Removed from her biological parents as a young girl after experiencing terrible abuses, she spent her early years in foster care and juvenile hall. There were abusive boyfriends. Though there were a few kind social workers, none remained in her life and she trusts no one. Her two children are in the custody of her mother. She is diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder and major depressive disorder, along with opioid and methamphetamine use disorders.

Ty and Teresa are composite characters, built on traits and experiences that I've seen in countless detention facilities in the United States over the past three decades.

This nation incarcerates more people than any other country on the globe, with somewhere between 6 million and 6.5 million under correctional supervision, including prisons, jails, parole, and probation. Exact estimates vary slightly, but we in the field agree that about 16% of this population has some form of significant mental illness.

*“Fear is the parent of cruelty.” - James Anthony Froude*

6a] [Formerly incarcerated lawmaker reflects on breaking down barriers after prison](#) – YouTube - PBS News

Tarra Simmons is the first formerly incarcerated state legislator in Washington state. As part of our “Searching for Justice” series, special correspondent Cat Wise reports on how she went from teen mother to felon to lawyer, and now a state representative, overcoming barriers that she and many other people face after serving time in prison.

Tarra is also the executive director of the nonprofit focused on assisting those that are formerly incarcerated - [Civil Survival – Equity. Community. Lived Experience.](#)

*“If we want to stop the vicious cycle of unhappiness, we must learn new ways of living, new ways of relating to each other.” - A-Anon*

6b] [Likely Broad Impact for a U.S. Department of Justice Finding on Incarceration of People with Mental Illness](#) by Ira A. Burnim @ Safety+Justice Challenge

Article excerpt - A pivotal moment has come in the long and complex effort to reform the U.S. criminal justice system. The U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) has directed officials in Alameda County, California, to fundamentally change the way it deals with people with mental illness.

DOJ did so by issuing a formal “[letter of findings](#)“, taking the county to task for failing to meet the needs of people with mental illness and entangling them in the criminal justice system. Policy makers and lawyers are watching the situation closely, and the outcome is likely to have an impact far beyond the Bay Area.

The DOJ letter recognizes that people with serious mental illness can live productive lives in our communities. Many of them do so by receiving services funded by the government, such as mental health treatment, peer supports, and housing. Many others, however, do not get the services they need, and those individuals are disproportionately Black, Indigenous, and people of color. Among those who lack services are people commonly called “frequent fliers.” People with mental illness are repeatedly jailed for low-level offenses such as trespassing, shoplifting, and disorderly conduct. Their mental health care consists of visits to emergency rooms and short hospital stays. They typically lack stable housing. They cycle between jails, hospitals, and the streets.

**The Cycle as a Single, Failing System of Care**-The DOJ letter is a turning point in remedying the cruel trap that this cycle creates, harming people with mental illness, their families, and their communities. The letter recognizes that, as a practical matter, jails, emergency rooms, and hospitals operate as a single, failing system of care.

*“Think for yourself and let others enjoy the privilege of doing so too.” - Voltaire*

*“Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature in its beauty.” - Albert Einstein*

7] [ForLikeMinds Workbook](#) – Workbook to Share Hope by Katherine Ponte

*“Katherine Ponte's Recovery Workbook nicely lays out the principles and practices that help people on their recovery experience. It is chock full of skills which workbook participants might try as they consider their priorities. Katherine comes at this from two perspectives: as a person with lived experience AND as a thought leader in the recovery space.” - Patrick Corrigan, PsyD*

Katherine's mission is to share her hope and inspire others to believe that mental illness recovery is possible and to help them reach it. Since reaching recovery and starting to share her story publicly in 2018, Katherine's work has reached millions and been widely recognized for its insights and guidance by families and their loved ones, clinicians, and academics.

Katherine has lived with severe bipolar I disorder with psychosis for over 20 years and has been happily living in recovery since 2018. She is based in New York City and the Catskills.

*“Each of us must confront our own fears, must come face to face with them. How we handle our fears will determine where we go with the rest of our lives. To experience adventure or to be limited by the fear of it.” - Judy Blume*

*“What message does my silence communicate? Today I will try to align the stillness of my tongue with a stillness of spirit.*

*...If the silence has even in it a trace of anger or hostility, it loses all its power...True quiet has the quality of serenity, acceptance, peace.” - One Day at a Time in Al-Anon*

8] [The Future of Gen Z's Mental Health: How to Fix the 'Unhappiest Generation Ever'](#) by Helen Chandler-Wilde @ The Telegraph

Article excerpt - What will be the lasting effects of technology, social media and lockdown on the minds of young people?

It is late one night early in lockdown. I look out of the window of my parents' house, where I am waiting out the pandemic, and see an orb of ghostly light hanging in the misty air. It's my sister Rosie, her face lit up by her phone, standing statue-still in the cold night, texting.

While I was on boozy Zoom calls, she spent much of lockdown like this. Neck craned down, oblivious to the outside world as she texted.

Our behaviour is predicted with spooky accuracy by our ages: I am a 25-year-old Millennial, part of a generation of supposed narcissists that allegedly prefers avocado toast to saving for a house deposit. She is part of [Generation Z](#), born between 1995 and 2010, who are characterised as more hardworking, abstemious and glued to their devices.

Every generation is shaped by historical markers. The Baby Boomers grew up in a time of unrivalled economic growth and happiness; Generation X were the jaded entrepreneurs that fed the Dot-Com Boom; Millennials graduated into the Great Recession.



Gen Z can't remember a time without widespread internet usage, and have now lost a lump of their education in lockdown.

*“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.*

*“Worry never robs tomorrow of its sorrow; it only saps today of its strength.” - A.J.Cronin*

9] [How Can a Church Care for the Trauma-Afflicted?](#) by Michelle Stiffler @ Common Good Magazine

Article excerpt - *“When faith communities (or any community) view substance use through a trauma-informed lens, they see people as human beings rather than human problems.” - Sanghoon Yoo*

The rate of opioid overdose in Maricopa County, Arizona, was exploding. So in 2018 Tracy Cruikshank, former director at the Maricopa County Department of Public Health, the third largest health department in the nation, began considering collaborative solutions within a large — and largely untapped — population: churches.

And why not churches? Nearly 2,000 faith organizations exist in Maricopa County alone. From a holistic perspective, faith organizations are already anchored to hope, flourishing, and transformation — the elements of any recovery or prevention program. Cruikshank knew that for an effort of this scale, faith organizations and government agencies would need to work interdependently. Not the first to encounter the challenge, she knew she would need help from someone connected to faith communities, someone who could inspire faith leaders to think beyond programs, conventional methods, and of course, the stigma of substance use.

Cruikshank enlisted the cooperation of Sanghoon Yoo, founder of [the Faithful City](#), a social service ministry at Arizona State University, and founding board member of the [Arizona ACEs \(Adverse Childhood Experiences\) Consortium](#). Yoo was passionate about trauma-informed care, an approach to care that understands trauma's impact, recognizes its effects, and plans potential paths for recovery. A few pioneer faith organizations in Maricopa County were applying trauma-informed principles to their policies and service models. Yoo was instrumental in training and mentoring all of them.

With Yoo's help, Cruikshank assessed the readiness of local churches for trauma sensitive work. Feedback from participating local church leaders highlighted two prominent themes: 1) They wanted prevention and recovery training for all substances, not just opioids, and 2) they wanted a reciprocal relationship of trust with government agencies — not as an ideal, but as a prerequisite.

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

*“If you carry joy in your heart, you can heal any moment.” - Carlos Santana*

10] [As Prescribed Film Screening](#) - In partnership with [Alliance for Benzodiazepine Best Practices](#)



Xanax, Klonopin, Valium, Ativan – all belong to a class of drugs known as benzodiazepines (benzos). News and entertainment media portray them in terms of addiction and abuse or as innocuous medications that relax nerves. [Watch Trailer](#)

AS PRESCRIBED documents a strikingly different narrative, following eye-opening stories of invisible illness and disability. Boston-based survivor Geraldine Burns leads a grassroots army of “good patients” that help other victims and advocate tirelessly for benzodiazepine harm awareness. But resistance is strong. Geraldine and her cohorts are opposed by powerful forces that include pharmaceutical giants and a medical culture that has denied the problem for decades.

*“In making this film, it is not my intention to have benzodiazepines banned or taken away from those patients who might choose to take them even after learning of the risks. Undoubtedly, benzodiazepines are helpful for short-term use. But research does show that benzodiazepines disrupt neurotransmitter function in the nervous system. Fortunately, as many as 50% of those prescribed a benzodiazepine do not suffer their adverse effects. In the film, I am focusing on those who experience life-altering harm. As Prescribed is not an easy film to watch, but it is with awareness that we can make urgently needed change.”* - Holly Hardman, film director

*“The portal of healing and creativity always takes us into the realm of the spirit.”* Angeles Arrien

*“Normal is not something to aspire to, it’s something to get away from.”* Jodie Foster

11] [No One Wants To Read That You're Happy](#) by Donald D'Haene @ Amazon Books

Asking as many questions as it answers, is No One Wants to Read That You’re Happy - a tale of faith lost...or found? Will the author find his way out of purgatory? Who will he meet while he is there?

Donald D’Haene says, “I have had both the unluckiest and luckiest life.”

His second memoir reveals just some of the stories of his journey to survive and triumph in the aftermath of sexual abuse. An unbelievable, yet true, story told with brutal honesty, humor, hope, and history. This ain’t no Brady-Bunch memoir. D’Haene brings the receipts.

*“A multi-dimensional memoir of raw honesty about the life journey of one man, his siblings and mother to move forward in life in search of their better selves after years of sexual and psychological abuse by the father. Not everyone makes it but it stands as a message of hope and endurance for any person who wonders whether it's possible or worth it to keep going. The story, art work and letters of a sibling will make it impossible for the reader to look at any person living precariously on the margins without being reminded that they have a story that is far more complex than any label about mental health/addiction/homelessness.”* - Stephen Glass

*“Only time and tears take away grief; that is what they are for.”* - Terry Pratchett

*“The song is ended but the melody lingers on.”* - Irving Berlin

12] [Disorder](#) – film review by Cath Clarke @ The Guardian

Disorder review – sympathetic study of three military veterans living with PTSD

Article excerpt - Kate Blewett's documentary shows the lasting effects of war and considers the way that three ex-soldiers look to cope with their traumas.

Interviewed for this documentary about veterans living with post-traumatic stress disorder, war photographer Lalage Snow talks about her series of triptych portraits of soldiers: three photos, taken before, during and after deployment in Afghanistan. You find yourself searching for the psychological scars written in their tired, thinner faces. In some of the “after” shots, it's as if war has completely rewired them. Their features look subtly but noticeably different, muscles in their faces clenched, hardening their expressions – or somehow making them softer. It's extraordinary work.

Snow says she always wanted to go back, photograph the soldiers a decade after the war, but hasn't been able to get funding. Instead she talks here in Kate Blewett's straightforward sympathetic documentary following three veterans living with PTSD (none of them featured in Snow's work as far we know). One of them is Amber, who enlisted at age 16 after a childhood of domestic violence and sexual abuse. Her emotional rawness and vulnerability are very brave, but almost unbearable to watch in places. Former Royal Marine sniper Stuart is on his second attempt at rowing solo across the Atlantic. He wants to prove that PTSD doesn't have to hold you back. It's also a kind of therapy, he says, “To keep my demons at bay.” Blewett gently asks him how it changed him, being a sniper. He won't be prodded. “It's a job, you get paid to do it.” Which leaves you wondering if there is trauma he doesn't want to go near.

[DISORDER - Official trailer](#) You Tube

*“Stab the body and it heals, but injure the heart and the wound lasts a lifetime.” - Mineko Iwasaki*

*“Change, like healing, takes time.” Veronica Roth*

13] ["Eliminating the stigma surrounding suicide"](#) - CBS News @ YouTube

On average, a staggering 132 Americans kill themselves every single day, with every demographic at risk of suicidal ideation. Correspondent Susan Spencer talks with experts about this major public health crisis and the need to eliminate the shame that can be attached to mental health struggles, which prevents those suffering from finding the help that could save their lives. Spencer also talks with a professor who undertook about 10 suicide attempts, from as young as age six, but who - after defying the stigma by writing about it - today believes he will never do so again.

*“Adopt the pace of nature: her secret is patience.” - Ralph Waldo Emerson*

*“Man's heart away from nature becomes hard. “ - Standing Bear*

14] [Cutting 1 teaspoon of salt works as well as blood pressure meds, study finds](#) by Sandee LaMotte @ CNN

Article excerpt - Cutting 1 teaspoon of [salt from your diet](#) each day can lower your top blood pressure reading just as much as a typical hypertension medication, even if you don't have high blood pressure,

a new study found.

A teaspoon of salt is 2,300 milligrams — that’s the top daily limit for people over 14 recommended by the [latest US nutritional guidelines](#). However, the American Heart Association [recommends](#) a diet with less than 1,500 milligrams of sodium a day.

“This is the first study to show that people who are already on blood pressure medication can lower their blood pressure even more by limiting sodium,” said coprincipal investigator Norrina Allen, professor of preventive medicine at Northwestern University’s Feinberg School of Medicine.

“And regardless of medication, we found 70% to 75% of people are likely to see a reduction in their blood pressure if they lower the sodium in their diet,” Allen said.

High blood pressure is often called the “[silent killer](#),” because there are no symptoms — the only way to know if you have it is to test for it. Yet hypertension affects 1 in 3 adults worldwide and can lead to heart attack, heart failure, kidney damage and stroke, according to a [2023 report](#) by the World Health Organization.

*“It is good to have an end to journey towards; but it is the journey that matters in the end.” - Ursula LeGuin*

*“Don’t underestimate the value of Doing Nothing, of just going along, listening to all the things you can’t hear, and not bothering.” - Winnie the Pooh*

***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***