



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 February 2024

Newsletter Contents:

- 1] The Nordic Way to Stop Bullying by David Robson @ BBC News
- 2] People Who Had Unhappy Childhoods Usually Develop These Traits by Sinead Cafferty @ Bolde
- 3] Fighting for Recovery by Phyllis Vine – Beacon Press
- 4] How Arizona's crisis response network became a model for mental health hotlines – PBS Newshour – YouTube
- 4a] On Portland streets, recovered drug users offer lifeline to fight fentanyl’s cruel cycle by Noelle Crombie @ The Oregonian/oregonlive.com
- 5] The Finnish miracle: how the country halved its suicide rate – and saved countless lives by Miranda Bryant @ The Guardian
- 6] I was an addict, a prisoner, a sex worker. I thought the world had written me off – but I saved myself - Prisons and probation by Ammar Kalia @ The Guardian
- 6a] How we survive - People who have lived through our greatest fears @ The Guardian
- 7] Pain travels through families until someone is ready to feel it – YouTube
- 8] Heartbeats of Hope: The Empowerment Way to Recover Your Life by author Daniel Fisher
- 9] I’m a Neurologist. Here’s the One Thing I Do Every Day for My Long-Term Brain Health by Ayana Underwood @ SELF
- 10] US surgeon general Vivek Murthy: ‘Loneliness is like hunger, a signal we’re lacking something for survival’ by Katherine Rowland @ The Guardian
- 11] Cultural Silence and Wounded Souls – Black Men and Mental Health - Edited by Mark Tuggle

Foreword by Cleo Manago

12] Creativity and Madness - Continuing Education Conferences - August 1-4, 2024

13] Color to Heal - A Coloring Book of Healing Images for Adult Survivors of Child Abuse By Ellen Lacter, Ph.D. Illustrated by Robin Baird Lewis and Jen Callow

14] Anti-crime laws in Minnesota harmed people with mental illness, DOJ says by John Hanna @ AP News

“It's when we start working together that the real healing takes place.” - David Hume

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

1] [The Nordic Way to Stop Bullying](#) by David Robson @ BBC News & Pocket Worthy

Article excerpt - Bullying can make children's lives a misery and cause lifelong health problems – but scientists are discovering powerful ways to fight it.

Lady Gaga, Shawn Mendes, Blake Lively, Karen Elson, Eminem, Kate Middleton and Mike Nichols – these are just a few people who have spoken about their experiences of being victims of bullying at school, and the pain that it has caused them in childhood and later life. My own nemeses were a pair of Daniels from rural Yorkshire. They had the habit of mimicking and mocking everything I said, so that I barely dared to speak in class.

Anyone who has been victimised as a child will understand the feelings of shame that these kinds of experiences can bring. And the consequences do not stop there. Research suggests that the effects of childhood bullying can linger for decades, with long-lasting changes that can put us at a greater risk of mental and physical illness.

Such findings are leading an increasing number of educationalists to shift their views of bullying – from an inevitable element of growing up, to a violation of children's human rights.

Inflamed mind, inflamed body - There can be little doubt that bullying is a serious risk to children's mental health in the short term, with the most notable consequences being elevated anxiety, depression and paranoid thinking. While some of these symptoms may naturally vanish after the bullying stops, many victims continue to suffer from a higher risk of mental illness.

“Now every time I witness a strong person, I want to know what dark did you conquer in your story? Mountains do not rise without earthquakes.” - Katherine MacKenett

“Criticism, like rain, should be gentle enough to nourish a man's growth without destroying his roots.” – Frank A. Clark

2] [People Who Had Unhappy Childhoods Usually Develop These Traits](#) by Sinead Cafferty @ Bolde

Article excerpt - How you grow up determines a lot about the type of adult you eventually become. And while none of us is beholden to the negative effects of whatever we experienced as kids, it would be silly to think that you don't develop certain habits that end up being pretty hard to break. In fact, those who had unhappy childhoods tend to develop at least one of the following traits, for better or worse.

- 1.They often become perfectionists.
- 2.They develop hyper-independence.
- 3.They avoid emotional intimacy at all costs.
- 4.They're unnecessarily hypervigilant.
- 5.They struggle with their self-esteem.
- 10.They Have a Strong Creative Streak.

13.They Develop a Strong Sense of Justice.- Having felt the sting of unfairness in their formative years, they often develop a keen sense of justice. They're the ones standing up for the underdog, advocating for fairness, and challenging injustices. This trait makes them compassionate and formidable allies, but it can also weigh heavy on them, as they're constantly aware of the inequities and wrongs in the world around them.

“Often when we experience trauma, particularly repeated trauma, we focus solely on survival and end up disconnecting from both our emotions and our needs. This can prevent us from feeling the extreme pain of the trauma, but also from properly processing and recovering from the experience. Later, when emotions stirred by the trauma surface, we are forced to face what we could not cope with in such a vulnerable situation. At this time, it is vital we remind ourselves, we are now safe to face and heal from the experience, the emotions and the after effects. Be gentle with yourself when working to heal these wounds and know that you are capable and worthy.” - Rachel Finch

3] [Fighting for Recovery](#) by Phyllis Vine – Beacon Press

An essential history of the recovery movement for people with mental illness, and an inspiring account of how former patients and advocates challenged a flawed system and encouraged mental health activism.

This definitive people's history of the recovery movement spans the 1970s to the present day and proves to readers just how essential mental health activism is to every person in this country, whether you have a current psychiatric diagnosis or not.

In *Fighting for Recovery*, professor and mental health advocate Phyllis Vine tells the history of the former psychiatric patients, families, and courageous activists who formed a patients' liberation movement that challenged medical authority and proved to the world that recovery from mental illness is possible.

Mental health discussions have become more common in everyday life, but there are still enormous numbers of people with psychiatric illness in jails and prisons or who are experiencing homelessness—proving there is still progress to be made.

“It is not the bruises on the body that hurt. It is the wounds of the heart and the scars on the mind.” -

Aisha Mirza

“Be careful what you water your dreams with. Water them with worry and fear and you will produce weeds that choke the life from your dream. Water them with optimism and solutions and you will cultivate success. Always be on the lookout for ways to turn a problem into an opportunity for success. Always be on the lookout for ways to nurture your dream.” - Lao Tzu

4] [How Arizona's crisis response network became a model for mental health hotlines](#) – PBS Newshour – YouTube

Since the launch of 988, the three-digit dialing code for the National Suicide and Crisis Lifeline, millions have made contact with counselors. But the support and services available after someone calls 988 largely depend on what state one lives in. Stephanie Sy reports on how Arizona’s crisis response network has become a leading model for crisis care.

4a] [On Portland streets, recovered drug users offer lifeline to fight fentanyl’s cruel cycle](#) by Noelle Crombie @ The Oregonian/oregonlive.com

Article excerpt - Ricco Mejia waited impatiently, his jacket zipped, his backpack stuffed with bottled water, pairs of new socks and doses of life-saving medication that can reverse an opioid overdose.

Around him, a war room of sorts took shape: a walkie talkie crackled as people gathered around a conference table, studying laptops and making calls. The bank of windows overlooked Southwest Park Avenue downtown.

One day every other week since late last year, leaders of treatment services and nonprofits focused on [helping people with addiction](#) coordinate closely with Portland police officers to make sure people in the grip of fentanyl addiction get at least a shot at immediate access to detox or a hand getting off the street, even if just for a couple of hours.

On those days, instead of [only doling out tickets](#) for drug possession, officers working the city center go one step further, asking people if they’d like help.

If they say yes, the officer calls a line that rings in the conference room, where a worker dispatches a small team of peers -- a burgeoning workforce made up entirely of people in recovery from addiction and mental illness who provide support to [others experiencing the same](#).

“The goal of recovery is not to become normal. The goal is to embrace the human vocation of becoming more deeply, more fully human.” - Patricia Deegan

“The experience gained in darkness sheds light on the whole being, and through this experience we are irrevocably changed and empowered.” - Tsultrim Allione

5] [The Finnish miracle: how the country halved its suicide rate – and saved countless lives](#) by Miranda Bryant @ The Guardian

Article excerpt - It is now often known as the ‘world’s happiest country’, but Finland used to have one

of the highest suicide rates in the world. From alcohol to antidepressants, here are the changes that made the difference

“Now he’s died,” said his mother’s voice down the phone. Instantly, Jaakko Teittinen knew that what he had feared for years had happened: his older brother, Tuomas, had taken his own life. He was 33.

In a state of shock, Jaakko left work to join his mother at Linnanmäki, a theme park in Helsinki, where she was spending the day with Tuomas’s two children, who lived in foster care and had no idea what had just happened. While his mother started to make arrangements, he went on the rides with his brother’s children, trying not to give away what was on his mind.

“I knew and the kids didn’t,” says Jaakko, recalling the tragic events of 29 July 2009 on a frozen winter’s morning in Helsinki. We are at Surunauha ry (translation: “grief ribbon”), a peer-support charity for those who have lost loved ones to suicide, where he now volunteers. His eyes look towards the ceiling, his voice tightens. “It was really surreal. That’s pretty much all that I remember about that day.”

The family had thought that Tuomas, who had been diagnosed with bipolar disorder 11 years before and had a history of suicide attempts, was still in hospital, where they had taken him, suicidal, a few days earlier. But it later materialised that he had convinced medical staff he was fine and managed to get discharged without the family being informed.

Some 15 years on, having undergone therapy, Jaakko is unusually open about his experiences. “There’s no big secret behind it,” he says. “Of course it’s hard to accept.” To carry such trauma alone was a huge burden, and by speaking about it he hopes to help others to share their experiences. “Being public is important to me.”

“The mental health system is filled with survivors of prolonged, repeated childhood trauma. This is true even though most people who have been abused in childhood never come to psychiatric attention. To the extent that these people recover, they do so on their own. While only a small minority of survivors, usually those with the most severe abuse histories, eventually become psychiatric patients, many or even most psychiatric patients are survivors of childhood abuse. The data on this point are beyond contention. On careful questioning, 50-60 percent of psychiatric inpatients and 40-60 percent of outpatients report childhood histories of physical or sexual abuse or both. In one study of psychiatric emergency room patients, 70 percent had abuse histories. Thus abuse in childhood appears to be one of the main factors that lead a person to seek psychiatric treatment as an adult.” - Judith Lewis Herman, Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence--From Domestic Abuse to Political Terror

6] [I was an addict, a prisoner, a sex worker. I thought the world had written me off – but I saved myself](#)
- Prisons and probation by Ammar Kalia @ The Guardian

Article excerpt - For two decades Mandy Ogunmokun was either in jail or selling sex to pay for drugs. She had four children – but never got the chance to raise them. Now clean, she has devoted her life to helping other struggling women.

andy Ogunmokun stands in the back garden office of a quiet suburban east London house, softly pointing out members of staff who work there with her. It is a brisk, sunny November morning. “There’s Vivianne,” she says, as a woman with long brown hair crunches along the gravel outside. “She’s nine years in recovery and works full-time to manage the houses. She first went to Holloway prison when she was 15.”

Many of those she points out first arrived here, at the Treasures Foundation, looking for help. Ogunmokun created the foundation nearly a decade ago to offer housing and support to women who had passed through HMP Holloway and had experienced addiction issues. When the women-only prison shut down in 2016, she opened up the service to anyone in the country. Residents must agree to remain abstinent and attend daily meetings, as well as receive trauma therapy, nutritional guidance and holistic therapy. The women can stay in the houses for as long as they need, and the foundation has recently acquired four one-bedroom flats for them to move on to until they find a more permanent home. It is also looking to buy more flats and a caravan where the women’s children can stay.

“We’re not just boxes to be ticked,” says Ogunmokun, whose decision to set up the foundation came from direct knowledge of just how much a safe space like Treasures was required. “These are all women with complex issues, and so we want to support them in whatever way they need. With some of our clients, it takes a long time before they feel safe. We’ve had women come here who have not got undressed for a year because they’re afraid of their abuser walking through the door, or they won’t ever take off their shoes in case they have to run. Slowly, we try to make them feel safe and we encourage them to talk, since secrets keep you sick.”

Her own story began in 1960s Yorkshire, where she grew up with her mother and her grandmother. Alcohol was readily available, since her mum was a heavy drinker, and she had her first drink at 10. She didn’t like the taste, but its effects felt like a brief respite from the chaos of growing up in a household where her family were sex workers.

6a] [How we survive](#) - People who have lived through our greatest fears @ The Guardian

“Recovery can take place only within then context of relationships; it cannot occur in isolation.” - Judith Lewis Herman,

“Recovery unfolds in three stages. The central task of the first stage is the establishment of safety. The central task of the second stage is remembrance and mourning. The central focus of the third stage is reconnection with ordinary life.” - Judith Lewis Herman

7] [Pain travels through families until someone is ready to feel it](#) – YouTube

“Too often we underestimate the power of a touch, a smile, a kind word, a listening ear, an honest compliment, or the smallest act of caring, all of which have the potential to turn a life around.” - Leo F. Buscaglia

8] [Heartbeats of Hope: The Empowerment Way to Recover Your Life](#) by author Daniel Fisher

I hope for a day when:

Every person who experiences extreme emotional states is engaged in respectful, hopeful, humanistic, and empowering relationships that enable them to heal and recover full, meaningful lives in the community.

Instead of being seen as threats to society, we will be seen as a source of wisdom that we have obtained through our recovery.

Practices like Open Dialogue will eliminate the long-term iatrogenic effects of a prophesy of doom and lifelong illness.

Suffering will be seen as an understandable human response to trauma rather than a chemical imbalance or a defective fear circuit.

“Believe in yourself and all that you are. Know that there is something inside you that is greater than any obstacle.” - Christian D. Larson

“I feel the capacity to care is the thing which gives life its deepest significance.” Pablo Casals

9] [I’m a Neurologist. Here’s the One Thing I Do Every Day for My Long-Term Brain Health](#) by Ayana Underwood @ SELF

Article excerpt - If you’re worried about cognitive decline, add this to your routine.

Everything you do—walking to your yoga class, making your favorite latte order, talking to your bestie, and just getting through the workday—happens thanks to your [brain](#). Your brain is the control center for your entire body—it’s how you get shit done. So how can you take care of such a beautifully complex and integral part of your body and keep it in great shape for as long as possible?

[Lara V. Marcuse, MD](#), a board-certified neurologist and codirector of the Mount Sinai Epilepsy Program at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai, shares the one thing she does every day (or almost every day, because life gets busy, folks!) to keep her brain healthy. As a bonus? It’s fun.

Pick up a difficult new skill, even if you suck at it. - “I started playing piano in my mid-40s,” Dr. Marcuse tells SELF. It all started by chance when her son began taking lessons: “I took his lesson book on the sly one night before bed, and I was totally enthralled by it,” she says, though she admits she found the songs themselves hard to get into at first. “I’m a 1980s New York City club kid. I grew up on a steady diet of house music, and I never liked classical.” It’s been seven years since she first gave playing a Chopin piece a shot, and she hasn’t looked back since. “[Playing piano] helps me get into [the] nooks and crannies of myself—and into my spirit,” she says.

Taking up a hobby that’s unfamiliar and even difficult forces your brain to exercise new or rarely used neural pathways, and that can help prevent cognitive decline and even protect your brain against [Alzheimer’s disease](#), a type of dementia that leads to memory loss and an inability to complete daily tasks. Keeping your brain active makes neural pathways strong—and the opposite is true if you’re not finding ways to engage your mind.

“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.” - Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

“Want of care does us more damage than want of knowledge” - Benjamin Franklin

10] [US surgeon general Vivek Murthy: ‘Loneliness is like hunger, a signal we’re lacking something for survival’](#) by Katherine Rowland @ The Guardian

Article excerpt -As the 19th and 21st surgeon general, Dr Vivek Murthy has described loneliness as an epidemic on par with tobacco use – the antidote, he says, is human connection

Dr Vivek Murthy, who is currently serving as the 21st surgeon general of the United States, is the first person in this position to have taken his oath on the [Bhagavad Gita](#), the sacred Hindu scripture.

When he was first confirmed in 2014 under the Obama administration, he was, at 37, the youngest person to assume charge of the nation’s public health. He’s also the first person to have been confirmed twice, having been relieved of his post by [Donald Trump](#), only to be sworn in by his successor. Today, he commands a uniformed service of more than [6,000 public health officers](#) who work on issues as diverse as the opioid crisis, refugee resettlement, emergency preparedness and Ebola outbreaks.

There is much that sets Murthy apart from his predecessors, but one detail stands out: he’s a high-ranking government official who insists on the importance of care, compassion and deep listening. Love, he says, is the foundation of good policies and needs to inform the nation’s public health agenda. At first blush, this message sounds almost utopian – but Murthy’s own idealism is fortified by evidence. As he recounts in his 2020 book, [Together: The Healing Power of Human Connection in a Sometimes Lonely World](#), it was in the course of talking to Americans across the country that he realized the extent to which people were suffering from sadness, withdrawal and isolation.

“Loneliness,” he wrote, “ran like a dark thread through many of the more obvious issues that people brought to my attention.”

As surgeon general, he has described loneliness as an [epidemic](#) on par with tobacco use and obesity, and is at the helm of a new World Health Organization [commission](#) to address the hazards of social isolation. Not only does it undermine physical and mental health, but, in his diagnosis, it underpins many of our more pernicious ills, including violence, addiction and extremism. The antidote, he says, is human connection.

“Never look down on anybody unless you're helping him up.” - Jesse Jackson

“A good character is the best tombstone. Those who loved you and were helped by you will remember you when forget-me-nots have withered. Carve your name on hearts, not on marble.” - Charles H. Spurgeon

11] [Cultural Silence and Wounded Souls](#) – Black Men and Mental Health - Edited by Mark Tuggle
Foreword by Cleo Manago

Article excerpt - “There is a vaccine for the Covid-19 virus, but there is no vaccine for mental health. so as a nation, as community leaders, as public health leaders, we need to think about how we provide the support and the resources and create the spaces to help people deal with the trauma, the emotional, physical symptoms – anxiety, helplessness, nausea, headaches – that they may be struggling with.” – David R. Williams (how unjust police killings damage the mental health of black Americans, 2018).

America has never been a safe place for a black man to express his true feelings while living on stolen land. in fact, the desire for enslaved Africans to escape colonial plantations – which in some cities are now golf courses – was described as a mental illness, drapetomania, by Samuel A. Cartwright, a physician who joined the confederate states of America in the mid-1800s.

Cartwright said the slaves should be kept in a submissive state and treated like children with “care, kindness, attention and humanity to prevent and cure them from running away.” if they became dissatisfied with their “condition” he felt they should be whipped as a prevention from running away. Cartwright further justified his racist theories by relying on christian scripture.

“Therapy is not a one-size-fits-all solution. at 63, I'm still a work in progress and feel good about myself; on most days. when disturbing thoughts and/or painful emotions surface i don't harm myself. i attend support groups, exercise in a gym or park, journal my feelings, listen to music, speak with a trusted friend, take a power nap or watch comedy, movies and sports.”

“In Rwanda, some cultural practices for healing depression include basking in the sun, dance, drumming and engaging community. Black Americans can benefit from natural and/or everyday “therapy” practices such as being around water, breathing in and out, cooking, gardening, humor, jogging, playing with kids, spending time with nature, rest and singing.”

“So when you are listening to somebody, completely, attentively, then you are listening not only to the words, but also to the feeling of what is being conveyed, to the whole of it, not part of it.” - Jiddu Krishnamurti

“Giving connects two people, the giver and the receiver, and this connection gives birth to a new sense of belonging.” - Deepak Chopra

12] [Creativity and Madness - Continuing Education Conferences](#) - August 1-4, 2024

Psychological Studies of Art and Artists - The conference will be in person at the Santa Fe Convention Center and will be available virtually.

Mission - AIMED is a Non-Profit educational organization dedicated to providing continuing education for the general medical community and the interested layperson. Our audience is primarily, but not limited to, mental health and psychiatric care providers.

AIMED's presentations incorporate psychological theories, clinical techniques, the concepts of creativity, resilience, and burnout and provide information regarding the application of different treatment modalities.

We aim to expand the participants' awareness of mental health conditions by providing information on

creativity and how it applies to mental health. Our goal is to educate the learner to understand better, recognize, diagnose, and, when appropriate, treat different psychological and mental health conditions, improving patient care and clinical outcomes.

The American Institute of Medical Education is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit educational organization. Amy Panter Vail, Psy.D. is the Director. Jacqueline Berz Panter, BA, MA and Barry M. Panter, MD, Ph.D. are the Senior Advisors. The Institute was founded in 1981 by the late Mary Lou Panter, RN and Barry Panter, MD, Ph.D.

“Kindness is the language which the deaf can hear and the blind can see.” - Mark Twain

“Wherever there is a human being, there is an opportunity for a kindness.” - Seneca

13] [Color to Heal](#) - A Coloring Book of Healing Images for Adult Survivors of Child Abuse By Ellen Lacter, Ph.D. Illustrated by Robin Baird Lewis and Jen Callow

The images in this coloring book have been lovingly conceived and developed by the author and illustrators to bring healing to anyone who was abused as a child. The author has been observing, learning, and collecting "what works" for over 30 years.

Each chapter begins with a page or two describing an aspect of healing. Next, most chapters include a list of ideas to facilitate that aspect of healing. This is followed by suggestions for creative expression. Then the coloring images are listed, each with a self-affirming intention. The next pages are a series of full-size healing images on heavy weight paper suitable for most art media.

It is the hope of the author and illustrators that as the reader-artist colors these images and lingers on their meaning, all that they hold of value will be slowly digested and integrated into mind, body, and soul. Within each child abuse survivor are resources of intelligence, creativity, sensitivity, and wisdom which not only survived the abuse, but also likely developed in extraordinary ways because of the abuse. Our hope is that these messages and images will tap into these inner resources and help them realize their full potential.

“Healing is a matter of time, but it is sometimes also a matter of opportunity.” - Hippocrates

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

14] [Anti-crime laws in Minnesota harmed people with mental illness, DOJ says](#) by John Hanna @ AP News

Article excerpt - Lots of cities have anti-crime laws. A Minnesota city used theirs against people with mental illness.

The Minneapolis suburb of Anoka sits where Minnesota's meandering 150-mile (241-kilometer) Rum River ambles into the mighty Mississippi. Like other communities, it touts itself as an agreeably placid place to live.

But last year, [a federal investigation](#) found Anoka illegally discriminated against residents with [mental health disabilities](#), saying the city gave landlords weekly reports over five years revealing personal medical information of renters who received multiple emergency calls to their homes.

In at least 780 cases, the city also shared details about [mental health crises](#) and even how people had tried to kill themselves, all under the guise of enforcing an ordinance designed to deter crime and eliminate public nuisances, the U.S. Department of Justice said.

Laws like Anoka's, one of hundreds enacted across the U.S. since the 1990s, have long drawn criticism for unfairly targeting poorer neighborhoods and communities of color. Now they are under scrutiny as sources of mental health discrimination

"It's horrific," said Elizabeth Sauer, an attorney for Central Minnesota Legal Services, which serves low-income people. "Can you imagine having the most intimate details of your life just broadcast to every landlord in the city you live in?"

"Rage - whether in reaction to social injustice, or to our leaders' insanity, or to those who threaten or harm us — is a powerful energy that, with diligent practice, can be transformed into fierce compassion." - Bonnie Myotai Treace

"Advocating for yourself in the context of friendship starts with choosing the right people to be part of your inner circle." - Kimberly Guilfoyle

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

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

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