



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 May 2024

May is Older Americans Month and Mental Health Awareness

[Older Americans Month 2024 Theme: Powered by Connection](#) - Administration for Community Living

Every May, the Administration for Community Living leads the nation’s observance of Older Americans Month (OAM), a time to recognize older Americans' contributions, highlight aging trends, and reaffirm commitments to serving the older adults in our communities. The 2024 theme is **Powered by Connection**, which recognizes the profound impact that meaningful relationships and social connections have on our health and well-being. We will explore the vital role that connectedness plays in supporting independence and aging in place by combatting isolation, loneliness, and other issues.

Join us in promoting the benefits of connecting with others.

[Mental Health Awareness](#) – SAMHSA

Mental Health Awareness Month was established in 1949 to increase awareness of the importance of mental health and wellness in Americans’ lives and to celebrate recovery from mental illness. For more than 20 years, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) has recognized **Mental Health Awareness Month (MHAM)** every May to increase awareness about the vital role mental health plays in our overall health and well-being and provide resources and information to support individuals and communities who may need mental health support.

“The place of true healing is a fierce place. It's a giant place. It's a place of monstrous beauty and endless dark and glimmering light. And you have to work really, really, really hard to get there, but you can do it.” - Cheryl Strayed

“Feelings are much like waves, we can't stop them from coming but we can choose which ones to surf.” - Jonatan Martensson

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"We can't always choose the music life plays for us, but we can choose how we dance to it." - Unknown

1] [My Father Had ADHD. I Thought He Didn't Like Me. It Was Decades Before I Learned The Truth.](#)
By CJ Clouse @ Huffington Post

Article excerpt - If my dad were still alive, it would hurt him to read these words. Because he loved me. Because he never intended for me to feel like a nuisance. So why, then, did I so often feel that

way?

My parents and I lived in a working-class Phoenix neighborhood, in a tract house shaped like a matchbook with three bedrooms. The closed door led to the spare room my father used as his art studio. And while the memory ends before the door opens, I can conjure for you the man behind it: a young man, not much older than 30, with eyes the color of melancholy and feathered hair like a 1970s teen heartthrob, transfixed by the painting in front of him as if under his own spell.

This question has taken me decades to answer. Partly because, until relatively recently, crucial information was missing. You can't put a puzzle together if you don't have all the pieces. But before I share what I've learned about my relationship with my dad, there's something you should know:

"We can not tell what may happen to you in the strange medley of life. But we can decide what happens to us, how we take it, what we do with it and that is what really counts in the end." - Joseph Fort Newton

"Love is not consolation, it is light." - Simon Weil

2] [The Internet Has Made Health Anxiety Worse Than Ever](#) By Caroline Crampton @ TIME

Article excerpt - "Don't google your cancer," the oncology nurse said to me as she drew my blood ahead of my first round of chemotherapy. It was 2006 and I was 17 years old. I was very confused by the emphasis she put on this advice. Still, I took the print-out of "safe" web addresses she gave me home and pinned it on the noticeboard in the kitchen, where it stayed, ignored, as I slowly progressed through six months of cancer treatment.

I was confused because the opportunities for me to use the internet to research my recent diagnosis of Hodgkin's Lymphoma, a kind of blood cancer, were minimal anyway. I didn't own a smartphone or a laptop and my only access to the internet was in communal spaces: at school or via my family's shared computer with its dial-up connection. The notion that I could use these public facilities to explore something as intensely private as my cancer didn't even register as a possibility for me.

Everything changed a year later when I learned that the treatment had not been effective and the cancer was back. Or it had never gone away in the first place, it was hard to tell. Standing petrified in my college dorm room, I found the lump in my neck myself and its malignant properties were quickly confirmed by scans and tests. The chance of this happening, I was told by my doctors, was less than 5%. I had been "unlucky."

[A Body Made of Glass](#) by Caroline Crampton

Part cultural history, part literary criticism, and part memoir, Caroline Crampton's, *A Body Made of Glass* is a definitive biography of hypochondria.

"We meet as equals and help one another, not because some are experts and others are learning, but because we all have needs and strengths." - The Twelve Steps and Traditions

"The soul always knows what to do to heal itself. The challenge is to silence the mind." - Caroline

Myss

3] [The Psychological Importance of Wasting Time](#) By Olivia Goldhill @ Quartz

Article excerpt - There will always be an endless list of chores to complete and work to do, and a culture of relentless productivity tells us to get to it right away and feel terribly guilty about any time wasted. But the truth is, a life spent dutifully responding to emails is a dull one indeed. And “wasted” time is, in fact, highly fulfilling and necessary.

Don’t believe me? Take it from the creator of “Inbox Zero.” As Oliver Burkeman reports [in The Guardian](#), Merlin Mann was commissioned to write a book about his streamlined email system. Two years later, he abandoned the project and instead posted a (since deleted) blog post on how he’d spent so long focusing on how to spend time well, he’d ended up missing valuable moments with his daughter.

The problem comes when we spend so long frantically chasing productivity, we refuse to take real breaks. We put off sleeping in, or going for a long walk, or reading by the window—and, even if we do manage time away from the grind, it comes with a looming awareness of the things we should be doing, and so the experience is weighed down by guilt.

Instead, there’s a tendency to turn to the least fulfilling tendency of them all: Sitting at our desk, in front of our computer, browsing websites and contributing to neither our happiness nor our productivity.

“Did I offer peace today? Did I bring a smile to someone's face? Did I say words of healing? Did I let go of my anger and resentment? Did I forgive? Did I love? These are the real questions. I must trust that the little bit of love that I sow now will bear many fruits, here in this world and the life to come.”
Henri Nouwen

“Love one another and help others to rise to the higher levels, simply by pouring out love. Love is infectious and the greatest healing energy.” Sai Baba

4] [Your Kids Don’t Suck: Cultivating Closeness with your Kids through Non-Coercive, Conscious Parenting](#) By Cara Tedstone and Rythea Lee

Non-coercive, conscious parenting is a radical departure from mainstream, traditional parenting practices. The essence of the mindset involves collaboration and mutuality with our children.

Through in-depth discussion and disclosure, therapists and parents Rythea and Cara explore the personal and societal challenges of choosing this uncommon parenting philosophy. The intention behind this podcast is to empower parents with education and tools to help them dismantle the patterns that cause power struggles, disconnection, and stress within our family systems.

For parents attempting to break the generational cycle of abuse the podcast offers practical alternatives and has special guests to help support parents to make the shift from power-over, to collaboration.

This podcast is fun, punchy, vulnerable, and exploratory. Let's dive in and grow together!

[Rythea Lee – YouTube](#) - Rythea is a CSA survivor and trauma therapist and her videos often talk about her healing process and how she is successfully breaking the abuse cycle with her 12 year old daughter, the challenges and the rewards.

Also on Tiktok - <https://www.tiktok.com/@rythealee>

“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.” Albert Schweitzer

“He is a wise man who does not grieve for the things which he has not, but rejoices for those which he has.” Epictetus

5] [Postpartum depression soared in 2020. Four years later, has anything changed?](#) By Maggie Doherty @ The Guardian

Article excerpt - Rates are improving in the US as healthcare organizations take steps to confront the continuing crisis. Still, new mothers often feel alone: ‘People don’t know what to do’

After five months of maternity leave with her second baby, a daughter born on 26 March 2020, Pam Lins felt she was ready to return to work and start a new role. This was the first year of the pandemic, so she had to work remotely while simultaneously raising her newborn and a toddler. Six weeks into her leadership position – about eight months postpartum – she finally admitted something was wrong.

“I had really bad anxiety. I had trouble sleeping, worrying about something that could happen to the kids. At work, I recognized that I would overreact to something that really wasn’t that big of a deal. I wasn’t able to think rationally, had trouble making decisions, and got hyper-worked up over certain things. I knew that wasn’t me,” she said.

She had dismissed what were hallmark symptoms of postpartum depression, among them a persisting sense of doom, overwhelm and mounting dread. It wasn’t until she began to receive feedback from her direct reports that she started to realize she needed help. “I hysterically broke down crying one day, and my husband sat me on the floor of our bedroom and said, ‘You need to go to the doctor,’” she recalled.

Lins, who is now 40 and works in corporate finance, was finally diagnosed. She told her boss that she had an emergency and took three days off work to take care of herself, resting and developing a treatment plan with her doctor. She began taking medication and reconnected with a therapist. “I do remember feeling relieved at the time that I could finally acknowledge that I needed help,” she said.

“It’s hard for people to understand, it’s hard for partners to understand, and it’s hard for the woman who’s experiencing it to understand.” - Andrea Olmsted

“Healing is never complete until we have been truly heard. May the universe send you someone who will sincerely care to listen.” - Anthon St. Maarten

“You’re not a victim for sharing your story. You are a survivor setting the world on fire with your truth. And you never know who needs your light, your warmth and raging courage.” - Alex Elle

6] [Craig J. Phillips “Finding Purpose after Brain Injury” Presentation on Rob Baugh’s “Life Re-Wired — the Brain Injury Podcast” @ Second Chance to Live](#)

To review the full written presentation, as shared on this podcast, at your own rate and pace you may click on this link:

[“Finding Purpose after Brain Injury Keynote Presentation” — Craig J. Phillips MRC, BA](#)

I created **Second Chance to Live** on February 6, 2007 to share what helped me to find my purpose and creative hope. Find my purpose and begin to create hope in my life after many years of living in denial.

Three years ago I began creating and giving presentations to encourage and empower purpose and creative hope. Purpose and creative hope in the lives of individuals who are living with the impact of brain injury.

“There are two ways to live your life: One is as though nothing is a miracle. The other is as though everything is a miracle.” Albert Einstein

“We may encounter many defeats but we must not be defeated.” Maya Angelou

7] [A new barbershop in Denver is staffed with formerly incarcerated people](#) By Melissa Magsaysay @ CNN

Article excerpt - “This is nerve-racking,” James Canody exclaimed — through an exhale — of his new job as an apprentice at the Denver-based business R&R Head Labs. When speaking with CNN, Canody had been working as an apprentice at the barbershop for 13 days.

Fourteen days ago he had been released from prison, where he served 6 and a half years of an 18-year sentence.

Canody is one of 650,000 people released from prison every year across the United States, according to the Department of Justice. That’s a population of which nearly [75%](#) are still unemployed a year after being released. According to the Brookings Institution, stable employment has been shown to reduce recidivism, but even for those who find a job, earning capacity is likely hindered: Based on a report released by the Bureau of Justice Statistics, formerly incarcerated people who do find employment after their release tend to earn just 53% of the median US worker’s wage.

Canody is one of eight employees — apprentices, barbers and managers — at R&R Head Labs, a barbershop which opened its doors in February exclusively employing formerly incarcerated and justice-impacted individuals. It aims to address the financial, logistical and emotional inequities associated with their reentry into society.

Fresh starts and fresh cuts -R&R Head Labs’ model creates a pathway to employment by utilizing skills — and sometimes a barbering license — its employees gained while in prison. (Prison programs offering barber/cosmetology licenses are not federally mandated, rather determined state-by-state based

on a variety of factors.)

“To know the true reality of yourself, you must be aware not only of your conscious thoughts, but also of your unconscious prejudices, bias and habits.” - Geena Davis.

“One thing: you have to walk, and create the way by your walking; you will not find a ready-made path. It is not so cheap, to reach to the ultimate realization of truth. You will have to create the path by walking yourself; the path is not ready-made, lying there and waiting for you. It is just like the sky: the birds fly, but they don't leave any footprints. You cannot follow them; there are no footprints left behind.” Osho

8] [Call for Presenters 2024 - Support After a Death by Overdose](#)

Thank you for your interest in presenting at the 2024 Finding Support in Grief Third Annual Conference, entitled, *“Finding Support in Grief.”* This Submission Guide provides the information you need to submit a proposed session for the conference.

Whether you are a seasoned presenter or are new to sharing your voice, talents, and passion, we appreciate your willingness to contribute a session and look forward to reviewing your proposal.

The Finding Support in Grief is a peer-support conference for people in Massachusetts who are bereaved by a death from substance use-related causes. Come share in a weekend of connection, hope, healing, fellowship, remembrance, and support.

This is a conference for anyone who self-identifies as bereaved (family member, friend, colleague) from substance use-related causes.

“Try not to become a man of success, but rather try to become a man of value.” Albert Einstein

“When you feel like giving up, remember why you held on for so long in the first place.” Unknown

9] [Study Links Nature's Diversity to Mental Health](#) By Andrea Mechelli @ Science Alert

Article excerpt - Humans rely on a wide range of animals, plants and microorganisms for healthy living environments. Research has shown that the continuing decline in biodiversity – the variety of life on Earth – is a threat to humanity's existence.

[A study](#) my colleagues and I conducted takes this knowledge further. We have shown that biodiversity can also play a critical role for people's mental wellbeing.

Previous studies [have demonstrated](#) that contact with nature benefits mental wellbeing, especially for those who live in cities. For example, the risk of developing the two most prevalent mental disorders in the world, [depression](#) and anxiety, is [71% lower](#) in urban dwellers who live near green spaces.

Most of these studies, however, haven't considered the extent to which these benefits depend on natural diversity.

To address this gap in research, we examined whether environments with a wealth of natural features, such as trees, plants, waterways and wildlife, would bring greater mental health benefits than those with a smaller range of natural features.

Between April 2018 and September 2023, we gathered data through the [Urban Mind app](#), which measures user experience of urban and rural living. 1,998 people submitted 41,000 assessments of their environment and mental wellbeing throughout the day.

We found that green spaces with high natural diversity have more mental health benefits than those with [low natural diversity](#). Participants attributed nearly a quarter of this positive impact to natural diversity – and reported that the benefits can last for up to eight hours.

“There’s no need to be perfect to inspire others. Let people get inspired by how you deal with your imperfections.” Robert Tew

“When you look upon another human being and feel great love toward them, or when you contemplate beauty in nature and something within you responds deeply to it, close your eyes for a moment and feel the essence of that love or that beauty within you, inseparable from who you are, your true nature.” Eckhart Tolle

10] [Poets And Peers – Art & Poetry](#)

Carla and I had been talking about writing a book together, telling our story for years. When we started attending a poetry group, we noticed that many of the poets that we were studying were, like us, peers (individuals with lived experience of mental health and or substance use challenges). It was inspiring and sparked the idea of telling our story through poetry and Carla’s artwork. Poets and Peers followed. Many of Carla’s poems went back over twenty years, including poetry she had written in psychosis. For me, once I started the words spilled out. This book is a collection of poetry and poetic prose. Many of the poems were inspired by poets we admired. All of the poetry is inspired by our personal experiences. Our struggle, our path to recovery and to each other; the meaning of peer support, love and living a life of purpose. Ultimately beyond words that shine a light into the deepest corners of our lives, Poets and Peers represents the healing power of creative expression and awakening the voice within. This is our story; your reading it, is part of our recovery journey. - Nick

About the Authors - Carla Pappas began writing poetry in the midst of a break with reality. Writing became a tool to allow her to cope with childhood trauma and the struggles that ensued. At a fork in the road, Carla discovered peer support and her life was never the same.

Carla has worked in the peer field since 2006. She has worked as a peer specialist at Raft House in Hanover County and Chester House in Chesterfield, Virginia. She is the founder and former Executive Director of Friends 4 Recovery, a peer-run program. She currently works as Lead Region 4 Peer Recovery Specialist Coordinator building peer services. She has found her passion and is an innovator and leader in the peer field.

Nicholas Pappas had lived a life of isolation suffering from debilitating anxiety and depression. At the age of fifty, he discovered peer support, shed the cocoon and took flight. He found the voice he had suppressed for years and began facilitating groups and advocating for peer services.

Nick has served on the Chesterfield Community Services Board, the County organization he first went to for help, including as Board Chair. He has volunteered for a number organizations in the peer field, leading groups and serving on Boards. He has facilitated groups on mindfulness, non-violent communication and The Artist's Way.

"Always be a first-rate version of yourself, instead of a second-rate version of somebody else." Judy Garland

"You don't need another human being to make your life complete, but having your wounds kissed by someone who doesn't see them as disasters in your soul but cracks to put their love into is the most calming thing in this world." Emery Allen

11] [CBT Patients Want Understanding, Not Homework](#) by José Giovanni Luiggi-Hernández, PhD @ Mad In America

Article excerpt - A recent [study](#) published in the *Community Mental Health Journal* has shed new light on the patients' experiences of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) for anxiety and depression.

Becky Yarwood and her colleagues from the University of South Wales and the University of Liverpool conducted a comprehensive review and meta-analysis of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) treatments. The study revealed that many patients undergoing CBT found the treatment techniques to be challenging, burdensome, and superficial. However, patients also appreciated the personal qualities of their clinicians, such as being empathetic, impartial, and reliable, which helped in their recovery process.

"No matter how far out your dreams are, it's possible and, you know - fair play to those dare to dream and don't give up...hope, at the end of the day, connects us all, no matter how different we are." Marketa Irglova

"The true sign of intelligence is not knowledge but imagination." Albert Einstein

12] [Darkness Visible](#) By John Angelo @ Manchester Ink Link

Article excerpt - I like to joke that my PTSD, OCD and depression keeps a whole team of counselors and a medicine woman in business. My daily life is no laughing matter, though. Each day presents a new challenge. Mental illness allows me and several millions of others to pass as normal. It's an invisible disability for the most part though, and with stigma persisting few mentally challenged people come out of the closet. Greeting cards and workplace signs stating, "You don't have to be crazy to work here, but it helps," are the defining understanding of mental illness for most people.

In 1949 Mental Health America designated May as Mental Health Awareness month. Today green ribbons are worn to signify support.

I'm 71 years young but got a PTSD diagnosis only a decade ago after a month of troubling dreams and awake auras. I'm here to tell you that repressed memories are a real thing. My seminal events of abuse occurred when I was 6 years old. I was diagnosed with OCD/depression when I was 19, a typical age

for the onset of mental illness. I learned only recently that about two-thirds of people who have PTSD also have some level of OCD.

Depression is the leading cause of disability for those aged 15-44 and accounts for 41,000 suicides each year. One-in-five adults and 1-in-10 adolescents experience some level of depression annually. Those with a familial history of depression are 2-3 times more likely to struggle with depression (count me in here too!), and account for 35 percent of all diagnoses of depression. Depression accounts for 65.4 percent of all mental health services even though only one out of five adults with depression seeks treatment.

“Watch your thoughts; they become words. Watch your words; they become actions. Watch your actions; they become habits. Watch your habits; they become character. Watch your character; it becomes your destiny.” Frank Outlaw

“Success is to be measured not so much by the position one has reached in life, as by the obstacles which one has overcome while trying to succeed.” Booker T. Washington

13] [Call For Art](#) - The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration’s (SAMHSA) Office of Recovery is excited to announce the 2024 Art of Recovery project, which aims to highlight the transformative impact of art on mental health and substance use recovery. Through creative expression, individuals can find connection, healing, and empowerment. By promoting artistic avenues as viable tools for coping, self-discovery, and expression, this project aspires to break down societal stigma surrounding mental health conditions and substance use, fostering understanding and support for those on their journey to wellness.

Now accepting submissions! The Office of Recovery will solicit submissions May 7 – June 28, 2024, for the 2024 Art of Recovery project from artists with lived or living experience.

“I do it because I can, I can because I want to, I want to because you said I couldn't.” Unknown

“Never give up on something that you can't go a day without thinking about.” Unknown

14] [‘Shame and betrayal’](#): sexual abuse within the spiritual healing industry comes to light By Edward Helmore @ The Guardian

Article excerpt - Scandalous behavior that has dogged the Catholic church is becoming increasingly common in shamanic healing circles

Shamanic healing or opportunity for ritualized abuse? A lawsuit filed in New Mexico last week alleged that a “shamanic master” assaulted a woman during an “energy medicine” training session in March.

The claim, which is being investigated, could shed more light on what some say is a dark side of some trends in modern spirituality, especially those that involve the ceremonial use of often intense psychedelic treatments.

The woman in New Mexico, who was identified in the complaint only by the initials MG, says she paid thousands of dollars to the Four Winds Society and the Chi Center to become a certified energy

medicine practitioner with “an extraordinary life of health, purpose and inner guidance”.

The lawsuit, [first reported by the Santa Fe New Mexican](#), says that the woman had scheduled a session with an unidentified Peruvian “wisdom keeper” and “shamanic master of energy training” and informed him that she had been sexually abused as a child. The man indicated in Spanish he understood.

But after he directed her to lie down on one of the beds in his room at the Chi Center, the shaman used the healing session for “his own personal interests or gratification”. The lawsuit alleges that at least two other women had similar experiences with the man.

[A separate study published by Psychedelic Invest warned](#): “Many of the people running these programs are not qualified to be working with people suffering from the after-effects of trauma. Others do have qualifications, but overstep important boundaries because they believe they are entitled to.”

“Be who you are and say what you feel because those who mind don't matter and those who matter don't mind.” Dr. Seuss

“In the end, it's not going to matter how many breaths you took, but how many moments took your breath away.” Shing Xiong

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 Mind, Body & Spirit Through the Creative Arts, Education & Advocacy

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[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

