



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 2026

Hi folks,

I hope all is well for you in your corner of the world. Things are okay in my neighborhood...staying busy with the promoting and marketing of my memoir, along with a brand-new website - [Michael Skinner - Author • Musician • Advocate - Explore Healing and Find Strength in Resilience](#)

Please check out this interview; I feel the journalist touched upon a lot of key points I raised in the book - [Author Michael Skinner addresses childhood trauma and abuse in new book, The Lunchbox Theory](#) - Manchester Ink Link

Please do share the newsletter with others and please send me information about people and organizations/agencies doing good things to help heal the world.

Thank you, Michael

“The human heart has a way of making itself large again even after it's been broken into a million pieces.” Robert James Waller

“The highest form of wisdom is kindness.” The Talmud

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"Many people will walk in and out of your life, but only true friends will leave footprints in your heart" Eleanor Roosevelt

"Be soft. Do not let the world make you hard. Do not let pain make you hate. Do not let the bitterness steal your sweetness. Take pride that even though the rest of the world may disagree, you still believe it to be a beautiful place." Kurt Vonnegut

1] [Healing From Our Trauma Helps Shape Future Generations](#) by [Kaytee Gillis, LCSW](#) @ Psychology Today

Article excerpt:

Why the work you do today reaches far beyond your own life.

Key points

- Healing breaks patterns of trauma that are often passed down across generations.
- Healing also shifts the impacts of trauma, changing both relational patterns and biology.
- Children learn how to love by watching the adults around them.

"I wish my parents had done the work of healing from their own childhoods," Joanne said, letting out a long sigh. "Then I wouldn't be sitting here with you, going over this again and again." She added with a small laugh. "I mean, no offense!"

"None taken," I replied, smiling. "You're right. If your parents had done their own work, maybe you wouldn't need [therapy](#) as much—or at least not for this long."

Joanne had just completed her third year of therapy with me, and we had spent most of this time helping her unlearn dysfunctional patterns she had carried for decades.

I continued gently, "But also, if their parents—your grandparents—had done their own healing, perhaps your parents wouldn't have repeated the same patterns of abuse and dysfunction."

"My entire life can be described in one sentence: it didn't go as planned, and that's okay." - Hugh Raye

"You either get bitter, or you get better. You either take what's been dealt to you and allow it to make you better, or you allow it to tear you down." - Iona Mink

2] [‘Not unique to war’: millions of Americans suffer from moral injury. What’s causing it?](#) by Jo Livingstone @ The Guardian

Article excerpt:

Psychologist Michael Valdovinos explains this ‘unique kind of stress’, which is now acknowledged in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders
To experience moral injury is to be forced to act in ways or to witness actions that contradict your most deeply held convictions.

You can sustain moral injury in one catastrophic event, like hurting an enemy combatant in an armed conflict you don’t believe is just. It can also appear after a slow crescendo of moral distress, as people who work in slaughterhouses or prisons report. Easily mistaken for depression, moral distress frequently presents as sadness or feeling like a bad person.

As of last year, the American Psychiatric Association’s Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) “now formally recognizes moral injury under a ‘moral problems’ classification, acknowledging the psychological harm that arises when experiences violate a person’s core ethical beliefs. This marks a shift toward incorporating moral and existential dimensions of harm into clinical frameworks,” says Michael Valdovinos, a former US military psychologist.

“Sometimes it takes an overwhelming breakdown to have an undeniable breakthrough.” - Don Keigh

“There is a gorgeous wisdom that can only be gained by surviving and thriving. We must walk through the fire, get burned and scarred, reflect, and heal. When we offer it to the world, real change occurs.” – Cherene Caraco

3] [Strengthening Peer Services Through Partnership](#) by Jeremy Reuling, LCSW, NYCPS, CPRP @ Behavioral Health News

Article excerpt:

The expansion of peer-delivered services is one of the most significant developments in behavioral health over the past decade. What was once a rare, little-known role has become mainstream. A [2024 report by the Peer Recovery Center of Excellence](#) estimated that more than 100,000 individuals nationwide have been certified as peer providers in mental health or substance use dependence (SUD) services, and that number continues to grow. Today, trained peer professionals work across crisis services, emergency departments, inpatient and outpatient programs, housing, outreach teams, community-based settings, and more. Their presence reflects a broader shift toward a recovery-oriented behavioral health system.

[According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration \(SAMHSA\)](#), peer staff foster hope, accelerate engagement and the development of trust between individuals and their treatment/support teams, and illuminate potential pathways to recovery. When well

implemented, clinical providers and peer professionals complement one another, leading to a more responsive, person-centered approach to service delivery.

Despite this growth, many organizations continue to struggle with implementing peer services with fidelity. Challenges often include unclear role definitions, supervisors unfamiliar with peer practice, workplace cultures that misunderstand the peer function, and policies that were never designed with peer roles in mind. In addition, limited career pathways and advancement opportunities can contribute to turnover and workforce instability. This also affects agencies' ability to find and recruit qualified peer professionals.

While most agencies approach peer integration with good intentions, many lack the infrastructure, training, or bandwidth to fully support the role. In some cases, peer positions are added to meet funding requirements without sufficient attention to organizational readiness.

"Always hold firmly to the thought that each one of us can do something to bring some portion of misery to an end." Author Unknown

"People think healing looks like having huge visible breakthroughs when really, it's just a series of small decisions that reprogram your subconscious mind. One healthy activity at a time is a great starting point." – Unknown

4] [People in recovery find a fresh start by crafting Troublesome Creek instruments](#) – YouTube

In eastern Kentucky, the heritage of folk and traditional music, rooted in instruments like guitars, mandolins and dulcimers, is deeply seated. There's an effort to capitalize on this rich culture while providing a fresh start for people in addiction recovery. Jeffrey Brown has the story for our look at the intersection of art and health for our arts and culture series, CANVAS.

At [Troublesome Creek Stringed Instrument Co.](#), we're building fine instruments, using the best materials and people in the country. While deeply rooted in the ancient musical traditions of these hills, our work is driven by the belief that an individual can take recovery into his or her own hands, and then, build something beautiful.

"Normalize not bringing up a relatable story about yourself when someone is telling you something about themselves, and just listen." – Priest

"Today I live from my heart, not from my hurt." - Svava Brooks

5] [The Epidemiology of Social Anguish: Mental Illness, SUD, and the Cost of Being Left Alive](#) by [Jennifer Maria \(Jen\) Padron](#), M.Ed, LMSW @ LinkedIn

Article excerpt:

Let's stop pretending this is so complicated.

People with serious mental illness are dying **10–25 years earlier** than everyone else. This has already been named what it is: a *public health scandal*. Yet—nothing about how we structure daily life for this population suggests urgency. We call it “care.” But what does that care actually look like?

It looks like:

- Living on SSDI below subsistence
- Being alone most days, most nights
- Cycling through hospitals, shelters, jails
- Being managed, documented, discharged—repeat
- Having your physical health ignored until it becomes irreversible

This is not just epidemiology. This is **the epidemiology of social anguish**. We are not only measuring disease. We are measuring **what happens to people when they are systemically excluded from belonging**.

Let’s be precise:

The mortality gap is not because people are “too sick.” It is because they are **too unsupported**. Because psychiatry was split from medicine. Because poverty is treated as a personal failure instead of a policy decision. Because loneliness is invisible in data—but lethal in practice. Because we have built systems that keep people alive just enough to remain counted—but not enough to actually live.

“Where there is love there is life.” – Mahatma Gandhi

“Each time I perform an act of kindness, a part of me heals.” - Lupi Ngcavisa

6] [Nice People Finish First](#) by Paul Wright @ Amazon.com: Books

Renowned psychologist Paul H. Wright, with 50 years of experience, unlocks the secrets to lasting happiness and fulfillment in his empowering book, “Nice People Finish First.” The book dismantles the pervasive goal-driven mentality, “winning at all costs,” and its detrimental effects on mental well-being. The author argues that strong, loving, and supportive relationships are the key to achieving a life filled with happiness, progress, and a sense of fulfillment. Taking the teamwork of the gold-medal-winning U.S. Women's Gymnastics team as a case study, he reinforces his idea of how relationships can help you finish at the top. He introduces the H.A.L.F.S. Principles: Humility, Appreciation, Love, Forgiveness, and Spirituality, the universal principles given to us by God that allow us to gain contentment in life rooted in gratitude and generosity

The semi-autobiographical work isn't just about finishing first. Rather, it's a roadmap to

achieving: Enduring Happiness, Strong Relationships, Reduced Stress, Greater Productivity, A Sense of Purpose

“Activism is my rent for living on the planet.” Alice Walker

“Listen to the wind, it talks. Listen to the silence, it speaks. Listen to your heart, it knows. Native American Proverb

7] [The Grief of Family Rejection by Kaytee Gillis, LCSW](#) @ Psychology Today

Article excerpt:

Key points

- Family rejection often involves ambiguous loss: a form of grief that is not socially recognized.
- Because of this, many survivors often feel isolated as they mourn those who are still alive.
- Healing involves recognizing and supporting the grief that comes from this form of loss.

“Being deeply loved by someone gives you strength, while loving someone deeply gives you courage.” - Lao Tzu

“A positive future cannot emerge from the mind of anger and despair.” - Dalai Lama

8] [Our Voice of ME: Podcast from the CCSM](#) - Consumer Council System of Maine podcast

A podcast for Peer Voices, Mental Health, and Stories That Create Change

Be a Guest - Consumer Council System of Maine - <https://maineccsm.org/ourvoiceofmeguest/>

“Will power cannot eliminate in a day troubles that have taken root and flourished in my life for decades. Things take time.” Courage To Change

“You cannot create a statue by smashing the marble with a hammer, and you cannot by force of arms release the spirit or the soul of a man.” Confucius

9] [Dr. Lavanya Seshasayee](#) - Women's Mental Health

Lavanya Seshasayee is the founder of the Global Women’s Recovery Movement [GWRM] formerly known as the Indian Women’s Recovery Movement which has existed since 2010 to re-conceptualize and change the conversation around mental health issues with a special feminist focus.

She has been a BBC Radio Interviewee and was the only funded scholar from India and one among only 9 scholars in the world to participate in the Global Mental Health Summit conducted by the Movement for Global Mental Health in 2009 September in capacity of a Travel Fellowship Holder.

She has been a Women's Mental Health Specialist, Controversial Literary Writer, Creative Thinker, Activist, Self-Advocate, Fulbright Finalist while doing PhD, Bapu Trust Fellow, Banyan Academy for Leadership in Mental Health [BALM] Fellow having immense experience for over a decade in the Mental Health Field. She dons several hats. She is several things rolled into one.

"Who then can so softly bind up the wound of another as he who has felt the same wound himself?" Thomas Jefferson

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

10] [Dora McQuaid – One Woman's Voice](#)

Dora E. McQuaid is descendant of traveling gypsies, Irish Golden-gloved boxers, and strong women, whose stories and the telling of them prompted her lifelong fascination with the written and spoken word. Dora continues her family tradition of using the personal story to explore memory and conjecture, culture and community, and the connections between the private and the political. Her work embodies the intersections between the arts and activism, service and empowerment.

Dora's unique blend of art, emotion and service has earned her multiple literary and service honors and awards. To honor her activism addressing sexual and domestic violence, Dora's image replaced that of former Penn State football coach and convicted pedophile Jerry Sandusky in the *Inspiration* Mural by artist Michael Pilato near Penn State in 2012. In 2018, Dora's lifetime achievements were acknowledged by her induction into the Wall of Honor by the Unionville – Chadds Ford School District in Chester County, Pennsylvania, where Dora attended middle and high school. *Gargoyle* Literary Journal nominated Dora's poem, *Tunnel of Love*, for a 2014 Pushcart Prize. Dora was also honored as one of the Remarkable Women of Taos, New Mexico during the 2012 celebration of women whose lives and creative spirits have influenced the Northern New Mexico community. In 2011, Dora was awarded the New Mexico Woman Writer's Fellowship by A Room of Her Own Foundation. Dora's efforts also garnered a 2003 Pennsylvania Governor's Pathfinder Award, recognition by the Pennsylvania Senate and a Vagina Warrior Award from the Penn State cast of Eve Ensler's play *The Vagina Monologues*, all while serving as faculty at Penn State between 1999 and 2006, among other honors. She has also been awarded several Poet-In-Residence and Artist Fellowship positions with programs including The Harwood Museum of Art and The Helene Wurlitzer Foundation in Taos, New Mexico, among others.

"Strength doesn't come from what you can do. It comes from overcoming the things you once thought you couldn't do." Rikki Rogers

"I don't know what your destiny will be, but one thing I know: the only ones among you who will be really happy are those who have sought and found how to serve." Albert Schweitzer

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

<https://shop.survivingspirit.com/shop/> - web store – T-shirts, Freedom to Soar Award, music CDs

[The Surviving Spirit Facebook Page](#)

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<https://x.com/SurvivinSpirit> <https://x.com/MichaelSkinne11>

[Michael Skinner Music](#) - Michael Skinner -Author • Musician • Advocate Explore Healing and Find Strength in Resilience

[The Lunchbox Theory: Lessons Learned from Trauma and Abuse](#) by Michael Skinner – Healing with Music, Nature and Love

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

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