

# reunion

ISSUE 04



## CHILD'S PLAY

How play therapy can help both kids and adults heal from trauma

## ALEXANDRA COHEN

Hero of the Heart

## SPOTLIGHT ON CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

Engaging communities to safeguard children and strengthen families

## HAWAI'I CHILDREN'S TRUST FUND

and Joyful Heart Foundation partner to launch public awareness campaign



The mission of the Joyful Heart Foundation is to heal, educate and empower survivors of sexual assault, domestic violence and child abuse, and to shed light into the darkness that surrounds these issues.





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# reunion

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**FROM THE EDITOR**

Welcome to *Reunion* Issue 4! Here, we turn our attention to the issue of child abuse and neglect and the incredible work being done to safeguard future generations. For this edition's letter, our CEO, Maile Zambuto, is joined by Andrea Buchanan. Andrea is an award-winning filmmaker, editor of two anthologies (*NOTE TO SELF: 30 Women on Hardship, Humiliation, Heartbreak and Overcoming It All* and *Live and Let Love*) and a founding board member of the Joyful Heart Foundation.

~ Nathan J. Richards



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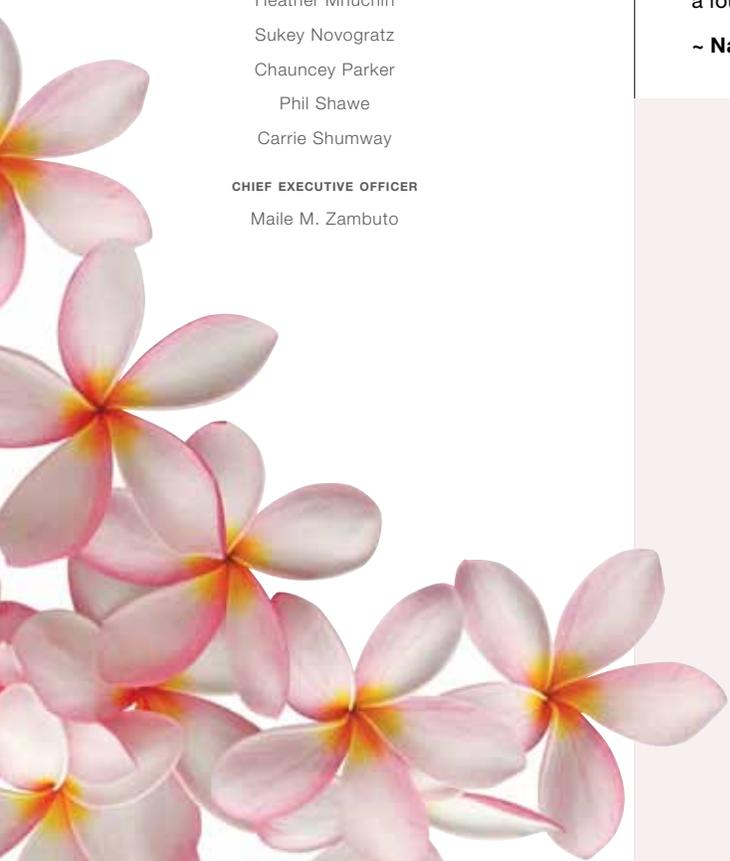
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**IF YOU ARE IN IMMEDIATE DANGER, PLEASE CALL 911.**



“If we do our part today, future generations have a real chance at a life without child abuse and neglect.”



Joyful Heart CEO Maile Zambuto and founding board member Andrea Buchanan enjoy a moment together at the 2010 Joyful Revolution Gala.

PHOTOGRAPHY: CATHERINE WHITE



When we first met about six years ago, it wasn't long before we were deep in conversation about our hopes and dreams for the future, as well as our personal histories and how they have shaped who we are today. It was after a Joyful Heart workday, and we were gathered at Mariska's house for some food and fellowship.

**ANDREA:** *It's a moment neither of us will ever forget: sitting on the large white couch as Maile disclosed about her early life and the sexual abuse she suffered for most of her childhood, starting from the age of five, and a later sexual assault that occurred in college. I must have sat perfectly still, frozen like a statue, hoping to be a safe place for her words. Maile's story deeply affected me, and I soon learned that, even though she had been working as a mighty force in the fields of domestic violence, child abuse and sexual assault prevention and response for more than a decade, she had never disclosed her full story to anyone. Her belief that this pattern of abuse was somehow invited created a veil of shame that had never fully lifted, and she had settled into believing that she deserved it.*

At the same time, Andrea was putting together a book of triumphant stories told by women about overcoming hardship, called *NOTE TO SELF*, and in 2009 Maile agreed to step out into the light and allow her story to be published, to free herself and so that other survivors might find comfort and begin to heal.

**MAILE:** *Joyful Heart and Andrea came into my life at just the right moment. Healing is a lifelong path, and I was blessed to have someone meet me with an open heart to bear witness to all I had suffered without judgment, and to see me and celebrate that I am so much more than my wounds or the sum of my work. Since the book was published, I've felt empowered to stay in the light—to never retreat back into the darkness of shame and isolation—and to live my truth and speak my truth without shame. And while it is always difficult to share my story, it brings me peace that in doing so, I am helping to bring about a change in the way we acknowledge, understand and respond to violence and abuse.*

All of us at Joyful Heart have a personal connection to the work we do. Some of us

are survivors, others are mothers and fathers who want a brighter future for our kids, many of us are citizens of the world who want to see justice for all those who have suffered at the hands of an abuser and some of us are all of the above.

As a mother of two and a new mom-to-be, respectively, we hope to do our part in creating a new possibility for the next generation. One that says, “No more.” A future that sees an end to the cycle of violence and abuse. If we do our part today: end complacency, foster and educate our communities around the issues of child abuse and neglect and take each step with compassion and grace, future generations have a real chance at a life without child abuse, and stories like Maile's will be a thing of the past.

All of this begins by learning more about the issue and speaking up about it. This edition of *Reunion* is intended to help start or further that dialogue. We hope it contributes to your conversation.

In fellowship and with deep gratitude,

~ Maile M. Zambuto & Andrea Buchanan

“At Joyful Heart, we believe child abuse is preventable, and that the best hope we have of realizing our vision of ending violence and abuse is to break the cycle before it begins.”

**W**

elcome to our fourth edition of *Reunion*.

In this issue, we turn our attention to child abuse and neglect, and our collective efforts to heal, educate and empower future generations. As the mother of three kids, this issue is near and dear to my heart. And I think it will touch the heart of anyone who has ever looked at a child and thought, “I want nothing but the best for you.”

The unfortunate reality is that each year, hundreds of thousands of children are abused and neglected. In most cases, the perpetrator is someone close to them. Each day in the United States, more than four children die as a result of abuse and neglect. More than three-quarters of these children are under the age of five. More than 40 percent of young victims won't live to see their first birthday. And over 15 million children witness violence and abuse in their homes each year.

Those who do survive the abuse are likely to experience lasting effects. Research has found that abused and neglected children are at least 25 percent more likely to experience problems including delinquency, teen pregnancy, low academic achievement, drug use and mental health issues.

At Joyful Heart, we believe that through intervention and holistic support services, education and awareness, community engagement and public-private partnerships, we can end the cycle of violence and abuse.

Through our collective participation in research studies and public awareness campaigns, Joyful Heart has long been involved in spreading awareness about the signs of child abuse and neglect, and in fostering public dialogue and engagement with this issue.

I will never forget the story that catalyzed my activism around this issue.

In January 2006, a 7-year-old girl named Nixzmary Brown was beaten to death in her home in Brooklyn, New York. She weighed just 36 pounds. She had missed weeks of school in the months leading up to her death. She often had cuts and bruises and vague explanations—another

fall, another accident. Home was an unspeakable horror for Nixzmary—but somehow, so many caring adults in her community missed or ignored the signs of her abuse.

In response, I became the face of an extensive public awareness campaign launched by Safe Horizon in March 2006, which proclaimed as its rallying cry: *Turn Your Outrage and Grief into Action*.

In 2008, Joyful Heart evolved its mission to include child abuse and neglect to reflect our growing education and awareness work in this area. Later that year, we partnered with Safe Horizon and *Redbook* magazine on a special child abuse awareness issue. Joyful Heart also joined Hope Shining, a national initiative to increase awareness, prevention and support services for children, families and communities affected by violence and abuse.

Most recently, we joined in a groundbreaking partnership with the Hawai'i Children's Trust Fund in 2010 to study the feasibility of a comprehensive child abuse awareness campaign in the state of Hawai'i—Joyful Heart's birthplace. Through this partnership, Joyful Heart commissioned research demonstrating the prevalence of child abuse in Hawai'i, and earlier this year, we launched the culmination of those efforts: the One Strong 'Ohana campaign. It is the most comprehensive child abuse prevention and public awareness campaign in the history of the state of Hawai'i.

Turning our attention and resources to this issue has been hugely rewarding. Through campaigns like One Strong 'Ohana, we are seeing that when communities get involved, they can help to nurture and strengthen families and keep our children safe. At Joyful Heart, we believe child abuse is preventable, and that the best hope we have of realizing our vision of ending violence and abuse is to break the cycle before it begins.

I invite all of you to explore the pages of this magazine, learn more about this important issue and then join me in our work to protect the most precious resource we have—our children. ♥







*A Joyful Tribute to*

# RAYLENE KAWAIAE‘A

*On behalf of the Joyful Heart Foundation ‘ohana (family in Hawaiian), we honor dear friend and cultural practitioner Raylene Ha‘alelea Kawaiie‘a, who passed away on March 9, 2012. Since 2010, Raylene was an important contributor to Joyful Heart as a member of the Hawai‘i Advisory Committee.*

By Valli Kalei Kanuha, Ph.D.

**R**aylene spent her early years in California and Hawai‘i, always with music, culture and family as her roots. Raylene was a mother of five, a grandmother, daughter and sister, as well as an auntie to many. She was a hula master with her own halau (schools of hula) in California and Oregon, as well as in Kapa‘au, Kohala, located on the very northern tip of the island of Hawai‘i, where she lived since the early 1990s. Raylene worked in the Kohala public schools with children and youth, as well as with kupuna (elders). Among her many talents, Raylene was a musician, dancer, teacher and storyteller of Hawaiian culture and traditions. However, she was also a gifted practitioner of ho‘oponopono, a spiritually-based healing and conflict resolution process based in Hawaiian values and beliefs. For the past decade, Raylene worked at the Queen Lili‘uokalani Children’s Center, providing services, counsel and mentorship to Hawaiian families in need. She was particularly dedicated to the children and youth of Hawai‘i, traveling around the islands and the world with her students. She taught them by example how to extend aloha for themselves and to others. She was their hope, and they were her hope for a future of goodness and peace.

For all of her accomplishments, however, Raylene will always be remembered for the deeply human being she was, and for the ways she exemplified and extended the fullness of aloha to everyone around her. She was aloha; she was love. Raylene freely shared her gifts with people at venues around the globe at the invitation of so many people who could feel the genuineness of warmth and generosity that emanated from her. She taught hula in Poland and Japan, shared her life philosophy in New Zealand, Taiwan and Europe and, in 2007, was among only a handful of cultural practitioners who were granted a private audience with the Dalai Lama during a rare visit to Hawai‘i.

Anyone who had the honor of being in Raylene’s presence could feel the palpable essence of her calm yet powerful spirit, and at Joyful Heart we were blessed with many of those moments. One of the first gifts that Raylene offered Joyful Heart was an ‘oli (Hawaiian chant), specifically to honor Mariska as our founder. Raylene performed the chant with her colleague, Na‘auao Vivas, at Joyful Heart’s Neiman Marcus Hawai‘i event in September 2010. Raylene was a humble and unassuming person who spoke only barely above a whisper, yet when she opened herself to the strength of our ancestors, her voice resonated beyond space and time.

In January of this year, Raylene honored us with her presence at our new Joyful Heart Hawai‘i office

open house, once again offering a blessing for our new beginnings. She moved through the afternoon visiting guests and staff with her usual kindness and warmth.

Over the short time we knew her, she affirmed her belief in Joyful Heart and her wish to continue her association with us by offering her skills, abilities and heart in “whatever way I can be of service.”

Jamee Miller, Co-Chair of our Hawai‘i Advisory Committee and Raylene’s co-worker, said after her passing that Raylene was one of those people about whom no one had a harsh or negative thought or feeling. This was in part because she lived her life as she carried on her practices; no conflict or hihia (tension) went unresolved. Peace, kindness, reverence and spirit were ever-present in her and, therefore, among everyone around her.

Raylene’s own voice best represents all that she was to Joyful Heart and to the communities around her who are mourning her loss:

*“All things have this essence, all life does. Some people interpret it as unconditional love. Everyone has the capacity to be... love, and it’s up to each one to discover their own capacity of what that is... It is wonderful when we can remember to give appreciation for that which we are given, for this place [where] we live—for its mountains, and its oceans, and the land and all things that grow upon the land, and dwell on it, and fly above it, and swim within it, and crawl within it. And to acknowledge our ancestors that have walked before us, so that we are now who we are at this moment. And then also those who will journey in this world after us... and they too will be all of what they will be because of who we are. And to acknowledge those who guide us, and inspire us, and encourage us. And to life itself. To the breath of life that each of us is given. To the waters of life that exist within our bodies. That we have to have to exist. And all of this belongs to the creator. For we are it and it is us.”*

(Excerpt from “Be Love ~ In Memory of Kumu Raylene Kawai‘ae‘a,” <http://youtu.be/BKjOYGZUj9M>)

We extend deepest sympathies to Raylene’s parents, children, grandchildren and extended ‘ohana who were so precious to her. We are so grateful for the brief but precious moments we at Joyful Heart shared with Raylene and are saddened by the opportunities for growth, change and aloha that we will not have in her physical presence. However, we are eased in knowing that a sacred soul such as Raylene’s lives on in each and every one of us who live aloha every day. As her friend, Mikhala Roy of Kona, reminds us, “A true pearl of Hawai‘i has simply shifted to another shoal. She glimmers still...” ♥

# FROM SHADOW TO LIGHT

*Stories of hope and healing  
from survivors of child abuse*

By Stacy Morrison

Children are abused and neglected every day, in every community—including yours. It's hard to write about child abuse without sounding alarmist, but the truth is that the statistics reflect a reality that is deeply alarming. Every seven seconds in America, a child is born, and every ten seconds, a case of child abuse is reported. That figure represents six million children, nearly ten percent of the youth population under the age of 14. Four children die every day as a result of child abuse and neglect. More than three-quarters of those children are under the age of five and more than 40 percent of young victims won't live to see their first birthdays. If you take anything away from reading this story, we hope it is this fact: 90 percent of abused children are victimized by someone they know. When it comes to sexual abuse, the statistics are equally staggering. Our imaginations strain to come to terms with the fact that the very people who are meant to care for their children commit such brutalities, so we do our best to keep this reality at a safe distance, and tell ourselves, "Not in my family, not among my friends, not in my community."

**B**ut even these statistics don't tell the whole story. Despite laws mandating the reporting of abuse, the signs of child abuse are often unknown to most community members, and child abuse and neglect are still often viewed as a "family matter." Well-meaning citizens look the other way out of fear of "breaking up the family," being wrong in their accusation, or facing some sort of retaliation by the abuser. Take society's reluctance to take action and pair it with the abusers' manipulative strategies to keep children quiet, and you have a powerful isolating force that keeps children in these damaging circumstances, where they feel afraid, ashamed and alone.

According to Irma Seilicovich, co-founder and Chief Operating Officer of The Village Family Services, an organization that assists more than 3,000 at-risk children and

families each year in Southern California's San Fernando Valley, "When you consider the effects of abuse on a child's social, emotional and intellectual development, it's clear that situations like this really have a tremendous lifetime impact. And no matter the circumstance, children blame themselves for what happens."

Accepting that they are not to blame for the abuse is just one piece of the recovery process. The road from victim to survivor can be a long one, as it's a complex process to unwind and resolve these layers of emotional trauma. Three courageous survivors have stepped forward to share their stories of abuse and recovery in order to help others understand the impact of abuse on a person's life and provide inspiration and hope to people whose lives may in some ways mirror their own.



**J**osé was born in Cuba and fled the Castro regime with his mother when he was three years old. His parents divorced shortly thereafter and José and his mother moved into a boarding house in Miami. There, she met Andy, the man who would become her next husband and José's tormentor and abuser for the next six years. José suffered many broken bones and bruises and at times was even hospitalized from Andy's brutal beatings. Despite many medical emergencies, José never got the help he needed during these painful childhood years. And while Andy left the family when José was 11, the consequences of his abuse left a mark on José forever. José shares his story.

Even before Andy and my mother married, Andy was physically abusive toward me. I was only five years old and Andy was physically imposing, six-foot-three and 250 pounds of muscle with a macho disposition. He was also an alcoholic. I never called him Papi or Dad; there was none of that. Besides, Andy never treated me like a son.

Andy would find any excuse to punish me when my mother wasn't around. I was punched, kicked and thrown through walls. I had broken bones and bruises and cigarette burns. Doctors diagnosed the bruises as a rare blood disorder and concluded my bad posture was a form of scoliosis. And the cure for my repeated falls, tumbles and

scabby knees? Orthopedic shoes.

Every beating came with a story. Andy would hurt me and then tell me exactly what to say to my mother: "You fell down the stairs," "You tripped," "You banged your head into the wall by accident." My mom would come home from work and find me in a corner doing my homework, doing my best to stay out of the way and covered up so she wouldn't see my injuries. When she'd noticed a bruise, I'd tell her the lie Andy expected and what had not happened. Andy always used the same threat: "If you tell your mother the truth, I'll kill you and kill her as well." I couldn't help myself and knew I had no other choice than to protect my mom. She always believed the lies I told her, which Andy reiterated. Besides, Andy and my mom were lovebirds. I never saw them fight. I never saw him hit her. So, in my mind, telling her the truth would only ruin her life and this was a heavy burden for a young child to bear.

We moved to Seattle, Washington, when I was seven, and the abuse got worse. I often ended up in the hospital. After one horrible event, I spent six weeks in intensive care and nearly died.

That day, Andy had completely lost it on me. He threw me against wall, and through a couple of doors. Still wearing

PHOTOGRAPHY: LORENA ROS

**For José, there were certainly many happy, public moments—like this childhood birthday party. But behind closed doors, the regular beatings and abuse he suffered at the hands of his stepfather went unnoticed by those around him.**



A report of child abuse is made every ten seconds.

More than four children die every day as a result of child abuse and neglect.

More than three quarters of these children are under the age of five and more than 40% of young victims won't live to see their first birthdays.

**SOURCE:**  
[www.childwelfare.gov](http://www.childwelfare.gov)



his construction boots from work, he kicked me over and over for about an hour—it felt like an eternity. Once he was done, Andy picked me up and drove me to school. There, I spiked a fever and became violently sick. I doubled over in pain at school and ended up in the fetal position. As it turned out, Andy had broken several of my ribs and pierced my small intestine during the beating. I was hemorrhaging internally. I was literally on my deathbed. The school called Andy, who picked me up. On the drive home he repeated his usual threats and told me the story I had to tell my mom. He told me to say I was playing football at school and a bunch of boys had tackled me, causing my injury. No one bothered to notice that this sad, slight 8-year-old had never even thrown a football, much less played the game.

Later that night, Andy and my mom rushed me to the emergency room. I vividly remember them standing by

my side, crying. Neither Andy nor my mother spoke a word of English, so I had to translate what the doctors were saying. There I was, in intensive care with tubes being shoved up my nose and down into my intestine while being prepped for surgery, and I'm explaining to the adults that I needed surgery and the doctors said they'd do what they

About 80% of 21-year-olds who were abused as children met criteria for at least one psychological disorder.

**SOURCE:**  
[www.childwelfare.gov](http://www.childwelfare.gov)

could to save my life. At that moment, I felt I was digging my own grave.

Nothing changed after that incident, but I began to realize how lucky I was to be alive. I still have the scar that runs from just under my heart down to my belly button from the life-saving surgery and once in awhile, I rub it and remember what I went through as a kid.

Today, looking back, what sticks out in my mind the most are the experiences that most kids take for granted, like learning to ride a bike. The day Andy tried to teach me, he got frustrated, picked me up and threw me through a basement window. After all these years, I still don't know how to ride a bike and am terrified of falling.

When I was 11, my mother kicked Andy out of the house and divorced him. After that, I never saw him again. Even so, for many years, I felt that Andy was in the room with me, and in my nightmares when I slept. I lived in fear

*"I continue to heal and cope with the realities of my childhood and the violence that too many people do not survive. I take each day as it comes."*

of running into him. As an adult, I even searched for him, desperate to find him for reasons I can't explain, but mainly to get closure. I never found him though.

I didn't share anything about the trauma and abuse with anyone until I was 14 and confided in my friend Amalia, who remains my best friend today. Telling her my story helped me begin to heal, and I sought professional help in college, where I began to process my feelings in therapy. Through therapy, I was able to accept the fact that the abuse wasn't my fault, and that what Andy did to me was criminal. The fact that I survived the torture and can speak about it openly today is something I'm proud of even though I wouldn't wish the pain I experienced on my worst enemy. After college, I started speaking out openly about what happened to me. As a successful businessman, with the support of my peers and colleagues, I became an advocate for child abuse prevention and awareness and joined Safe Horizon's Board of Directors. Becoming involved in the cause helped me cope with my shame and insecurities. And advocating for

survivors and victims of violence is an incredibly important part of my well-being and lifelong healing.

I didn't confront my mother about Andy until I was 25, half a lifetime ago. When I did, she began repeating the same lies I was forced to tell her years before. At first, she couldn't accept the truth about what Andy did to me, and eventually, I was forced to give her an ultimatum. I told her she needed to accept the facts because I was telling the truth or she'd risk losing her only child forever. Eventually, she accepted it, even though she still lives with her demons and the guilt of not helping me when I needed her most. But just recently she disappointed me all over again as I overheard her telling a stranger about my perforated intestine and—to my shock and disbelief—she casually repeated the same story and same lies about the football injury at school that nearly killed me when I was eight. For me, at that moment, time stopped. I was breathless and angry. Once again, I was that sweet kid who needed his mom's support and protection, and felt powerless, desperate and devastated. I was invisible. I sat there in silence, feeling as helpless as I did 40 years ago. I haven't confronted my mother about this conversation, but it reminded me how difficult it still is to deal with the consequences of my abuse. For my mother, the abuse is buried beneath layers of lies and feelings that are incredibly hard to deal with. While it's clear that I will carry the burden of Andy's abuse forever, I take comfort in knowing I continue to learn from these experiences and am helping others confront similar demons. It's never easy, but sometimes it's worse than the physical pain itself, especially when the truth is dismissed and the lies take over again.

Despite our ongoing issues, I'm

lucky my mom was there for me as a mother, especially after Andy left. My mom always believed in me, wanted me to have a better life than she'd had and helped me focus on getting good grades, going to college and establishing myself as a successful marketer. Even while Andy was in our lives, she was unbelievably supportive of my desire to read, learn and excel. In her, I saw the possibilities for the future—and not the fear, insecurities and hurt that Andy beat into me.

Forty years ago when I was being tortured, places like Safe Horizon and Joyful Heart didn't exist, and there was no place for boys like me to get help. Even today, it's still hard to find support groups for boys. As a result, my mission as an advocate for victims and survivors of abuse is to talk to boys and men about my experiences, remind them that violence is never acceptable and has lifelong consequences and get them to realize that abuse and violence are NOT "women's issues" and that they, as men, must be part of the solution to this ongoing problem that affects millions of people today.

In my heart I forgave Andy long ago. For me, without forgiveness, there's only anger and pain and no room to grow. Thanks to therapy, good friends like Amalia who listened when I needed it most and the lessons I've learned by working with survivors of violence, I continue to heal and cope with the realities of my childhood and the violence that too many people do not survive. I take each day as it comes, and always try to live in the present. I take pride in my accomplishments, my relationship with my partner of 25 years and the life we've built together. Above all, I'm grateful for the many gifts in my life and know how close I came to not having them at all. □

Children who experience child abuse and neglect are 59% more likely to be arrested as juveniles, 28% more likely to be arrested as adults, and 30% more likely to commit violent crime.

**SOURCE:**  
[www.childwelfare.gov](http://www.childwelfare.gov)



More than 90% of juvenile sexual abuse victims know their perpetrators in some way.

**SOURCE:**  
[www.childwelfare.gov](http://www.childwelfare.gov)

This person who abused me completely took advantage of my family's trust—not just mine. He claimed to be some sort of spiritual advisor, and my father brought him into our family because he wanted to stop drinking, but he couldn't. My father wanted to be more financially stable, so our home life could be more stable. And, at the time, I was having some health issues as well. This man said that we had these problems because someone in our extended family was doing witchcraft on us, and that only he could help us and protect us. Today I don't necessarily believe that kind of thing, but at the time I did because of my Latin American culture and the rituals that exist on the fringes of Catholicism in Latin American communities.

Looking back on it now, it's very clear that this person knew exactly how to get what he wanted. He visited with everyone in the family a couple times a week, but he structured it so that every meeting was private—almost like a psychiatrist or a priest—and I completely believed in absolutely everything he said. There were certain behaviors we had to adhere to and certain things we couldn't do, such as go visit or spend the night at someone's house because, according to him, you'd pick up all their negative energy and bring it back with you.

The inappropriateness began in my very first private meeting with him. He made it seem as if it were a part of the spiritual healing. But what I went through wasn't just physical and sexual abuse. There was a lot of psychological

**J**ennie grew up in a Latin community in Southern California, one of two sisters in a family that sometimes struggled to make ends meet. Her father was an alcoholic, and her mother was “not neglectful, exactly,” says Jennie, “but not quite present, either.” She says this turned her into a child who was always looking for attention, “which pretty much made me vulnerable to predators.” Her father unwittingly invited one predator into their family, believing he was a friend and advisor. However, what followed were years of psychological, emotional and sexual abuse that had a defining impact on Jennie's entire worldview. Her abuser attempted to control everything she did and said, and he vowed to marry her and take her away from her family. As she was nearing the end of high school, she managed to distance herself from him but sank into a “deep, deep” depression, still unsure about what had really transpired and whether it was abuse. Eventually she sought counseling and then later began the process of pressing charges. Jennie tells her story.

**Jennie was just a child when the abuse began. For years, it was was relentless, and by the time Jennie was a teenager, pictured above, she was alone, lost and convinced it would not end.**



Over 15 million children witness violence and abuse in their homes each year.

**SOURCE:**  
[www.childhelp.org](http://www.childhelp.org)

warfare. I characterize it as spiritual abuse. He isolated me from everyone and completely convinced me that I couldn't trust my mother, my father, my sister, any of my friends—no one. In every meeting with this person, he would literally interrogate me, and on the days he couldn't visit, he would call. Daily. And as the sexual abuse started increasing during that first year, he tried to convince me that this was a real relationship and that I was

a consenting participant. I was only 12 at time. This person was 40 years older than me, old enough to be my grandfather.

This man started to intentionally create many issues between my mother and my father, completely driving a wedge between them. They separated and got a divorce within a year and a half of when he came into our family. He then convinced my sister and me that if we went with my mom, he wouldn't be able to help us anymore; I didn't speak to my mother for about a year. My dad actually stopped drinking and got a stable job, which was great, but it was a second-shift job, so we pretty much became latchkey kids and the abuser kind of had free reign over us for quite a while. It was horrific. This went on for years. And the whole time I thought, "Well, this is just a bad relationship, this is all it is, and you'll get out of it."

My father remarried and we moved to be closer to my stepmother's brothers and sisters. They were immediately skeptical,

saying that we didn't need this person around and asking what he was doing to us. So my dad got him out of our household—and the abuser was very, very angry. I remember that conversation. He threatened my father, saying, "I'm going to get you where it hurts the most." My father didn't understand what he meant, but I did.

He still called my sister and me every day and he would actually wait for me after I got out of school. Even though the encounters were more limited and less frequent, I knew I needed to find a way to get out of this. So my sister and I moved in with my mom. The abuser would call my mom's house, but I always had my sister answer the phone and say I wasn't there or I was in the shower or that I'd call back. Eventually the calls stopped.

After it all ended, I was just left with this feeling of, "Okay, what do I do now?" I had no one telling me what to do anymore, and I hadn't quite yet figured out that the whole thing was some-

*"I'm in a loving relationship now,  
and I feel like life is so normal.  
All of the abuse feels like a lifetime ago,  
and now I can see that I'm on my way  
to where I always wanted to be."*

thing I didn't have a choice in. So as graduation approached, I became really depressed. Very, very depressed. I tried to explain to my mother—"I want to cry all the time, I don't know what's wrong with me"—but she didn't know how to help me.

This is where Mariska Hargitay comes in. When I was in high school, I started watching *Law & Order: Special Victims Unit*, and a lot of the stories sounded kind of familiar to me. And finally it hit me: "I'm just like one of the victims on the show!" I saw a PSA for a hotline number for sexual assault victims, and then I saw it a couple more times. So one night, months later, when I was alone at work doing my night shift at the nursing home where my mom worked, I thought to myself, "I can't take this anymore. I have to do something about this. I think this was abuse? I mean, I technically did consent to it, but..." I was very confused, and so I called. I told them that I needed counseling services, and they suggested a place.

The place they recommended was in Pasadena, in an old church. Right away I saw it as a sanctuary. I walked in and met with a woman named Sandy, who essentially asked me to sum everything up. I'd never actually had a chance to do that before—at all. And I remember that the whole time I was telling this crazy, horrific story, I was totally disconnected from everything I was saying, almost in a proud way: you know, it's like, "All of this happened to me, and I'm not even emotional about it; it's not really affecting me, it's fine." When I finished, the first thing she said to me was, "I believe you, and it wasn't your fault." And then I started to cry. It was the first time it was comforting to say something about what had happened. God, the relief—just thinking about that feeling right now, I'm almost crying again. It felt as if the nightmare was over, and I started to put it behind me. It just felt like an exhale.

So I went through a couple years of counseling, and I went through all sorts of different

stages of emotions throughout it. And I was finally able to get to the point to realize it wasn't my fault—that it was not a consensual relationship. That it was abuse. And then I moved into a phase where I was very angry, to the point that I wanted justice. I mean, look at what happened since this person had walked into my family's life!

And then I thought, "No." No, you're not getting away with this. So, with the help of Peace Over Violence, I went to the police department and filed a report.

The trial was a long, long process, about two years. The first time I saw the abuser in court, he was so pissed. He just kept looking at me with daggers, and I thought to myself, "The the tables have turned." When I told my father what had happened, he was completely brokenhearted and yet so supportive through the whole thing; he actually went to every hearing with me. At the end of the trial, my abuser was sentenced to 14 years in jail.

My sister started her own counseling during the trial, and since then she's graduated from college. I'm very proud of her. I feel like both she and I have come a very long way, and we are very close. My relationship with other family members is a work in progress.

I'm also a work in progress. I would love to go back to school and get my sociology degree, so I can actually speak to the things I've lived and learned with an academic background. If I could prevent even one child or one woman or one man from becoming sexually assaulted or abused, I'd feel like I'd done a great deal. Speaking about my story and becoming an advocate and then a certified crisis intervention counselor has really helped me bring the whole thing—victim-to-survivor-to-advocate—full circle. I'm in a loving relationship now, and I feel like life is so normal, surfing the Internet for recipes and all that kind of stuff. All of the abuse feels like a lifetime ago, and now I can see that I'm on my way to where I always wanted to be. □

PHOTOGRAPHY: LORENA ROS

**The first time Jennie told her story, she felt like she was finally exhaling. Today, she continues to heal, to love and to see herself as a work in progress.**

**C**lain grew up in a comfortable middle-class neighborhood in Brooklyn, New York, with his father, mother and brother, Austin, who was 9 years older. But his household was also volatile and violent; no family member was spared abuse. After literally surviving childhood, Clain launched himself into a fast-paced life in New York City just as Studio 54 was taking off. Working on Wall Street by day and doing intense volunteer work at night at the height of the AIDS crisis, he finally faced the moment where his family history came roaring back at him, setting him on the journey that would ultimately set him free from his past. Clain tells his story.

When I was 30 years old, I was on the phone one afternoon for my volunteer work with the Gay Men's Health Crisis (GMHC). When I hung up, the secretary said, "Your mother called." I replied, "My mother's dead. How could my mother be calling?" She responded, "The woman said, 'It's Mrs. DiPalma.'" And then I realized, "Oh, it's that woman, my father's girlfriend." I hadn't been in contact with either of them for years.

So I got on the phone. "Lee," I said, "please don't call yourself that. You're not my mother." She just cut right in and said, "Your father's in the hospital. He's had a heart attack, you have to come up. Now." Okay, fine. So I wrote down all the details and got off the phone. And I immediately just leaned over and tossed my cookies into the wastebasket. Because at that moment all the memories came back, like a sewer backing up. All the memories flooded back at once.

I was hysterical. I really had a sense right then and there of how great my own personal crisis was at that moment. I knew I was going to need a lot of help and that I was going to have to devote time to it. So I immediately called my GMHC crisis manager and said, "I have to leave, I have to quit! All my family memories just came back. I need therapy, now." It was crystal clear. I had to take

care of me. It was that pivotal moment when the caregiver has to take care of himself. It was crucial. It was survival.

As for the memories... My father was a wife beater, and he would beat the living daylight out of our mother and verbally abuse her, rip off her clothes and rape her in front of us. And she would aggressively, actively fight with him verbally. And then my father would go after my brother and beat him terribly. I was so afraid of my father that I wouldn't go near him. He would have to sort of seduce me to come near him with kindness and gentleness. And then I would be sexually abused by him.

It went on for years. My mother would try to leave him. We'd go to Arizona in the summer without him, but then they'd reconcile. Then the explosions would happen on the holidays, Christmas trees being thrown upside down and things like that. The tension would build and then just suddenly explode.

My brother became an early barbiturates user, then heroin, and he went in and out of jail. He would be abused in jail and come home even angrier, more erratic and violent. It was awful. My brother and I would fight, then he would chase me down and rape me, and that's how we lived for about six years. Once, I threw the kitchen table up in the air and flipped all our dinner on the floor. I was wrestling my brother and then I was on top of him with a knife, threatening him. And I felt so angry at myself. I'd turned into them! And my brother was saying, "Go ahead, go ahead, do it!" I threw the knife down and ran out of the house.

When you are living it, you don't even have the time to contemplate or review. You can really only respond and duck and cover.

So jump back to the future: I found a really great therapist. At first I would sit there and tell him, "Oh, no, we had a lovely house and a great childhood." And he'd say, "Okay. Well, you're here now because something's bothering you." And I'd say, "Yeah, but I can't talk about it." Wanting to deal with it is one thing; facing it and then running your hands through the muck of it is not a lot of fun.

So he suggested putting all those experiences into a little box on a shelf. And on the days when I felt good, I could take the box down and start to open it.

I went on antidepressants for about three years to help me face my therapy, and then at some point I was able to agree to join a small gay men's group, which terrified me. But it was great, too; there were so many men who had had similar situations as me.

And so about eight years or so later, I was on Long Island with all my cousins and my Aunt Marie—my mother's sister. It was her 85<sup>th</sup> birthday, Fourth of July, we were all having hot pasta in the sun and just talking about my mother and my name, Clain, and why my mother chose it, just being a little nostalgic. But that obviously triggered something in my aunt. She became very emotional and very agitated, and I was concerned she was going to fall down. And she was very adamant and almost angry. "You know, your mother had choices! Your mother had choices!" she said to me. I didn't want to go into it further at that moment. I was afraid she would

It is estimated that between 50 - 60% of child fatalities due to maltreatment are not recorded as such on death certificates.

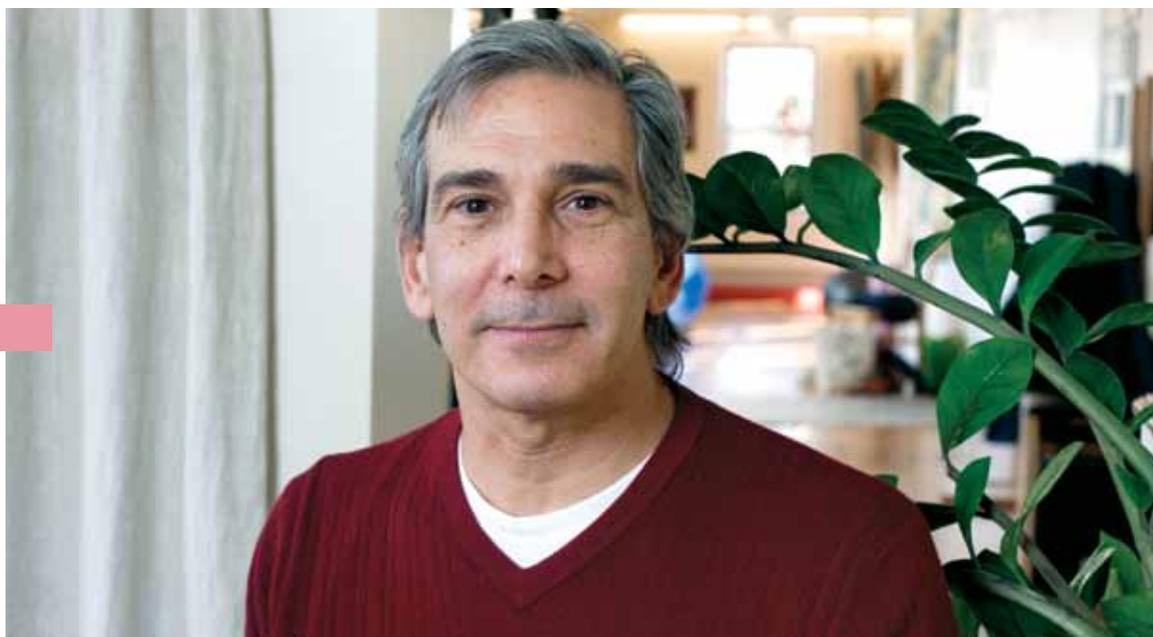
**SOURCE:**  
[www.childwelfare.gov](http://www.childwelfare.gov)

have a heart attack, but on the train home I kept thinking about it.

I called back that night, thinking, "I hope she can talk to me about this." And we were able to go there, to all this darkness, and she confirmed this one memory I have where my mother was at a point where she was going to leave my father. She was on her way to Aunt

*"It was crystal clear. I had to take care of me. It was that pivotal moment when the caregiver has to take care of himself. It was crucial. It was survival."*

PHOTOGRAPHY: LORENA ROS



To hear confirmation that the scenes and images filed away in the deep, dark shadows of his mind were real was one of the happiest feelings Clain can recall. Not because they happened, but because he could finally begin healing.

Marie's house, where I was, and we were talking to my mother on the phone. And while we were on the phone, my father started in on her, and he pushed her down a flight of stairs. She was pregnant at the time and she later miscarried, and afterward we never talked about any of it. And I said, "Did this really happen? Are you talking about this?" And Aunt Marie said, "Yes, that actually did happen." And it validated everything. To actually talk about it with a relative, who said, YES, all of this happened, was one of the happiest feelings I ever had. Of course, it was also interlaced with sorrow, but it was also confirmation about the reality of my past.

It was a big thing to realize that it was my parents' stuff, to understand that whole situation really was just them. I was certainly affected. I was their kid, I was present—but it all had to do with them. There was a long time I hated and resented them both, but I've also always felt that this is where I come from. And there have been gifts—some tremendous gifts because of that as well: my intuition in reading people, the way I can avoid

people who are going to blow up at any minute, my desire to be a healer with my hands instead of hurting someone.

I recognize that I suffered for a long time, and my mother suffered, and my brother suffered, and my father really suffered, too, even though he was doing a lot of the damage. But, you know, as for "we should have been a happy home," that's just a television show; that's not reality. And I took the train out of there as soon as I could. But, of course, I took it all with me anyway, because I didn't know any differently until the memories all came back out. But for me, the important thing about all of it is the self-healing and the validation and the forgiveness I felt when I was finally there. □

*Our emotional reactions to these narratives give us the smallest glimmer into worlds few see and all too many experience. They may simultaneously fill us with inspiration, despair, anger and admiration. They also may leave us with questions. Questions such as, how could these lives have been changed had someone responded differently? What if the doctor had reported the suspicious*

*injuries? What if a teacher had made a referral for the isolation and depression? What if a neighbor had called the police when they heard fighting? These are questions that will unfortunately remain unanswered. However, each survivor's courageous story can help us create a better understanding of how abuse can impact the life of a child and give us guidance on what we can do today and in the future to protect children from abuse.*

*As these three narratives illustrate, each survivor's healing journey is unique, a path forged specifically by him or her alone. And yet there are similarities in the pathways each survivor must walk. Each survivor brought the history of the abuse into the light; had others bear witness to their pain and receive them with compassion and belief; acknowledged their own strength and wisdom as a survivor; and, finally, reclaimed their innocence so that the blame, shame and all forms of responsibility shifted off of the child and onto the abuser, where all those burdens belong. It is through this process that survivors are able to create an identity for themselves that simultaneously integrates and frees them from their histories, allowing them to walk in the fullness of their lives. ♥*



A close-up, soft-focus photograph of a hand holding a pink flower, likely a rose, against a bright, white background. The petals are delicate and layered, with some showing a gradient of pink. The hand is visible on the left side, with fingers gently gripping the stem.

# PROTECTIVE FACTORS

## FOR STRENGTHENING FAMILIES

Protective factors are conditions in families and communities that, when present, increase the health and well-being of children and families. They are attributes that serve as buffers, helping parents who might otherwise be at risk of abusing their children to find resources, supports or coping strategies that allow them to parent effectively, even under stress.

For years, researchers have been studying both the risk factors common among families experiencing abuse and neglect and those factors that protect families who are under stress. There is a growing interest in understanding the complex ways in which these risk and protective factors interact—within the context of a child's family, community and society—to affect both the incidence and consequences of abuse and neglect.

## Why Focus on Promoting Protective Factors?

Research has found that successful interventions must both reduce risk factors and promote protective factors to ensure the well-being of children and families. Focusing on promoting protective factors is a more productive approach than reducing risk factors alone.



**Protective factors are positive attributes that strengthen all families. A universal approach helps get needed support to families who may not meet the criteria for “at-risk” services, but who are dealing with stressors that could lead them to abuse or neglect.**



**Focusing on protective factors, which are attributes that families themselves often want to build, helps service providers develop positive relationships with parents. Parents then feel more comfortable seeking out extra support if needed. This positive relationship is especially critical for parents who may be reluctant to disclose concerns or identify behaviors or circumstances that may place their families at risk.**



**When service providers work with families to increase protective factors, they also help families build and draw on natural support networks within their families and communities. These networks are critical to families’ long-term success.**

## Which Protective Factors Are Most Important?

Research has also shown that the following five protective factors are linked to a lower incidence of child abuse and neglect:

### Nurturing and Attachment

A child’s early experience of being nurtured and developing a bond with a caring adult affects all aspects of behavior and development. When parents and children have strong, warm feelings for one another, children develop trust that their parents will provide what they need to thrive, including love, acceptance, positive guidance and protection.

### Knowledge of Parenting and of Child and Youth Development

Discipline is both more effective and more nurturing when parents know how to set and enforce limits and encourage appropriate behaviors based on the child’s age and level of development. Parents who understand how children grow and develop can provide an environment where children can live up to their potential. Child abuse and neglect are often associated with a lack of understanding of basic child development or an inability to put that knowledge into action. Timely mentoring, coaching, advice and practice may be more useful to parents than information alone.

### Parental Resilience

Resilience is the ability to handle everyday stressors and recover from occasional crises. Parents who are emotionally resilient have a positive attitude, creatively solve problems, effectively address challenges and are less likely to direct anger and frustration at their children. In addition, these parents are aware of their own challenges—for example, those arising from inappropriate parenting they received as children—and accept help and/or counseling when needed.

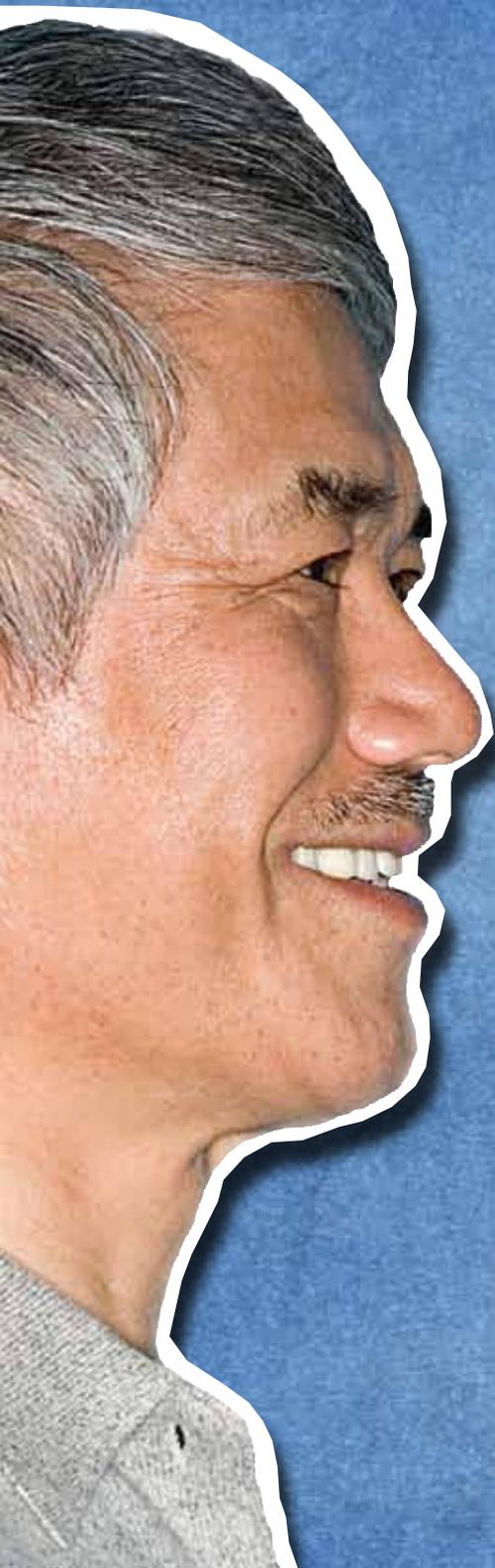
### Social Connections

Evidence links social isolation and perceived lack of support to child maltreatment. Trusted and caring family and friends provide emotional support to parents by offering encouragement and assistance in facing the daily challenges of raising a family. Supportive adults in the family and the community can model alternative parenting styles and can serve as resources for parents when they need help.

### Concrete Supports for Parents

Many factors beyond the parent-child relationship affect a family’s ability to care for their children. Parents need basic resources such as food, clothing, housing, transportation and access to essential services that address family-specific needs (such as child care and health care) to ensure the health and well-being of children. Some families may also need support connecting to social services such as alcohol and drug treatment, domestic violence counseling or public benefits. Providing or connecting families to the concrete supports that families need is critical. These combined efforts help families cope with stress and prevent situations where abuse and neglect could occur.

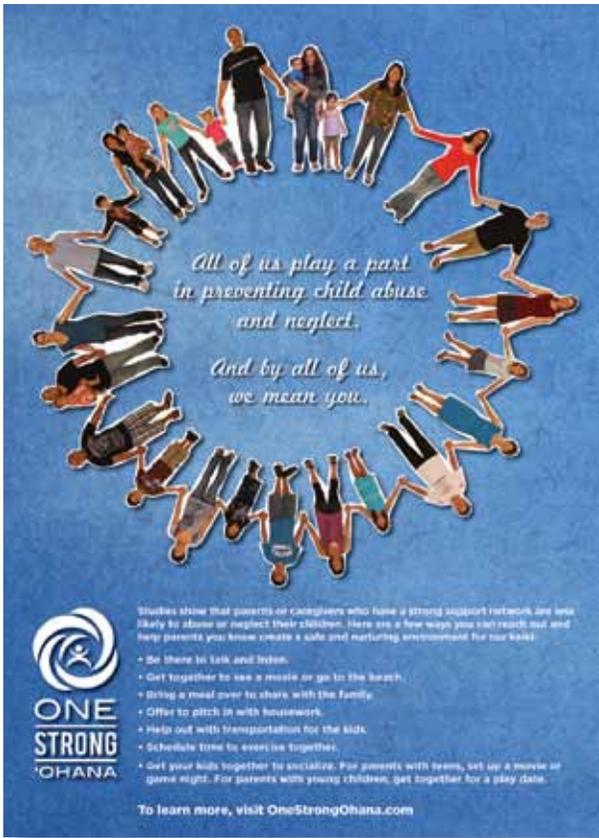
These protective factors are critical for all parents and caregivers, regardless of the child’s age, sex, ethnicity or racial heritage, economic status, special needs or whether he or she is raised by a single, married or divorced parent, or other caregivers. All of these factors work together to reinforce each other; for example, parents are more likely to be resilient in times of stress when they have social connections and a strong attachment to their child. Protective factors can also provide a helpful conceptual framework for guiding any provider’s work with children and their families and have been at the forefront of recent child abuse prevention public awareness campaigns. ♥



*Make a joyful noise!*



The Joyful Heart Foundation was established to help survivors of sexual assault and domestic violence heal and reclaim their lives. In 2006, a tragic case of child abuse and neglect in New York City inspired the organization to also address the youngest victims of violence. Since then, this work has expanded to Los Angeles and most recently, Joyful Heart's birthplace: Hawai'i.



## 'ohana = family

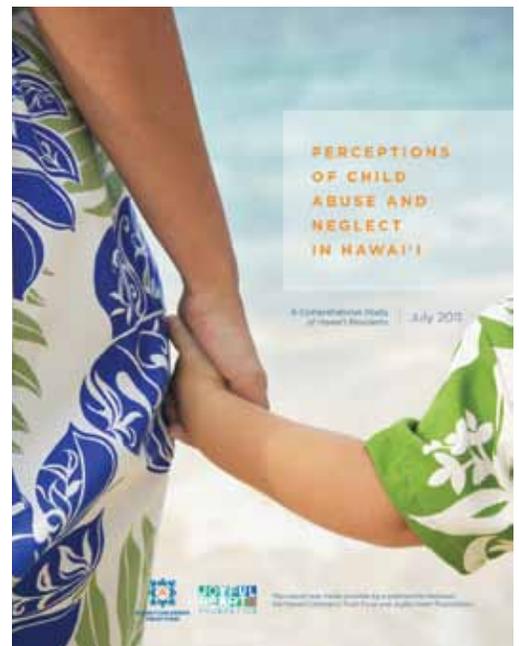
In 2006, the news reported that seven-year-old Nixzmary Brown was beaten to death in her home in Brooklyn, New York. Weighing just 36 pounds, Nixzmary had missed weeks of school in the months leading up to her death. She often had cuts and bruises and vague explanations—another fall, another accident. Home was a horror for Nixzmary, but somehow, so many caring adults in her community missed the signs of her abuse.

In response, Mariska became the face of a city-wide public awareness campaign urging New Yorkers to turn their grief into action and Joyful Heart changed its mission in 2008 to include child abuse and to reflect our commitment to children and survivors of child abuse and neglect.

At the heart of these efforts is working to engage members of the community—adults who are responsible for the safety and well-being of children—to prevent and end child abuse.

With One Strong 'Ohana, the biggest child abuse prevention public awareness campaign in Hawai'i to date, we're finding an empowering and positive—definitely *noisy* and, we think, joyful—way to do just that.

**Above:** Collateral from the One Strong 'Ohana campaign, including promotional posters and tip cards that list common signs of abuse and neglect and simple ways to help strengthen families. **Right:** Joyful Heart commissioned state-wide research on the perceptions of child abuse and neglect to help inform the campaign's creative process and goals.



**BACKGROUND**

In 2010, the Joyful Heart Foundation formally joined in partnership with the Hawai'i Children's Trust Fund (HCTF), a public-private partnership between the Hawai'i Department of Health and the Hawai'i Community Foundation to develop how, together, we could nurture and promote protective factors among parents, caregivers and bystanders throughout Hawai'i, Joyful Heart's birthplace. The result is a groundbreaking state-wide public awareness campaign to prevent and end child abuse and neglect called One Strong 'Ohana.

In the United States, nearly four children die every day as a result of child abuse and neglect. More than three quarters of these children are under the age of five and more than 40 percent of young victims won't live to see their first birthdays. Over 15 million children witness violence and abuse in their homes each year. In Hawai'i alone, 4,199 cases of child abuse were reported in 2010.

Knowing this, but lacking key information on residents' awareness of and attitudes about child abuse, the HCTF and Joyful Heart set out to conduct research throughout the state of Hawai'i on the self-reported percep-

tions of child abuse and neglect. We learned that a majority of Hawai'i's residents have a low awareness of the prevalence of child abuse and neglect and that many people are uncertain of how to prevent or report abuse. Yet nearly 40 percent of residents know a victim of child abuse.

This research—and the genuine belief in Hawai'i that we are all one family ('ohana)—built the foundation of the One Strong 'Ohana campaign.

While the public awareness campaign is unique to Hawai'i, its message and the protective factors are universal. The strengths-based approach of One Strong 'Ohana emphasizes that all of us—parents, caregivers and bystanders in the community—can play a role in creating a positive and healthy environment for children and families through actions that foster two of the key protective factors: *social connections and concrete support for families.*

**ONE STRONG 'OHANA'S MESSAGE AND REACH**

Directed toward parents, caregivers and bystanders in the community, the One Strong

'Ohana campaign emphasizes that simple things—reaching out to other parents to ask how they're doing, offering to pick up groceries or watching the kids for an hour— increase social connections and support to reduce the incidence of abuse and neglect and build stronger families and communities.

With tools like public service announcements, posters and information cards—and with the incredible support of local community partners, media and corporate sponsors—the One Strong 'Ohana message will reach nearly all Hawaiian adults dozens of times by the end of its first year.

And this is only the beginning.

**MAKING A JOYFUL NOISE EVEN LOUDER**

It is through the support of our corporate and media partners, who are standing with us during this campaign and are finding creative and inspiring ways to extend the reach of its message, that we are able to join together as One Strong 'Ohana. The campaign would not be possible without the support of these partners, and we extend our deep mahalo to them. ♥

PHOTOGRAPHY: GREG YAMAMOTO



*Joining the campaign*

For more information about the campaign, visit:

**OneStrongOhana.com**

If you are local to Hawai'i and you or your agency would like to become a member of the Hawai'i Children's Trust Fund Coalition or request more information, please email:

**Join@OneStrongOhana.com**

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# Manhattan Child Advocacy Center

By Linda Fairstein

*Whenever I think about child victims of sexual and physical abuse—and there are sadly so many thousands of them across this country—I start with the fact that not only are they our most vulnerable population, but they have also traditionally been terribly underserved by a criminal justice system designed for adult survivors.*

In 1977, when I was a young prosecutor in charge of the country's pioneering special victims unit, New York City established a multi-disciplinary task force to create innovative ways to deal with these long-ignored issues: sexual assault, domestic violence and child abuse. Assistant district attorneys, police officers, advocates, mental health experts and physicians met regularly, but some agencies were so territorial that

we despaired of finding a more comfortable way for children to disclose abuse.

In some cities and towns—like New York in the '70s—it is still the practice that a child who reports sexual abuse, for example, is taken first to a police station and exposed, often in the middle of the night, to everything from perpetrators in handcuffs to jail cells, as well as lots of men and women in uniform. They are then taken to a hospital emergency

room, where it would just be a matter of good luck if a trauma pediatrician is on duty, where the child waits to be triaged after car accidents, shooting victims, strokes and other urgent matters. Eventually, he or she might meet with a prosecutor in a courthouse, a child welfare investigator and ideally someone to counsel the victim. Each of these steps takes place under a separate roof, at a distinct day and time, and, while



The reception area of the Manhattan CAC is an inviting and playful space. Children wait here before they meet with Safe Horizon's warm and friendly staff in the facilities, which are decorated with artwork and gently lit throughout.

PHOTOGRAPHY: MICHAEL WEBBER



“The new Child Advocacy Center will help build stronger investigations, but more importantly, it will make it much easier for young victims who are referred here to get the care and support they need.”

**Mayor Michael Bloomberg**

necessary, the process often adds to the child’s trauma instead of relieving it.

The concept that seemed so hopeless to us in the ’70s came to fruition in 1986, when the country’s first “child advocacy center” (CACs, as we call them) was developed in Huntsville, Alabama. From that first center in Huntsville, a national movement was created. Today, there are nearly 700 child advocacy centers nationwide, and more on the way. But it was here in New York City in 1996, when Safe Horizon opened the first fully co-located CAC in the United States, that the idea blossomed and yielded the great results we see today.

Let me tell you a little bit about Safe Horizon, the country’s largest victim advocacy organization, which is based in New York and was founded in 1978. It’s a non-profit with long and close ties to the Joyful Heart Foundation, for which I currently serve as the Vice-Chair on the Board of Directors. The two organizations have partnered on many important projects over the years. Mariska Hargitay, Joyful Heart’s Founder and President, served on the Safe Horizon board with me (as does her fabulous co-star, Stephanie March), and Maile Zambuto, Joyful Heart’s CEO, led their development team for several years. Safe Horizon is the only organization in the United States to operate four fully co-located, nationally accredited CACs

in an urban setting—serving children ages 11 and under, almost five thousand cases a year.

What’s so important about being fully co-located? The first mission for providers is to ensure that children disclosing abuse are not further traumatized, as they might easily be in the example shown above. In Safe Horizon’s Manhattan CAC—which opened in 2009 and is my favorite place in the city, truly—the child-friendliness of the setting is obvious from the minute a visitor walks into the reception area. There are toys, games and books, child-sized furniture, and friendly workers to put the kids at ease immediately. And then the key to the solution: a multi-disciplinary team—a superb trauma pediatrician with a private office designed to meet the medical needs of the victims, as well as to collect evidence; a detective specializing in child abuse, both physical and sexual; workers from the Administration for Children’s Services; a prosecutor from the DA’s office; and a social worker trained specifically to do a forensic interview—conduct a single interview, rather than five or six at agency after agency. This interview allows the police officer and others to watch through a one-way mirror, so the child is not overwhelmed by six interrogators.

One flight down, part of the CAC

## CAC FACTS

A recent national cost benefit analysis of the Child Advocacy Center model shows that, on average, CACs save approximately \$1,000 in services to children and families during the course of a child abuse investigation.

In 2006, researchers at the Crimes Against Children Research Center at the University of New Hampshire completed a five-year national study of the CAC model. The study’s findings included:

- ▶ Child Advocacy Centers were three times more likely to make a referral for mental health services.
- ▶ Children served by a Child Advocacy Center were twice as likely to receive a medical exam.
- ▶ Non-offending caregivers from the Child Advocacy Center sample described greater levels of satisfaction with the investigation.
- ▶ Child Advocacy Centers with greater involvement from law enforcement were more likely to show an impact on criminal justice outcomes.

SOURCE: Crimes Against Children Research Center at the University of New Hampshire Study

complex, is an entire self-contained module of a special victims unit. It's an NYPD facility that includes a room in which line-ups can be conducted without ever having to take the victim out of the building, a cell in which an offender can be held and a room in which the offender or other witnesses can be interviewed.

The CAC team can complete the medical exam, conduct a detailed interview of the child, perform a mental health evaluation, provide victim support and advocacy and then follow up with case review and tracking. This process ensures the best clinical aftercare and a far greater chance of success in the courtroom. The dream of better serving the often-fragile child victim, which many of us thought hopeless three decades ago, are realized in each of Safe Horizon's CACs.

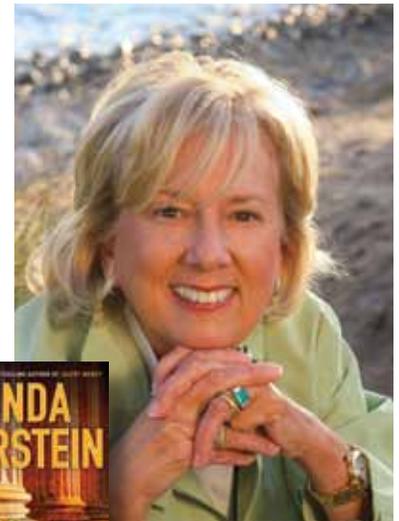
Nancy Arnow, the program director in charge of the CACs, rightly points out that "the need for treatment of child abuse victims is on the increase, and that Safe Horizon's groundbreaking programs are proven, successful models to be replicated across the country." I go to the Manhattan CAC often to tour prospective donors, talk with school groups or prosecutors about this

important work or simply visit my friends who do this difficult work with such skill and enthusiasm. It is always a privilege and a joy to see how this team approach to intervention following abuse so dramatically improves the circumstances of the victims who come to the CACs. This model not only changes these young lives that have been so severely traumatized, but it also saves the lives of the kids, their parents and their siblings every single day. To my view, Safe Horizon's four CACs have set the gold standard for the way every child victim should be met when disclosing the awful truths of abuse.

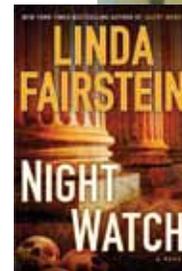
Child Advocacy Centers are also located in Joyful Heart's other locations in Los Angeles and Honolulu. The Stuart House is a part of the Rape Treatment Center in Los Angeles, and the Children's Justice Centers are located in multiple cities in Hawai'i. For more information, please visit [www.911rape.org/about-us](http://www.911rape.org/about-us) and [www.courts.state.hi.us](http://www.courts.state.hi.us) for details and contact information for the respective centers.

For information on Child Advocacy Centers across the country, please visit the National Children's Alliance website at [www.nationalchildrensalliance.org](http://www.nationalchildrensalliance.org). ♥

## Linda Fairstein



PHOTOGRAPHY: PETER SIMON



**Linda Fairstein, former prosecutor and best-selling novelist, is**

**America's foremost legal expert on crimes of violence against women and children and currently serves as the Vice-Chair on Joyful Heart's Board of Directors. Her newest crime novel, *NIGHT WATCH*, will be released on July 10, 2012 and is currently available for pre-order.**

[www.lindafairstein.com](http://www.lindafairstein.com)



One of the most important elements of the Manhattan Child Advocacy Center is the Alice "Bobbie" Fairstein Medical Suite.

Alice Atwell Fairstein of Mount Vernon, New York—also known as Bobbie—died on July 3, 2008 at the age of 88. Born on April 17, 1920 to James and Ida Atwell, she was a 1941 graduate of the Mount Vernon Hospital School of Nursing and served as a U.S. naval nurse during

## The Alice "Bobbie" Fairstein Medical Suite

World War II. Alice was stationed at the Portsmouth Naval Hospital in Virginia, where her first patients were pilots wounded during the battle of Guadalcanal.

In 1943, she married her husband, the late Samuel Johnson Fairstein, a Fellow of the American College of Anesthesiology and Chief of Anesthesiology at Mount Vernon Hospital from 1957 to 1984.

In 1965, Alice joined the staff of Louise Wise Services of Manhattan, where she was a supervising pediatric nurse, participating in the care of thousands of infants and children until the agency closed in 2004, forcing her retirement at the age of 84.

After Alice's death, in her honor—and in recognition of her devotion to the health and well-being of children in crisis—her family and friends created the Alice Fairstein Medical Suite and a memorial fund to support its operation. The facility was dedicated in November 2008.

Alice will be remembered for her skilled medical care and compassion, her wise counsel to friends of all ages and the great spirit of joy with which she lived her very full life. Her memory will also live on in the level of expert and compassionate care provided to child victims of physical and sexual abuse in the medical facility that bears her name.



PHOTOGRAPHY: COURTESY OF ALEX COHEN

# Alexandra Cohen

## Hero of The Heart

*As a young girl growing up in a lower middle class community, Alexandra Cohen and her family didn't always have access to the greatest medical care or educational opportunities. Now, she's a champion for children and a fierce advocate for issues of violence against women and girls.*

**REUNION: You're being honored as a hero of the heart in this issue. Who were your heroes growing up?**

**ALEXANDRA COHEN:** First of all I have been called a lot of things but never a hero! A hero to me is someone who puts themselves in danger to help others—I am not that brave.

Growing up I had a few heroes, but the most impressive was my mother. She was the Mother Teresa of Washington Heights. She raised over twelve children that were not her own. People would bring their kids over in the morning for babysitting and show up right before bedtime (if they ever showed up at all). My mother took all of these kids in, fed them, educated

them and healed them. They came from all walks of life. Some of their parents were single parents, alcoholics, drug addicts...

My mother also ran a "rummage sale" shop where I worked. We collected used clothing and goods that we would clean and repair to sell to raise money for the church. From a very young age, I remember collecting items for the store for

**Above: Alex is pictured with her husband, Steven, and their daughters at the ribbon cutting ceremony for the Alexandra and Steven Cohen Children's Emergency Department at New York-Presbyterian Morgan Stanley Children's Hospital in June 2011.**

**Right: Alex Cohen with Joyful Heart's founder, Mariska Hargitay, at the 2011 Joyful Revolution Gala. Opposite: Alex (right) is pictured with her sister, Rose, who has volunteered countless hours to help evaluate the Foundation's Heal the Healers program.**

people who lost everything in fires, cooking food for someone who lost a family member, or going door-to-door asking for donations to buy necessities for a pregnant neighborhood teen. We grew up poor, but I never knew it because my mother always said, "No matter how little you think you have there is always someone who has less." From a young age giving became a way of life and that stayed with me.

**REUNION: You and your husband have supported a number of organizations and institutions that promote child health-care and welfare. Can you tell us about some of the work you do?**

**AC:** Here are a few stories of how my involvement in these organizations began:

When my oldest daughter was two we lived in New York City. She befriended a little girl named Jenna who was later diagnosed with childhood leukemia. Jenna was treated at Schneider's Children's Hospital in Long Island. We went to visit her, and when I saw the condition of the oncology department—especially the playroom they had—I was shocked. The kids were being treated in the hallway, and the playroom was no bigger than a broom closet.

I wanted to change that, and what began as the construction of a playroom ended with the full renovation of the oncology department, including state-of-the-art equipment and family lounges large enough for all. Our relationship with the hospital remains so strong that we were given the opportunity in 2010 to rename the hospital the "Steven and Alexandra Cohen Children's Medical Center," and we are building an additional 100,000 square feet for a new facility.

I was born in Washington Heights in Babies Hospital (now Columbia Presbyterian and Morgan Stanley Children's Hospital). I still frequent the neighborhood and the hospital. My husband and I jumped at the

chance to build a new pediatric emergency room as part of the larger hospital renovation and upgrade. The new emergency room opened in June 2011 and is almost five times bigger than the old one.

My girls were all born at Mount Sinai Hospital, and it was always such a great experience. When my lifelong doctor and friend Dr. Austin Abramson approached me to help redo the labor and delivery floor I was thrilled. It was my way to say thank you to the hospital for taking such good care of me during the births of my children and to make it the best experience possible for new moms coming in.

In Greenwich, we helped by building a walk-in clinic for residents of Greenwich or greater Connecticut who need medical services but cannot afford them. The clinic has been instrumental in caring for so many, and the medical team and nursing staff are wonderful.

**REUNION: Are there any other causes that are near and dear to your heart?**

**AC:** Education is a major focus for us. Steven and I are very passionate about educational reform of this country. We are learning more every day and look forward to helping enhance the education of children nationally. We have helped support schools through the Harlem Children's Zone and have built science labs and libraries all over the city in different schools and boroughs.

A few years ago we helped Achievement First build the first charter school in Bridgeport, Connecticut, with the help of some of our friends, and the school is thriving. We are now in the process of building another charter school in New Haven. We also support and sponsor teachers in Teach for America.

We have made significant donations to a few universities to help with tuition and summer programs for gifted students. These kids could never afford to attend college and



PHOTOGRAPHY: MICHAEL PARMALEE

get the education they deserve without this help. Several of the children we sponsor have thrived in school and are currently at the top of their class, and we are so proud of them.

**REUNION: What inspired you to support these organizations and issues?**

**AC:** I was born into a lower middle class family in Washington Heights. My dad worked in the post office and my mother babysat for a living. I had terrible medical care, and my father struggled to put my two sisters and me in Catholic school. While the education we got was better than the public school system, it still was not great. I now have a chance to make things better for others in the same situation.

**REUNION: What brought you and your meaningful support to Joyful Heart? When did that happen?**

**AC:** A few years ago, a friend of ours invited us to a Joyful Heart event to meet Mariska and hear about the work she and the organization were doing. Joyful Heart interested me because a close relative was in an abusive relationship with her first husband and was also the survivor of a sexual attack.

"I could hear the pain in their voices when they described their abuse and their attacks. Then something remarkable happened—I began to hear the peace and strength that came straight from their hearts..."

It was a great event and when I heard some of the women speak, I cried. I could hear the pain in their voices when they described their abuse and their attacks. Then something remarkable happened—I began to hear the peace and strength that came straight from their hearts, they were able to achieve this through the help and services they received through Joyful Heart. I was so inspired and so hooked.

**REUNION: What does Joyful Heart's mission mean to you?**

**AC:** I think that when women are suffering, they feel the need to be strong and keep their emotions bottled up, and this ends up making them physically ill and emotionally starved.

I believe that Joyful Heart allows women to feel and express their pain in a safe and loving environment. Joyful Heart surrounds these women with others who have similar stories, takes them away from their everyday lives and stresses and gives them a little piece of heaven. It's hard to see the rainbow when

all you see is the rain. Joyful Heart shows that beyond all the pain is peace and with the commitment we need to make to ourselves we can find that peace. Joyful Heart is there when no one else is, they will stay with you until you heal, they are the friends we all wish we had and we all strive to be.

**REUNION: Why do you think supporting efforts to end sexual assault, domestic violence, and child abuse is so important?**

**AC:** I hope that we see an end to this while I am alive, but with hard times like those that have fallen upon this country, I do not see an end anytime soon.

What I hope Joyful Heart brings to people in these and many other difficult situations is to find a place for them to go with someone to see and where they can talk about their feelings, frustrations and stresses.

We also need to educate our children, starting from a young age, to see signs of abuse as wrong and abnormal and not to be

afraid to report it or tell someone. Educate parents on what signs to look for at an early age so that problems are not ignored and begin to escalate without intervention. I am a mother, and I want my children to be able to speak their minds and express their emotions in a safe and loving place. I think this is what Joyful Heart does for survivors—Joyful Heart gives them that safe and loving environment.

**REUNION: When you envision progress on these issues, what do you see?**

**AC:** Joyful Heart has a great program for teens on recognizing abusive relationships; I would like to see these educational programs become mandatory in all of our schools.

I would also like to see more groups focusing on abused mothers and their children, helping them explore what their options are and helping them find the resources they need to make some realistic changes in their situations. They also need help finding funds that may be available to them if they cannot afford it.

**REUNION: There are so many individuals who want to support organizations but don't necessarily have the resources at their disposal to donate funds. What would you encourage them to do?**

**AC:** From an early age, I realized that my help was needed just as much if not more than money was in many situations. I worked in a nursing home through high school feeding the elderly during lunch; I worked in many soup kitchens on the weekends serving the homeless; I served food at the Gay Men's Health Crisis to men with AIDS; I volunteered at the local hospitals as a file clerk; and I helped set up for charity events by setting each and every table to save money. There are so many things a person can give that [ >> continued on p.42 ]





# PLAY THERAPY

**WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO PLAY?** If you are an adult, you might think of playing a game, an instrument or perhaps a role. For most people, play is something we do consciously and within a context. Do you remember, though, what play was like when you were a kid and how easy it was? **By Rachael Wong**



# F

or children, playing is as natural as breathing—it's a part of who they are and how they communicate. Play is fun and joyful. It provides a way to learn, and it can also promote healing.

As the noted psychologist Jean Piaget said, "Play is a child's work." Children learn, process and communicate through playing. For children who have experienced trauma—from abuse, family problems or social issues—play therapy can be an effective and developmentally-responsive way to cope and recover well-being.

## WHAT IS PLAY THERAPY?

Play therapy is a form of psychotherapy used mainly with children to facilitate communication and expression of thoughts and feelings through the use of toys and other creative activities. A trained clinician with experience working with children and families can provide this mode of therapy. Through the use of play, a clinician can make observations about the dynamics within the family system. In addition, the manner of play and the toys chosen can provide insight about the child's behavior both in and out of the session. Play therapy can also help children build trust and a sense of safety in which they can thrive. The participation of parents and caregivers is often encouraged as their involvement helps



strengthen the bond between the child and the caregiver.

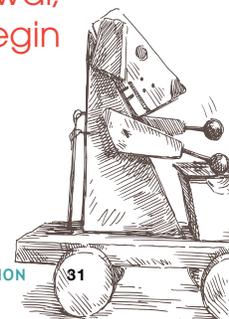
In the third issue of *Reunion*, Joyful Heart explored creative expression and how it can help us connect with our inner healing voice that knows how to find our joy and heal. Through creativity, we can communicate "thoughts and feelings that are too big or too difficult to put into words." Creative expression is a wonderful modality for all ages, but it might not work for children who are nonverbal, disinterested, or lack motor skills. Something more basic and inherent to their being kids can open the door for them: play.

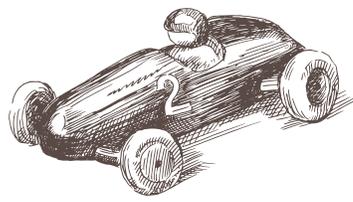
Play is another form of natural expression. It is spontaneous, inventive and joyful. Importantly, it gives children the opportunity to take what is abstract or unmanageable and transform it into real, relatable experiences. Play therapy is used to describe a compilation of techniques that incorporates play in order to provide therapeutic benefits to children. It provides the space and materials for kids to safely deal with feelings, thoughts and experiences, and it is used to help children ages 3-12 years address problems such as trauma, repetitive rituals, regressive behavior and more.

Trauma can be defined as "an experience that is emotionally painful, distressful or shocking, often resulting in lasting mental and physical effects." Examples include living through a natural disaster such as Hurricane Irene, witnessing an accident and surviving physical or sexual assault. As we know, trauma can also be caused by more than one incident, and it is also the emotional responses or symptoms to these experiences that threaten a person's safety, security and control. Trauma is often intimately experienced and can cause physiological and psychological changes that may lead to feeling scared, distressed, upset, anxious and isolated. Unfortunately, children are not immune: statistics show that at least four out of ten American children will experience trauma before they reach adulthood.

**"If we are to teach real peace in this world, and if we are to carry on a real war against war, we shall have to begin with the children."**

**Mohandas Gandhi**





Trauma can negatively impact children throughout their lives, from immediate reactions to their mental, physical and emotional development. It is vitally important for children to receive appropriate support so they, too, can find their inner healing voice and so that traumatic symptoms do not become embedded and permanent. Play therapy can support that goal.

Play therapy takes place in a safe environment with a trained therapist. Sessions can be tailored for individuals or a group of children, and selected materials (e.g., dolls, blocks, sand trays, art supplies, puppets, masks or games) are provided for play. Play therapy is child-centered, and contemporary models include both directive and nondirective approaches during which therapists may initiate play-based interventions, provide reflective observations or teach a parent/guardian play therapy techniques that will facilitate bonding with the child. Regardless of the approach, the goal is for children to have the freedom, time and space to make sense of their feelings and work through conflicts.

## THE IMPORTANCE OF PLAY

Think about a time when you really had FUN. You could've been out with friends, sharing a meal with loved ones, spending time alone listening to your favorite music or something entirely different. Whatever the scenario, what made the experience fun? Often, we have fun when we feel happy and alive, we smile and laugh, and our hearts brim with joy. As adults, we readily relate to having fun... which is exactly what playing is!

The Strong® is an educational institution in Rochester, New York, that is dedicated to all things related to play and even includes the National Museum of Play. Its website highlights the importance of play in happiness, healing and identity: "Play is basic to all of us... When we play, we affirm our values and connect with others... When we look closely at play over time, we find ourselves."

Indeed, many well-known philosophers and educators throughout history highlighted the value of play. The great philosopher, Plato (~428-347 BCE), shared that, "You can discover more about a person in an hour of play than in a year of conversation." Several centuries later, Fred Rogers (aka, Mr. Rogers) said, "Play is often talked about as if it were a relief from serious learning. But for children play is serious learning. Play is really the work of childhood."

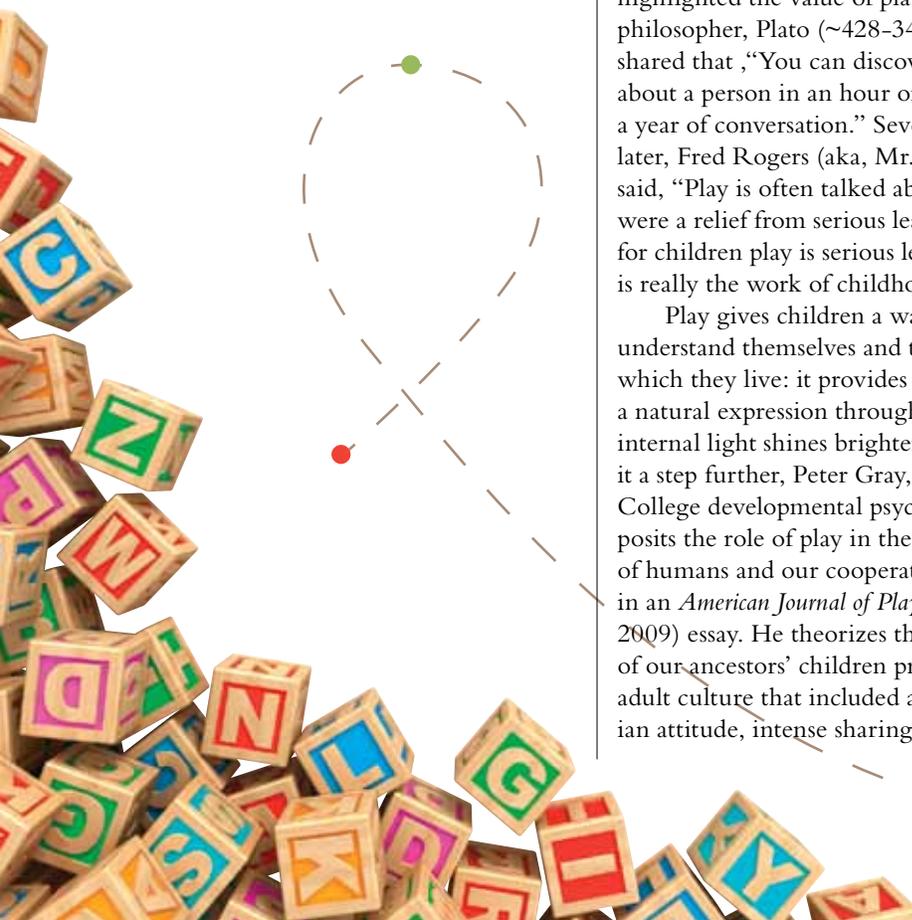
Play gives children a way to better understand themselves and the world in which they live: it provides them with a natural expression through which their internal light shines brighter. Taking it a step further, Peter Gray, a Boston College developmental psychologist, posits the role of play in the evolution of humans and our cooperative society in an *American Journal of Play* (Spring 2009) essay. He theorizes that the play of our ancestors' children promoted an adult culture that included an "egalitarian attitude, intense sharing and relative

peacefulness for which hunter-gatherers are justly famous and upon which they depended for survival." Through play therapy, individuals are able to reconnect with sharing and interacting in a non-competitive environment that promotes cooperation and free expression reminiscent of earlier forms of play at its purest level. When humans play, they are better able to decrease aggressive tendencies and become more cooperative and connected beings. The kind of play Gray describes is "free play" that is nondirective, not organized, mixed-age and non-competitive. It is also different from playing video games, watching TV and playing organized sports—all forms of play that are goal-directed or may lack full engagement with others. Within this context, we can see the importance of play for a healthy society in which people are concerned for and connected with each other. We can also see why play therapy is a therapeutic outgrowth of this natural expression.

## WHY PLAY THERAPY?

We know that playing is fun and brings laughter and light. Play therapy also has proven therapeutic benefits. Dr. Richard Gaskill, noted expert in play therapy at the Sumner Mental Health Center in Wichita, Kansas, explains the importance of play:

Play is a universal activity of children as well as a healthy, productive activity for adults. Studies on play have shown that all primates and most mammals play. Even birds play... Play enlightens us, invigorates us and informs us, often drawing us closer to each other.





## APPLICATION OF PLAY AND PLAY THERAPY

A trained clinician will often use diverse tools to facilitate play within a therapeutic session. The materials used depend on the topic or area the clinician would like to explore with the child. For example, if he or she is having difficulty talking about a traumatic event, the clinician may ask the child to draw their thoughts or feelings. The final art project may shed light about specific events or inner turmoil the child may be experiencing. Other forms of play include sandplay, dollhouse play, role play and puppetry. The most beneficial types of play therapy are those in which children can externalize their feelings in a non-judgmental environment.

While we have focused here on the use of play therapy for children who have experienced abuse and trauma, it can also be applied to other family members, including adults and health/healing practitioners, as well as in organizations. As adults, we learn, reflect and process information through multiple modalities. While talk therapy remains the most common service provided for adults, this leaves out large portions of the population who process information better through artistic, experiential means. The basic premise is to allow oneself to play, reflect and integrate what is learned and experienced.

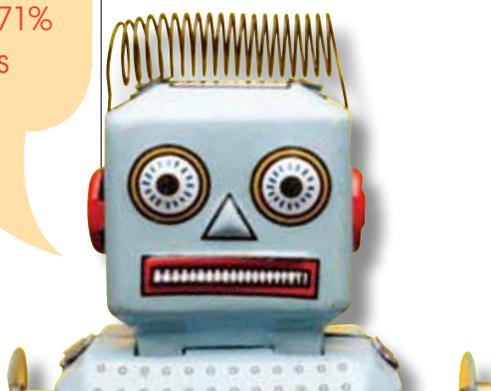
How do we initiate play? Perhaps the easiest way is to have some play kit items handy. You may not have

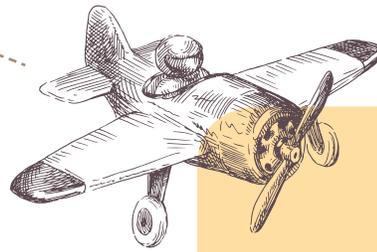
The first documented use of play therapy was in the early 1900s, and its efficacy has been well-researched. In August 2011, Play Therapy United Kingdom, also known as the UK Society for Play and Creative Arts Therapies, Limited, published a study entitled “An Effective Way of Promoting Children’s Wellbeing and Alleviating Emotional, Behavioral and Mental Health Problems—The Latest Research,” which found:

- \* Play therapy resulted in improvements for 83% of children with severe problems and 74% of children with slight to moderate problems
- \* Play therapy is effective for 80% of children at six years of age and for 71% of children at 12 years

This study was based on data from 8,026 cases from 507 play therapy practitioners.

A meta-analysis of 93 outcome studies also examined the efficacy of play therapy, and the results were published in *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice* (2005, Vol. 36, No. 4). This review found that play therapy is an effective psychological intervention for children: kids who receive play therapy function better than those who do not, and play therapy was found to work equally well for girls and boys, across age, in various settings and for different issues. This review also found that play therapy is more effective with a greater number (up to 35) of sessions, if parents/guardians are fully involved and trained using a well-developed protocol, and when utilizing a humanistic-nondirective play therapy approach that is centered on the child’s uniqueness, potential and growth.





a therapeutic sand tray available, but you can put on some upbeat music for singing and dancing and bring out a few colorful pens to doodle and draw. Play is what you make of it, and it can take many forms: being silly, playing a game or with something tangible, unfolding your own myth (please see p. 36) or merely giving yourself space to breathe and enjoy the present moment. It is also easy: give yourself permission to play and enjoy bringing fun into your daily life.

While play therapy is a service provided by a trained clinician, there are many ways each of us can increase play in our lives and the lives of our children in order to connect, relax and release stress.

There may be more value in these experiences than we ever imagined.

When was the last time you doodled on a page as a way to soothe yourself and maintain your focus? Consider the joy you experience when listening to a well-told story. Perhaps there is inherent value in being free to engage in an activity that does not require a directed outcome. Think about how we may tap on the table to create rhythm and how that may connect with the flow of thoughts in our mind. Our very beings are interactive and playful when given the space and safety to express these sides of ourselves. Einstein said, "I often think in terms of music." Maybe he was onto something! ♥



## MORE INFORMATION ABOUT PLAY THERAPY

**The National Child Traumatic Stress Network provides resources for parents and professionals on childhood trauma and how to access mental health services. Please visit: [www.nctsn.org](http://www.nctsn.org) for more information.**

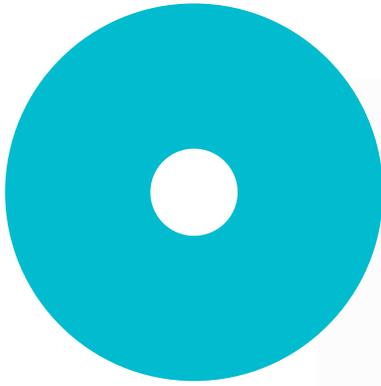
**Play Therapy International (PTI) promotes play therapy around the world and its website contains a wealth of information about this treatment modality. Learn more about PTI and play therapy at [www.playtherapy.org](http://www.playtherapy.org) or (559) 294-2128.**

**The Association for Play Therapy (APT) is a national professional association that "promotes the value of play, play therapy, and credentialed play therapists" through public awareness, educational and training programs and promotion of effective play therapy services.**

**"Play Therapy Works!" is a short APT video that introduces play therapy and how it works. You can find it at the APT website under "About APT" at [www.a4pt.org](http://www.a4pt.org). You can also go to [YouTube.com](https://www.youtube.com) and search for "Play Therapy Works!"**

**To find a play therapy practitioner, visit APT's website at [www.a4pt.org](http://www.a4pt.org) and click on "Search Directories" and "Find Play Therapists."**





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**JOYFUL  
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FOUNDATION



# Unfolding Your Own Myth

By Elena Hull

## Prepare

Create a comfortable, quiet space, and put a large sheet of paper in front of you. Have your favorite journal by your side. Use a gratifying writing instrument, be it a Sharpie, an ink or paint pen, a pencil or even a collection of colored markers. I have a favorite ink pen that feels wonderful to write with, and it makes such a difference in the quality and fluidity of my writing. Take a moment to close your eyes or soften your gaze and breathe deeply. Settle yourself; exhaling slowly naturally relaxes the body. We are going to invite your imagination to guide you in hearing and unfolding your own myth, your own symbolic story.

## Experience

Take a few moments to write your responses to the following questions on the sheet of paper in front of you. Write freely and take space on the page wherever you feel moved to write. Trust your imagination, your inner world, to bring forth images and responses.

*What was your favorite story, fable or myth when you were young?*

*Was it one that you read, watched or created yourself?*

*Was there a special animal, character, object or location you connected with? Maybe a place in nature such as a special tree, a heroine, a magical power or a stuffed animal that felt absolutely real?*

*What experience in the story was most compelling for you? What caught the light of your imagination, of your young wisdom? If you find that you are drawn to different moments in different stories, feel free to combine elements of more than one story.*

## Explore

Now take a walk around your room, home or personal space as if you were an explorer discovering it for the first time. Notice what you see and what surrounds you. Notice the images, colors, textures, objects, symbols, views, faces, music and books. Write down or draw symbols for these observations on your paper. Look with the curiosity of an anthropologist trying to know the story of the person who dwells here. Take your time. When you feel complete, sit in front of your paper, which by now may be filling up with words and/or images. This is the raw material for your unfolding myth, fable, fairytale or story.

## Unfold

Open your journal and begin arranging the pieces before you into a story of your own. Trust yourself and try not to judge whether your story is good or bad. Let yourself be guided. Play more than think. Mythology and fairytales carry the darkness and the light, obstacles and accomplishments, moments of impasse and reunion, relationships and solitude. There is a journey that usually includes leaving home to come home to oneself. You can even begin with "Once upon a time..." ♥



**Elena Hull is the Clinical Director of Midtown Marriage and Family Therapy and provides in-depth psychotherapy to both individuals and couples at Midtown MFT. As a licensed psychotherapist specializing in trauma and creative expression, Elena is an integral part of our program development, training and facilitation.**



*"Your sacred space is where you can find yourself again and again."*

**Joseph Campbell**

HEAL *the* HEALERS

# Caring for Self while Caring for Others

## *hugo* VILLA

The Village Family Services specializes in providing permanency and safety for neglected and abused children in Southern California. Hugo Villa, LMFT, is the organization's co-founder and Chief Executive Officer.



**REUNION: HOW LONG HAVE YOU WORKED IN YOUR CURRENT FIELD?**

**HUGO VILLA:** I received my degree in Clinical Psychology in Argentina in 1985. I have been working in this field for 26 years.

**REUNION: WHAT MADE OR INSPIRED YOU TO GO INTO THIS FIELD?**

**HV:** I am passionate about children and parenting issues. Child rearing was my major in school. When I moved to the United States, I specialized in marriage and family issues as well as child abuse and neglect and the devastating impact that abuse has on children and families.

**REUNION: HOW DID YOU COME TO BE INVOLVED WITH THE VILLAGE FAMILY SERVICES?**

**HV:** I co-founded The Village Family Services with Irma Seilicovich, the best business partner that I could have ever found. We were working with children in foster care and saw the need for bilingual, bicultural services for Latino families that were recent immigrants to Los Angeles. This was the inspiration to develop the organization.

**REUNION: WHAT DO YOU FIND THE MOST CHALLENGING ABOUT THIS KIND OF WORK?**

Fundraising, definitely. Acquiring private donations and unrestricted monies is one of the most challenging issues of the not-for-profit world, especially during hard economic times like the one we are experiencing now.

**REUNION: IF YOU FEEL COMFORTABLE SHARING, WHAT IS ONE OF THE MORE CHALLENGING THINGS YOU'VE HAD TO EXPERIENCE OR WATCH SOMEONE EXPERIENCE IN YOUR TIME DOING THIS WORK?**

**HV:** Every time a child is killed by a parent or a caretaker, it is like the world collapses in front of my eyes. It is hard to believe, especially since I have become a father, that a human being can harm an innocent child. Unfortunately, we have to deal from time to time with these cases and help not only the survivors but our staff of dedicated workers and therapists as well as the community at large with the effects of secondary trauma or vicarious trauma.

**REUNION: WHAT IS THE MOST REWARDING THING YOU HAVE EVER EXPERIENCED OR WATCHED SOMEBODY EXPERIENCE IN YOUR TIME DOING THIS WORK?**

**HV:** Without any doubt, the most rewarding experience for me would be the adoption of my son, Robert.

**REUNION: DO YOU HAVE A REGULAR SELF-CARE OR WELLNESS PRACTICE? IF SO, WHAT IS IT?**

**HV:** I work with a personal trainer twice a week and I go to the gym four times a week. I watch my diet. I get enough sleep. I enjoy my friends regularly and I allow myself both physical and emotional intimacy. I love to have fun with my partner and my son, and I try to laugh a lot.

**REUNION: AT WHAT POINT DID YOU REALIZE THE IMPORTANCE OF SELF-CARE?**

**HV:** I have always been mindful of the importance of self-care. I love good

massages and body treatments. However, it was not until a few years ago when I experienced the Heal the Healers program of the Joyful Heart Foundation that I realized the importance of relaxation, yoga and meditation. I am still struggling to relax and meditate throughout the day, but I am more active and aware now.

**REUNION: THIS WORK CAN BE HARD ON THE PEOPLE WHO DO IT. HAS YOUR ORGANIZATION ESTABLISHED ANY MECHANISMS TO DEAL WITH BURNOUT AND VICARIOUS TRAUMA OR TO NURTURE AN ENVIRONMENT THAT PROMOTES SELF-CARE?**

**HV:** Yes, we have. During the last couple of years our staff has gone through a one year training program on self-care techniques and improving communication. We have been lucky enough to send most of our wraparound staff and some of our therapists to the Joyful Heart Heal the Healers programs. We are constantly looking for avenues that promote self-care. ♥



PHOTOGRAPHY: MAILE ZAMBUTO

*irma*  
SEILICOVICH

*Since co-founding The Village Family Services in 1997, Irma Seilicovich, LMFT, has served as the organization's Chief Operating Officer. During that time, her staff has grown to more than 100 professional therapists and case managers—but the need for services has grown too.*



**REUNION: WHAT MADE OR INSPIRED YOU TO GO INTO THIS FIELD?**

**IRMA SEILICOVICH:** I moved and lived in different cities and countries as a child, including three years in a country where there was danger and war around the corner. When I was 15 years old, my father had a neurological incident that left him paralyzed. Our life changed dramatically. Having specialized support at that time would have been wonderful, the ability to speak with all the feeling and impact of such experiences. I always remember how difficult experiences have shaped me, and I wanted to be able to help other children in need.

**REUNION: HOW DID YOU COME TO BE INVOLVED WITH THE VILLAGE FAMILY SERVICES?**

**IS:** I came to the United States 23 years ago and met my friend and partner in business, Hugo Villa. We were both working in the community as social

workers and felt that we could make a difference if we opened our own agency. We thought we could serve those children in need in a comprehensive way and therefore co-founded The Village Family Services in 1997.

**REUNION: WHAT DO YOU FIND THE MOST CHALLENGING ABOUT THIS KIND OF WORK?**

**IS:** There are two things that come to mind. The first is the ability to obtain private funding, which has proven to be very difficult as we navigate through the economic difficulties of the country and cuts that are coming from the state. On a clinical level it is always challenge—the exposure to so much pain and trauma while keeping staff aware of their limitations and prevention of burnout behaviors.

**REUNION: WHAT IS THE MOST REWARDING THING YOU HAVE EVER EXPERIENCED OR WATCHED SOMEBODY EXPERIENCE IN YOUR TIME DOING THIS WORK?**

**IS:** When you see that a child and their family are able to live in a secure environment without fear of abuse or violence. When a child goes home and is able to feel happy again and have the support of a caring adult. I had some clients that years later contacted us to let us know how their lives have changed for the better and how they've attended college and are successful. It is my hope that any child that has suffered abuse can build up on their resiliency and define themselves more as survivors than victims. We want to empower the children to utilize their very difficult experiences in ways that hopefully make changes for the better.

**REUNION: WHAT ARE YOU MOST PROUD OF IN YOUR WORK?**

**IS:** Our success in engaging families and helping them to transition from suffering and distress to a more stable place. If we can help our clients to envision a better life, a better future, a better outcome, then that is what I am proud of.

**REUNION: DO YOU THINK THIS WORK HAS AFFECTED YOU PERSONALLY? HOW SO?**

**IS:** The line of work we have chosen always affects us. You are reminded every day of what violence and pain can do. Personally, it keeps me grounded and mindful of how grateful we should be in everyday life.

**REUNION: DO YOU HAVE A REGULAR SELF-CARE OR WELLNESS PRACTICE? IF SO, WHAT IS IT?**

**IS:** I try to completely disengage from work on weekends, read as much as I can, take walks under the sun, spend time with family and friends. I am mindful of my needs and try to eat healthy and keep well.

**REUNION: AT WHAT POINT DID YOU REALIZE THE IMPORTANCE OF SELF-CARE?**

**IS:** I've always been aware of the importance of self-care and have tried to increase awareness of self-care to all our staff. For the last two years we have brought in a team once a month to help educate staff about nutrition, mindfulness, healthy ways of communication, etc.

A couple years ago, I joined Joyful Heart on a three-day retreat and I still listen to the music and practice the yoga poses we learned when I feel the need to de-stress and stay calm. Many of our staff have been very happy for the opportunity to participate in Joyful Heart retreats and everyone has been positively impacted by the experience.

**REUNION: THIS WORK CAN BE HARD ON THE PEOPLE WHO DO IT. HAS YOUR ORGANIZATION**



PHOTOGRAPHY: MAILE ZAMBUTO

**ESTABLISHED ANY MECHANISMS TO DEAL WITH BURNOUT AND VICARIOUS TRAUMA OR TO NURTURE AN ENVIRONMENT THAT PROMOTES SELF-CARE?**

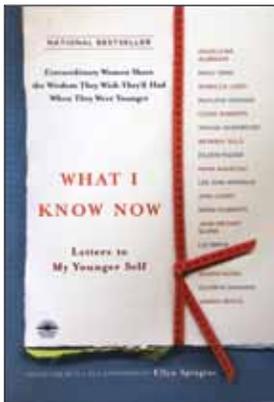
**IS:** Yes, in addition to the monthly sessions I discussed, our staff has also

attended a one-day Joyful Heart program to become more mindful of ourselves. We are aware that we can't take care of our clients if we are not taking care of ourselves. We need to be connected and grounded so that we can have a strong range of motion. ❤️

**WHAT I KNOW NOW**

**Letters To My Younger Self**

by Elyn Spragins

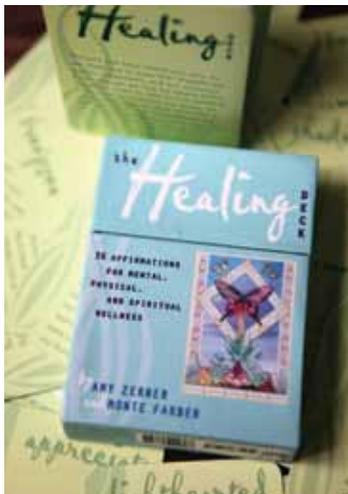


**E**lyn Spragins’s collection of forty-one letters by remarkable women from all walks of life is an inspirational read for all ages. Whether you peruse the book all at once or simply pick it up when you’re in need of some extra motivation, this compilation of letters will encourage and enlighten you.

Madeline Albright, Ann Curry, Eileen Fisher and Camryn Manheim are just a handful of the extraordinary women who share the insight they wish they’d had during personal struggles and triumphs. Discover, laugh and cry with these women as they share their private journeys and inspire you to push forward.

**THE HEALING DECK**

by Amy Zerner and Monte Farber



**POWER THOUGHT CARDS**

by Louise L. Hay



If you’re looking for quick bursts of positive energy, these pocket-sized sets are the perfect find. Whether you read them all at once or choose one card a day, both the *Power Thought Cards* and *The Healing Deck* will leave your heart full, uplift you and inspire you to live each day to the fullest.

**JOYFUL PLAYLIST**

**Tiny Light / Grace Potter and the Nocturnals**

I see a tiny light  
Like a flashbulb sparkle in the night  
I see a tiny light  
Telling everyone to hold on tight  
I see a tiny light  
But its not going to shine  
Without a fight

**Unwritten / Natasha Bedingfield**

**Everything is Everything / Lauryn Hill**

Let’s love ourselves then we can’t fail  
To make a better situation  
Tomorrow, our seeds will grow  
All we need is dedication

**Apple Tree / Erykah Badu**

I don’t walk around  
Trying to be what I’m not  
I don’t waste my time  
Trying to get what you got  
I work at pleasin’ me

**We Are One / Angelique Kidjo**

**Hold On / KT Tunstall**

Hold on to what you been given lately  
Hold on to what you know you got

**Everest / Ani Difrancio**

**Peace Train / Cat Stevens**

**The Circle Game / Joni Mitchell**

**Forever Young / Bob Dylan**

[ >> continued from p. 29 ]

only take some of their time but make a huge difference to others.

Start at an early age with your children: lemonade stands and bake sales for a cause. Children are the future philanthropists of the world, and they will learn as you do, not only as you say. So, start them young. Let them pick a cause that interests them and come up with some creative ideas to raise money for it. You will be surprised how creative they can be and have fun with it.

A great way to help an organization that you are interested in is to volunteer some of your time there and learn all you can about it. Then you can go to those who you know can afford to give financially and bring the organization to them. Word of mouth is the greatest gift you can give an organization because your passion for the cause will speak louder than any words ever could. Don't be shy—ask. I always do, and you will be surprised how many people will join your cause.

### REUNION: What brings you the most joy in this world?

**AC:** I consider myself the luckiest woman in the world. I married my best friend; he loves me so much and makes me laugh constantly. He allows me to be as generous as I want to be without exception. For this, I adore him.

I have five amazing children, and each one of them is different, but all of them will change this world for the better if they continue on the road they are on. They are as generous with their hearts as they are with their belongings. I can see a lot of me in them from when I was young. My parents still live with us and help us raise our children. I recently built them a house next door, because at 46 it was time to cut the cord. ♥

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# HEARTSHOP

## 1 Me&Ro's Wheel of Transformation

Me&Ro has added another stunning item to their line of jewelry supporting the Joyful Heart Foundation's mission to heal, educate and empower survivors of sexual assault, domestic violence and child abuse, and to shed light into the darkness that surrounds these issues. One of the eight Tibetan symbols of Good Fortune, the Joyful Wheel of Transformation represents the overcoming of all obstacles and illusions, expressing completeness and perfection. The limited edition necklace is available in gold and sterling silver and features a graceful lotus dish as well as a brown diamond bead. As with all other Me&Ro products in this partnership, 100 percent of the net proceeds from each necklace go directly to Joyful Heart. To purchase the Joyful Wheel of Transformation, visit [www.meandrojewelry.com](http://www.meandrojewelry.com).

## 2 Michael Stars Joyful Heart Tee

As a continuation of Michael Stars' partnership with Joyful Heart, the apparel company has brought back the gorgeous limited edition Joyful Heart tee. The cotton tee is a cozy and joyful way to show your support for survivors and for Joyful Heart's work. The tee features a metallic heart made up of empowering words inspired by Joyful Heart's mission such as Love, Heal and Survival. The shirts are 100 percent Supima Cotton and made in the United States. For every tee purchased, Michael Stars will donate another tee to a survivor of violence or abuse and will also contribute \$5 to Joyful Heart. Visit [www.michaelstars.com](http://www.michaelstars.com) to purchase a limited edition Joyful Heart tee before they're gone.

## 3 White + Warren Travel Wrap

Premier cashmere company, White + Warren, has proudly teamed up with Joyful Heart with a new exclusive product to help raise awareness on the issues of sexual assault, domestic violence and child abuse. White + Warren's signature cashmere Travel Wrap is available in a beautiful, deep purple and exudes effortless comfort and style. The "seasonless" accessory is perfect for crisp evenings, great for travel and can be worn in countless ways as a shawl, scarf or blanket to name a few. White + Warren is generously donating 50 percent of all net proceeds from each sale to Joyful Heart. To purchase a limited edition Joyful Heart Travel Wrap and further support our mission in style, visit [www.whiteandwarren.com](http://www.whiteandwarren.com).

## 4 AZIAM Victory Short

AZIAM is proud to introduce the Victory Short as another product in their collection supporting the Joyful Heart Foundation. The Victory Short is perfect for active women and features AZIAM's wide, double layer V-waist. The Short supportively stays in place during any kind of workout—from yoga to spinning to cross training—while creating a completely flattering silhouette. The black Victory Short is a blend of 92 percent Supplex and 8 percent Lycra and is available in extra-small to large sizes. As with AZIAM's "I Am Pure Joy" tank, 20 percent of the net proceeds from the Victory Short sales support Joyful Heart's mission. Visit [www.aziam.com](http://www.aziam.com) to purchase your pair of Victory Shorts.

1



2



3



4



All of the products sold to benefit Joyful Heart are designed to inspire and educate. To learn more about each of them, please visit our online Heartshop at: [bit.ly/heartshop](http://bit.ly/heartshop)



In addition to the Heartshop products featured here, visit our online store to purchase apparel and other items that allow you to show your support for the Joyful Heart Foundation or our End The Backlog work. [www.Zazzle.com/ShopJoy](http://www.Zazzle.com/ShopJoy)



"THERE ARE TWO LASTING BEQUESTS  
WE CAN GIVE OUR CHILDREN:

ONE IS ROOTS.  
THE OTHER IS WINGS."

HODDING CARTER, JR.

