

r e u n i o n

ISSUE 02

HEAL *the* HEALERS

Trauma Workers Share Their Thoughts On Staying Well While Caring for Those in Crisis

A WOMAN WITH A HEART OF GOLD

(and sometimes silver)

Robin Renzi of Me&Ro discusses why she supports Joyful Heart and what inspires joy in her life

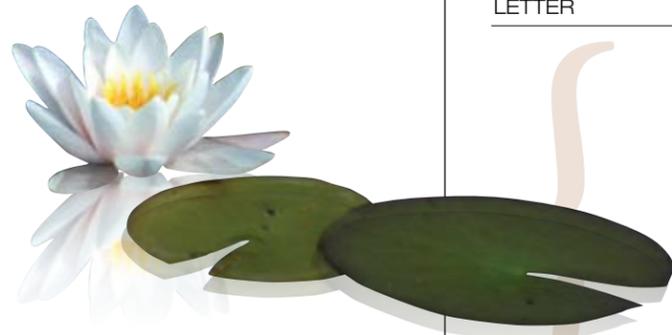
Vicarious Trauma

Learn about the signs of vicarious trauma and what self-care techniques can help you stay healthy in mind, body and spirit

Easy Steps to Create Your Own Retreat Space at Home



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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“And once we have the condition of peace and joy in us, we can afford to be in any situation... The most important thing is for each of us to have some freedom in our heart, some stability in our heart, some peace in our heart. Only then will we be able to relieve the suffering around us.”

—Thich Nhat Hanh



PHOTOGRAPHY: CATHRINE WHITE

At the heart of Joyful Heart's

mission lies the relief of suffering and the reclaiming of joy. That is why we exist. The same goal also fuels hundreds of thousands of people across the country and around the world who work—for pay or as volunteers—to help heal, educate and empower survivors of sexual assault, domestic violence and child abuse. As we come together once again in our second issue of Reunion, we direct our focus to this community of individuals who have dedicated themselves to being of service to

others. We call them healers.

We know everyone heals differently. But for so many survivors, the healing process both begins with and continues to be affected by the response of the community. At Joyful Heart, we envision a community that says to a survivor, “We hear you. We believe you. We feel for you. You are not alone. And your healing is our priority.”

We know that this healing community is a diverse group—from elected officials, medical professionals and members of law enforcement to educators, wellness practitioners and therapists; from the advocates who have dedicated their lives to this cause to the members of the media who will choose the words that will elevate our message. Each of us is vital in realizing the vision of what we can be together.

Yet that vision will never be fully realized if we do not also make a commitment to caring for ourselves.

In our work, we are confronted with the worst that human beings can do to each other.

The cumulative effects of this repeated exposure to trauma have been studied and documented by medical and therapeutic experts. A consensus has emerged: people who are continuously exposed to the details of trauma and violence are at risk for developing symptoms of what is now known as Vicarious Trauma, or VT. (See page 9 for a definition and description of VT.) This is true for everyone working within the healing community—even those of us who are not direct service providers.

Compounding the effects of VT is the

reluctance to admit the degree to which we are affected. Some consider such admittance a sign of weakness. In a conversation with Mariska Hargitay, Joyful Heart's founder and president, a veteran first responder confessed, “If anyone knew how I really feel, I'd lose my job.”

These are the healers—and heroes—to whom we dedicate this issue. And these are the individuals for whom we have developed and deployed our Heal the Healers programming, offering retreats and wellness training for mind, body and spirit. In conjunction with our practitioners and partners, we are offering healers instruction and insight on mindful and sustainable approaches to their work. (Our Heal the Healers programming is outlined on

page 6 and also at our website, www.joyfulheartfoundation.org/healthhealers.htm.) ♥

—Maile Zambuto & Chauncey Parker



Chauncey Parker serves as Executive Assistant District Attorney for Crime Prevention Strategies. Mr. Parker is also the Director of the New York/New Jersey High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA), a federally-funded program that invests in federal, state and local law enforcement partnerships designed to disrupt the market for illegal drugs.

NEED HELP? YOU ARE NOT ALONE.

If you or someone you know needs help, please contact:

- The National Domestic Violence Hotline*..... **1 (800) 799-7233 | www.ndvh.org**
- or *Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network*..... **1 (800) 656-4673 | www.rainn.org**
- or *The National Teen Dating Abuse Helpline* ... **1 (866) 331-9474 | www.loveisrespect.org**

If you are in immediate danger, please call 911.

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FOUNDER'S CORNER

Welcome back to *Reunion*! One of the most exciting and fulfilling aspects of the past year at Joyful Heart has been our “Heal the Healers” program. Those of you engaged in healing work—social workers, therapists, police officers, wellness practitioners, first responders, prosecutors, hotline advocates, and so many more—inspire me every day, both as an actress and as an advocate. As you know, I play a New York City police detective on television, which means my character’s motto is “to protect and to serve”. I have the utmost admiration for all of you brave healers who live that motto in your work every day. I have always thought “Heal the Healers” should be called “Heal the Heroes”, because that’s what you are. You encounter darkness every day, and, every day, you battle that darkness with your light. Revolutionaries that you are, you make the daily choice to turn toward the suffering of others, and then you do your utmost to alleviate it.

Your jobs require colossal amounts of courage.

But caring for others is only part of your job. In addition to honoring the experiences of those you serve, you must—must—also care for yourselves. As intuitive and obvious and lightweight as that observation may appear, self-care can be the task for a healer that requires the heaviest lifting.

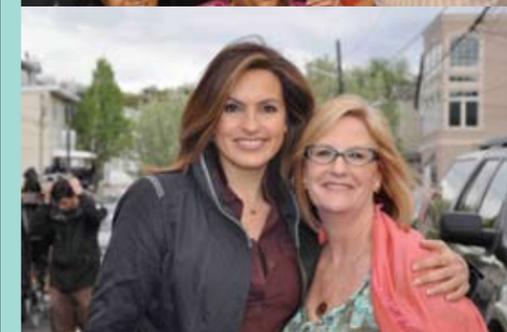
Joyful Heart wants to help.

We did a lot of research for this issue of *Reunion*, and I hope it will inform you and inspire you as much as all of you have inspired me. It is my wish that you live the healthiest, most fulfilled lives you can, in full acknowledgement and awareness of the demands of your calling. May you find ways, in the midst of your mission to serve and protect others, to do the same for yourselves.

With admiration and gratitude,

Mariska

1. Scott Berkowitz, President and Founder of RAINN, Mariska Hargitay and Sally Schaeffer, Senior Public Policy Advocate for the Family Violence Prevention Fund together for a day on Capitol Hill.
2. Mariska with the staff of the Justice Department’s Office on Violence Against Women.
3. Mariska with Sheryl Cates, CEO of the National Domestic Violence Hotline, on location filming the upcoming documentary, “Telling Amy’s Story.”



“Thank you for your courage, your determination and especially your heart.”

healing is happening



PEOPLE ENGAGED IN TRAUMA WORK WILL ENCOUNTER SUFFERING IN PROFOUND and intimate ways. In these pages, we honor these heroes—and those they serve—by telling their stories. We also hope to shed light on the toll suffering takes on those working to alleviate it. Achieving sustainability in this movement of healers requires that those caring for others also care for themselves. These pages reflect both the challenges and the triumphs of the healers working to strike a balance of wellness in their lives.

Social workers, law enforcement professionals, doctors, nurses, therapists, community organizers, advocates, along with many others, all play an important role in helping survivors of traumatic events address and heal from their experiences. While most of us feel privileged to play a role in the healing of others, this sense of purpose and accomplishment doesn't come without a cost. The repeated exposure to stories of violence, abuse and suffering often begins to affect our sense of self and our view of the world. We experience what is called "vicarious trauma".

At Joyful Heart, we recognize and have tremendous respect for those who help others cope with trauma. Our Heal the Healers program was designed to address the issue of vicarious traumati-

zation that can result from their work.

Our program's mission is to make each of us more aware of how we are impacted by witnessing and responding to the suffering of others, and to help professionals explore their own trauma exposure response and introduce them to self-care tools and practices.

We do this by first educating professionals about the impact of vicarious trauma: exhaustion, numbness, a sense of overwhelm, cynicism, or feeling like we are never doing enough.

Once we have identified the signs, we introduce therapies that engage the body through movement, the mind through creative expression, and the spirit through group sharing experience. In a safe and nurturing environment,

modalities we may use include creative arts therapy, guided writing, body work, yoga and meditation, music, dance, movement, play and mindfulness. Our goal is to help professionals restore balance and renew their sense of hope and possibility.

Our Heal the Healers program has been developed in collaboration with researchers, wellness practitioners and Clinical Consultant Elena Hull, among others, as well as our partner Laura van Dernoot Lipsky and material from her book, *Trauma Stewardship*.

For more information on our Heal the Healers programs, or to read about events we have conducted, or to find additional resources on this topic, please visit us online at joyfulheartfoundation.org. ♥

darlene
Johnson

catherine
Pierce



Darlene Johnson, Joyful Heart Executive Director Maile Zambuto, and Catherine Pierce at a New York City Joyful Heart Dinner celebrating the 15th anniversary of VAWA.

Catherine Pierce, Deputy Director of the Office on Violence Against Women at the U.S. Department of Justice, and Darlene Johnson, OVW's Associate Director talked with *Reunion's* Meaghan Morelli about the 15th anniversary of the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA)— and keeping themselves and their staff healthy as they combat violence on a national level.

Meaghan Morelli: This is an exciting year and a very exciting time within this movement. It's the 15th anniversary of VAWA and much progress has been made. Are you seeing a shift in the overall attitude of the healers you work with? Is optimism taking hold? Or is the current economic climate and all that it implies—shrinking funding, increased need—tempering what might otherwise be an enthusiastic mood?

CATHERINE PIERCE: Optimistic! Definitely! The current administration is more supportive of this office than any other before it. To be sure, we've been supported in the past; Janet Reno was

a very supportive Attorney General, but we were a much smaller office. We've grown exponentially since then. This is a time of real hope. Attorney General Eric Holder is absolutely committed to making these issues a priority. We are reaching out to new communities in substantive, meaningful ways. From inner-city work to remote Native American villages, we're reaching people we've never reached before and offering assistance in new ways, with farther reaching consequences. The current administration's budget allows for us to actually double the size of our staff, which is simply unprecedented. The

stress our staff has been under has been very intense.

It's the idea of operating in an environment of scarcity: not enough resources, staff stretched to the limit, intractable problem. And working from that place of scarcity can be very taxing.

CP: That's a great point. Because of the issues we deal with—sexual and domestic violence—people don't want to talk about it, they don't want to think about it, so we end up saying "we'll just do it." And so we take on more and more. But it's become clear to people that we aren't just paper pushers here. We have an agenda and we're getting results. We

want to continue to do our jobs well so the resources are paramount.
DARLENE JOHNSON: I definitely see the atmosphere of excitement. During the STOP (Services-Training-Officers-Prosecutors) Conference in February, you could just feel the enthusiasm, people wanting to contribute. And the anniversary of VAWA helps with momentum. Like Catherine said, people are figuring out that the OVW isn't just about talk; we're about action. Our staff is so dedicated, but if that support isn't there, we run the risk of losing the creativity and energy necessary to do our work.

How do you nurture that creativity within your staff? How do you try to preserve their energy for the long haul?

CP: I think knowing that help is on the way gives people confidence. This office really values our staff, so we try to be flexible and meet their needs in an open and encouraging way. When Attorney General Holder came to visit our office, he made a point of saying that he wanted the office to be a family-friendly place. I think he understands that with some creativity people will be much more productive.

DJ: You know, I'm a supervisor, so I interface with staff daily and I try to anticipate their needs. I try to pitch in wherever I can to help relieve the pressure. We work very hard to be creative, by implementing alternative work schedules, compressed work schedules. I try to stay tuned into the morale of the staff.

CP: Darlene is absolutely right. But I've

also learned so much from Joyful Heart about thinking more expansively about the wellness of our staff. We don't have in-house yoga, for example, which I think would be a wonderful addition. The department does provide us with the use of a gym that is literally just steps away from our office. But we don't exercise as a staff. It isn't currently a staff priority. People are so busy, so focused, and so it's easy to let that self-care slide down the list of priorities. So it's becoming clear to me that we must weave in the self-care component. We can't continue this pace and be well. Wellness creates the energy and space for us to do our work.

DJ: Oh yeah, I don't do the best job in that department, when it comes to my own self-care. Some people consider me a workaholic, Type A, whatever. It is so hard for me to say no when someone asks for help. I used to go to the gym every day, now I barely eat lunch. It's hard to turn it off. And the Blackberry is just an evil device.

You're not the only healers I've spoken with who seem to be challenged in this area. It sounds like you'd like to organize things a little differently. What would you do?

DJ: If we could cut down on meeting times, as an office, give people more breathing room in their schedules, that would help. For me personally, I just need to make exercise a priority again.

CP: Walking has always been very important to me—physically and mentally. I don't think I do that enough anymore. Getting out of the car or the

subway into the fresh air just makes a difference. And yes, like Darlene said, putting away the Blackberry can be a challenge. But when I manage it: relief! Spending time with friends and family is also very healing. My spiritual life is important to me as well, but like anything else, you need to make that a priority. We need to make ourselves a priority.

There are so many people across the country doing this work, and in so many capacities. Do you feel connected to a larger community of healers?

CP: I do feel a sense of community. It's that community which keeps us engaged and alive. It has a powerful effect on me, with relationship to this work.

DJ: Community, yes, within the program, for sure. We solve problems together, we help victims together. There is a connection. Sometimes, people see those of us in management as removed from the problem. But when you're a decision maker within an organization, the choices you make have a direct impact on human lives.

CP: Our community is broad. It includes advocates, law enforcement, prosecutors, judges—anyone who works for women who have been touched by violence. That's why Joyful Heart's Heal the Healers program is so important. There is more—much, much more—vicarious trauma in the people staffing this movement than we realize.

This idea that healers must care for themselves can seem radical, but it is essential to our health and the health of the movement. ♥



Healers Yvette Lozano from Peace Over Violence, Mariana Pascuzzi from Children's Institute and Hugo Villa from Village Family Services during the JHF Heal the Healers retreat in Ojai, CA.

PHOTOGRAPHY: MAILE ZAMBUTO

VICARIOUS TRAUMA

RESEARCH & HISTORY
By Nathan Richards

It has been nearly two decades since the term “vicarious trauma” entered the lexicon of psychological conditions. In early descriptions by Karen Saakvitne, PhD and Laurie Anne Pearlman, PhD in 1990, the co-authors of numerous articles on the subject, defined vicarious trauma (VT) as a “pervasive effect on the identity, world-view, psychological needs, beliefs, and memory systems of therapists who treat trauma survivors.”

SAAKVITNE AND PEARLMAN WENT ON TO STATE THAT VT can create “changes in the most intimate psychological workings of the therapist's self” and its impact can result in “dire consequences for the therapist's personal and professional life, including loss of personal relationships and in some instances, preventable job or career changes.” Since the early 90s, our understanding of the

root causes of VT has evolved considerably. So too has awareness of the signs of its impact and strategies to prevent or manage it. As detailed in this overview of literature on the subject, the newest research on VT is shedding a light onto the causes of compassion fatigue as well as the societal and organizational norms that can either worsen or mitigate its impact. >>

“...Those who have enormous capacity for feelings and expressing empathy tend to be more at risk of compassion stress.”

DEFINING VICARIOUS TRAUMA

Prior to the advent of the term “vicarious trauma” and even after it was introduced, many other conditions described by psychologists and psychiatrists had similar causes and outward symptoms. Babette Rothschild, MSW, LCSW notes in her book *Help for the Helper* that vicarious trauma has also been popularly known as compassion fatigue, secondary traumatization, and, simply, burnout.

Rothschild, who has been practicing psychotherapy since 1976 and is a member of the International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies, highlights the differences between each of these terms. She distinguishes vicarious trauma as an aggregation in the nervous system of the negative impact that is vicariously experienced. That is, in hearing the details of a patient’s suffering, the therapist’s body reacts (often subtly and unconsciously) to the description of the traumatic event as if she were experiencing it. Rothschild refers to secondary trauma as the noticeable sense of overwhelm that therapists may experience as they are serving as a witness to their clients’ experiences.

Further terminology is offered by Charles Figley. In his book, *Compassion Fatigue: Coping With Secondary Traumatic Stress Disorder In Those Who Treat the Traumatized*, he settles on the term compassion fatigue after noting that in his earlier writing he had used the term burnout to refer to a type of secondary victimization. In his follow-up book, Figley describes compassion fatigue as the “episodes of sadness

and depression, sleeplessness, general anxiety, and other forms of suffering that [therapists] eventually link to trauma work.”

More recently, in her book, *Trauma Stewardship: An Everyday Guide to Caring for Self While Caring for Others*, trauma worker Laura van Dernoot Lipsky comprises many elements of these other terms into her analysis of trauma exposure response:

“The depth, scope, and causes are different for everyone, but the fact that we are affected by the suffering of others and of our planet—that we have a trauma exposure response—is universal. Trauma exposure response is only slowly coming to the fore as a larger social concern rather than simply an issue for isolated individuals. It was first recognized a decade ago in family members of Holocaust survivors and spouses of war veterans, but it has only recently attracted wide attention from researchers, who are working to assess its broader societal implications.”

Van Dernoot Lipsky offers a broad definition of the trauma exposure response and cites the wide array of professional and personal roles played by those who may be affected by it:

“Generally speaking, a trauma exposure response may be defined as the transformation that takes place within us as a result of exposure to the suffering of other living beings or the planet. It can result from deliberate or inadvertent exposure, formal or informal contact, paid or volunteer work. When we refer to trauma exposure response, we are talking about the ways in which the world looks and feels like a different place to you

Healers from a number of organizations in the Los Angeles area participate in a JHF retreat in Ojai, CA.



as a result of you doing your work.”

Among those at risk of VT, van Dernoot Lipsky includes: “...social workers, ecologists, teachers, firefighters, medical personnel, police officers, environmentalists, home health aides, military personnel, domestic violence workers, biologists, the staffs at animal shelters, international relief workers, social-change activists, those caring for an elderly parent or a young child—in short, anyone who interacts with the suffering, pain, and crisis of others or our planet.”

RECOGNIZING THE SIGNS OF VT

Experts in the field of trauma study have seen examples of vicarious trauma that result in the same type of post-traumatic stress disorder experienced by those who have suffered directly. But unlike most survivors of primary trauma, professionals exposed to secondary trauma may not even be able to identify the impact of their work and can overlook the symptoms of their exposure.

Without recognizing the impact of the trauma, recovering from it can be difficult. In his book, *Healing from Trauma*, Peter Levine, Ph.D. notes that when the body experiences trauma, “both mind and body mobilize vast amounts of energy in preparation” to deal with the threat. Without an opportunity to discharge that stored energy, “the body holds onto that high-energy, ramped-up state.”

The ways in which secondary trauma can manifest itself range from psychological stresses and disorders to physical ailments. Like PTSD, the results of untreated VT can be observed as serious medical ailments. But in many cases, there are numerous non-medical signs that can be observed in order to diagnose the presence of a trauma exposure response.

Judith Herman describes some of the symptoms that therapists may encounter while working with their clients. “The most common constrictive responses [of vicarious trauma] are doubting or denial of a patient’s reality, disassociation or numbing, minimization or avoidance of traumatic

material, professional distancing, or abandoning the patient. The most common intrusive responses are assuming the role of the rescuer and stepping over boundaries that ultimately disempower the patient.”

MITIGATING THE IMPACT OF VT

With increased awareness of the root causes of vicarious trauma, professionals who work with suffering and crisis might attempt to avoid its impact. However, as noted by many researchers, those who serve in such roles are unlikely to be able to avoid VT entirely. The best hope for working with trauma in a sustainable way is often cited to be the development of regular wellness practices and a network of support that can help restore balance.

Judith Herman explains the almost inevitable impact of VT. “The therapist should expect to lose balance from time to time with traumatized individuals and needs a support system that includes a regular forum for reviewing his/her clinical work. The therapist must attend to the

balance in his or her own professional and personal life, and attend to personal needs.”

Figley goes on to explain, “Ironically... the most effective therapists are most vulnerable to this mirroring or contagion effect. Those who have enormous capacity for feelings and expressing empathy tend to be more at risk of compassion stress.”

Qualitative studies have shown that the most effective ways to mitigate the consequences of repeated exposure to vicarious trauma are structured self-care practices that are incorporated into everyday life. These include movement and exercise, body therapy and massage, retreats, vacations, and community building.

The first step is to understand the impact vicarious trauma can have on the way individuals look at the world. As researchers continue to explore the causes and effects of vicarious trauma, they are helping to create the circumstances in which those who heal others can work to heal themselves personally while creating sustainability for their professional lives. ♥

ben Schirmer

Ben Schirmer is the Executive Director of Rainbow Services, a domestic violence shelter program in San Pedro, CA, whose mission is to end the cycle of family violence.



PHOTOGRAPHY: MAILE ZAMBUTO

“There’s an old story about a grandfather walking on the beach with his grandson. As they’re walking, they notice that hundreds and hundreds of starfish have washed up on the beach. The grandson bends down, picks one up, and tosses it back into the ocean. His grandfather says, ‘You know, you can’t possibly save them all.’ And the grandson says, ‘I know. But I just saved that one.’

We all come into this work—crisis work—knowing we can’t possibly help everyone in need. But that becomes harder to reconcile in times like these, when funding is being cut or eliminated entirely. Sometimes it feels like the few we can help become even fewer—

though at Rainbow Services we never turn anyone away.

Extraordinary circumstances like the ones we’re facing (the State of California eliminated their budget for domestic violence shelters in 2009) can take an enormous toll on a staff as dedicated and driven as the staff at Rainbow Services. This is one of the reasons our management works so hard to make sure our staff actually like coming to work. We have an actual Cheer Committee, who take it upon themselves to plan joyful events for the staff: quarterly birthday bashes with games and prizes, Paint Your Office Day, a Goofy Winter Olympics—we even have an internal newsletter which

highlights wellness ideas. We laugh a lot here, and that helps.

My philosophy is that we deal with people in crisis, yes, but our agency is not in crisis. That attitude has to come from the management and move down. Our attitude impacts everything—just the way we hold ourselves when we walk down the hallway. Everything matters.

The Healers Retreat Joyful Heart conducted in Ojai was so eye-opening. I’m already aware of this stuff and the toll it can take, and I still learned so much. After Ojai, I signed up for a beginner’s yoga class and I love it. There’s always room to grow, no matter how much we think we know.”

michelle Archer

Michelle Archer is the Director of the the Anti-Stalking Program and the Brooklyn Criminal and Supreme Court Programs at Safe Horizon.



PHOTOGRAPHY: CATHRINE WHITE

“I believe in being of service. But this work—whether it’s working with Cambodian immigrants or within the Safe Horizon Anti-Stalking Program—this work changes you because from the depths of despair you witness the incredible human capacity for resilience. It’s this ability to persevere that helps you tap into hope.”

ted Bunch

Ted Bunch is the Co-Founder of A Call to Men, an organization committed to ending violence against women and promoting healthy manhood through education.

“Often it feels like we can never do enough. Trying to turn it off is hard. There are always more emails to answer, more work to be done, more people to reach with our message. So I have to constantly pull myself back toward that balance through exercise, time with my family, and the knowledge that the work I’m doing really is making a difference.”

jose Perez



PHOTOGRAPHY: CATHRINE WHITE

Jose Perez is the Vice President of Consumer Marketing for This Old House and Health magazines. He is also a committed Safe Horizon Board Member and an adult survivor of childhood abuse.

“Talking to survivors and hearing their stories—sharing our stories with each other—can be a very powerful experience. I can see that when I speak out, I can actually help empower people to take action, either to help themselves recover from what was done to them or to intervene and make a difference in the life of a child who may be suffering. Just knowing that is very healing.”



Wellness a r r i o r

Laura
van
Dernoot
Lipsky:

BY PETER HERMANN

From ecologists in the Pacific Northwest to domestic violence activists in Japan, firefighters in Canada to zookeepers in post-Katrina New Orleans, veteran trauma worker, author and Joyful Heart consultant Laura van Dernoot Lipsky has spent the last two decades guiding people through crisis. Now she has dedicated her life to helping those who serve others cope with the trauma they encounter on a daily basis. She spoke with JHF Board Member Peter Hermann about her philosophy of transforming trauma, suffering and crisis that she spells out in her book, *Trauma Stewardship, an Everyday Guide to Caring for Self While Caring for Others*, an indispensable guide for engaging in healing work in a healthy and sustainable way.

PHOTOGRAPHY: REBECCA DOUGLAS



New York Healers at a Joyful Heart wellness day.

PHOTOGRAPHY: CATHRINE WHITE

Thank you, thank you, thank you. Laura's presentation was fabulous...many good things are certain to come from your efforts. ~ Colonel Deborah J. Campbell,

Deputy Superintendent, New York State Police, in response to Joyful Heart's Heal the Healers presentation

with Lipsky at the National Center for Women in Policing Annual Leadership Conference.

There is a cost to interacting with suffering.

PETER HERMANN: I read *Trauma Stewardship*, and I'm so tempted to have this story consist of "Go read the book because it's really good." But I would love for our readers to get a sense of you and your work. How did you first get involved in healing work? What first drew you to it?

LAURA VAN DERNOOT LIPSKY: I think it was very much what I came into this world with. My earliest memories are of being very, very aware of and concerned about people and animals around me. I think I came in with that type of a spirit. Then, because of a variety of things that happened in my life, both traumatic things and great blessings, I was drawn to doing this work professionally. When I was 18, I was fortunate enough to have a professor who taught an incredible course on homelessness. He talked about homelessness in a way that embraced not only the pain but also the courage of people and the transformation of trauma that is possible. That was so meaningful, and what I felt like I'd been looking for my whole life. That's when I started volunteering overnights in a homeless shelter. It just really went from there. Later I started working with child abuse, then with domestic violence. And so on.

You've obviously encountered a broad spectrum of healers. What do you think draws healers to their work?

There are so many reasons. I see a lot of people who are just really, really justice minded, who simply cannot rest with the world as it is. Many people also come in from a conscious or unconscious place of trauma mastery. The concept behind trauma mastery is that one of the ways humans may heal from trauma is by returning to or recreating situations similar to the traumatic incident, this time hoping for a different outcome. For example, a person who grew up in foster care might have felt powerless to do anything to improve their situation when they

were young. They might then grow up and lead a foster care organization.

What are your thoughts on being drawn to the work that way, by that drive to master trauma?

There can be challenges. I think it's very important to have a tremendous amount of awareness around what draws us to the work. It's my belief that there's not anything inherently healing about doing this work if you're doing it from a place of trying to reconcile your own trauma. It can actually keep a wound open and rub salt into it instead of healing it.

Even though the work is not inherently healing, do you think it can be?

Yes, with a lot of mindfulness and intentionality. There are so many ways in which I have come to my work from trauma mastery, and I know that I constantly have to stay aware of whether I'm doing any harm to myself or others by my effort to try to reconcile my own trauma. In the example of the former foster child who grows up to head a foster-care agency, she may work endless hours and worry ceaselessly about the kids that are in her care, not only because she cares about them and wants to do her job well, but because she is trying to reconcile her own historic trauma. Because of what she went through as a foster child, she becomes deeply, overly invested in mastering the same situation through her work with these children. That kind of dedication can produce very positive results, of course, but it can also create a disproportionate investment in an outcome. That affects a person's health, her personal life, and certainly the work environment that's created for her colleagues. On the other hand, she may choose to care very well for herself even while maintaining that fierce dedication to her work, thus creating a supportive climate for her staff. With awareness, with intentionality, amazing things can happen. Like "Hurricane"

Carter. He was falsely accused and imprisoned for twenty-three years, then went on to be the executive director of the Association in Defense of the Wrongly Convicted in Toronto. That's some really well executed trauma mastery. What's messy about it potentially is that there's so much brutality in the work itself that if we're not very, very clear about what our intentions are, we can actually increase our suffering.

Brutality is a very strong word. Can you talk about that? What is the brutality in this work? And in that context, can you talk about the concept of the "trauma exposure response"?

In trauma exposure response, we're looking at the cumulative toll of being exposed to the suffering of other humans, living beings or the planet. The ways we may come to feel helpless and hopeless, that we can never do enough, exhausted, numb, just to name a few. Many of us are exposed to suffering through our work, but you will also feel it if you are the caregiver for your mom who has Alzheimer's, or your son is autistic, or if your best friend's daughter never returned from the war in Afghanistan. There is a cost to interacting with suffering. That has always been true, and in some ways it can feel that the cost keeps getting steeper. Part of the brutality in doing this work is that there's an increasing need among people, animals and the planet and, at the same time, decreasing resources. There's so much that's out of our control when we do this work. When you want to do right in the world, when you want to be of service, to really benefit others and you are interacting with the suffering, you will often find that it is impossible to achieve all that you would like to. Inevitably, you will be faced with the very difficult challenge of trying to hold onto your dedication and commitment while simultaneously trying not to get attached to the outcome in a way that is detrimental. >>

It is such a gift to be able to partner with someone who speaks the same language. ~ Allison Talis



>> On the topic of brutality and the toll this work takes, your book includes a meditation about ending suffering. Yet in many wisdom traditions, suffering not only plays a role, but a central role. It's treated as a vital part of life. There's the first of the four noble truths of Buddhism, which states that "Life is suffering", there's the Christian model of redemption through suffering. Could you speak a little bit about what role sacrifice and suffering play—or should and shouldn't play—in this work? Don't the people going into this work know it's going to cost them, that it's going to be very difficult?

One of the opportunities we have when we do this work, again whether it's professionally or whether it's being a caregiver in our personal life, is to engage with the fullness of life. That is going to include a tremendous amount of pain and loss and sorrow. But can we do it in a way that actually deepens our ability to awaken in this lifetime, deepens our ability to be more present? I think where the deep suffering comes from is not so much navigating through the pure trauma that is in life—because humans have an unbelievable ability to navigate through pure trauma—but in our ability to handle the complexity of what arises. In my experience, that complexity is largely about our perceived inability, or at times unwillingness, to stay present for what is unfolding moment by moment. Some of us may do everything possible to shut out the pain, while others of us may deny ourselves any moments of happiness. Either way, we pull a bunch of temporary, artificial ground under our feet to try to avoid settling into the reality of life—that there are seemingly endless amounts of both beauty and hardship. We need to be present for both. If I start reaching for addiction or control or dogma or rigidity or cynicism as a way to feel ground under my feet, that's what's going to bring me suffering. One of the

ways I think about this work of Trauma Stewardship is that we are using each of these turns in the road to deepen our compassion, to cultivate our awareness, to have more humility, to truly be more present. Can we do our work in a way that actually cultivates our ability to awaken in this lifetime?

When you talk about being present to "whatever arises", what is the spectrum of experiences that you mean?

Let's say I am the caregiver for an ailing family member, or I have a number of patients I'm not able to treat successfully, or I'm the head of an organization and overnight, 60% of our funding goes away. In any of those situations, I could certainly reach for a lot of temporary ground under my feet in an effort to not be present. I could ramp up my addictions. I could get more and more rageful. I could increase my contempt. I could compete really viciously for funding. Or I could say, "Okay, this is an opportunity to be present for this and to learn everything I can from this. Amid this hardship and the heartbreak of it all, how can I maintain my integrity and practice right speech, right conduct, right action?"

Let's say a theoretical emergency room social worker, or a therapist, or a hotline advocate hears you and says, "I love your ideas, but who's got the time? I don't have energy for this. And I'd like to use the little energy that I have not for introspection but for my clients." What do you say to that person?

I can tell you that the clearest and most troubling trend I'm seeing is how un-well people are getting. I often talk to people about this, and I say, "Look, if your life is working for you, awesome." It's a non-conversation. On the other hand, if they look closely, many people will find things may not be going as well as they thought. Physically, emotionally, mentally, psychologically, the dis-ease, as they say in Eastern medicine, is getting more extreme.

I believe we have a responsibility to make choices to care for ourselves in a preventive, proactive way. If you are on a path of being of service to others and if you do not have a diligent daily practice of some kind to keep yourself well, then the path—and I have seen this repeatedly around the world—is not going to go anywhere you want it to go. It will end in suffering for yourself and for others. I've also come to believe for myself that this work is not an entitlement. I'm not entitled to do it just because I've been in it for a long time and because I have a lot of passion for it and commitment to it. I see it as a privilege and a tremendous honor to get to be of service. I tell myself that every day I have to earn the right to be of service to others. I think about it in terms of Chief Sealth's web of life. He was a leader of the Suquamish and Duwamish tribes in the 1850's and spoke beautifully about this concept. What I believe is that I cannot be of sustainable, ethical, integrity-based service if I am simultaneously unraveling my part of that web. If my part of this interbeing is unraveling because I am unwilling to care well for myself, or because I tell myself I don't have time or the energy, or because I have bought into the belief that self care is for the weaker set, or because I'm a martyr, then there's something very, very inconsistent—to say the least—in what I'm trying to do. I can't tend to parts of the web that are compromised out there while I'm in here unraveling my part of the web. There are not two webs, if you know what I'm saying.

On that note, can you talk about the moment when you realized that things were no longer right in your relationship with this work?

I was about ten years into doing a variety of trauma work. I had come in with a wild passion and a huge amount of dedication and a whole lot of trauma mastery. I had a lot of fire, but no skills for maintaining >>



Allison Talis,
Joyful Heart
retreat specialist,
wellness
practitioner and
founder of
Creative Seeds.

PHOTOGRAPHY: CATHERINE WHITE



PHOTOGRAPHY: CATHRINE WHITE

**Mariam Habib, L.M.S.W., Mount Sinai
Hospital Rape Crisis Intervention
Program Coordinator at a Joyful
Heart Heal the Healers wellness day.**

I sat with my clients today and felt like I was present and attuned in a calmer, more loving and peaceful way than last week. I can actually feel the difference and I know they can too.

~ Mariam Habib, L.M.S.W.,

>> the long burning coals. I was working in and around a huge amount of trauma, and over time, many people noticed that I seemed to be having a really hard time. They tried to reflect that back by saying things like, “Maybe you should take some time off.” And the point I always highlight is that this included clients, which is the most disturbing part, when your clients are encouraging you to take time off. So I was very, very arrogant. I was incredibly cocky. I was entirely self-righteous. I believed I was fine. I was doing what needed to be done in the world, and as far as I was concerned, everybody could step up or step off. And I just really didn’t have any capacity to have insight about this. My partner and I ended up taking a short trip to the Caribbean to visit our family. We went on a hike to the top of these cliffs, and we’re standing looking out, and the first thing I thought was that this is incredibly gorgeous, and the second thing I wondered was how many people had killed themselves by jumping off the cliff. And because I was a trauma worker in the regional trauma center for the Pacific Northwest at the time, I just naturally started triaging. I wondered about where the helicopter would land and, you know, where the nearest Level One trauma center was and how long would it take to get there. Would you land on the cliff or the beach? Would you bleed out? So I said this out loud, assuming I’m giving voice to what everybody in my family was also wondering. And apparently nobody was. It got very quiet, and then after several long minutes, my stepfather-in-law said to me, “Are you sure all this trauma work hasn’t gotten to you?” And so it was really at that point that I was able to start connecting the dots of how profoundly I’d been impacted—and with such little insight previously.

What happened next?

I started trying to bring myself back from what I describe as a near psychotic break.

I put myself at the feet of every healer I could find. I spent a huge amount of time in Utah with Native American medicine men and women. I worked with Qigong healers. I went on retreats with Buddhist masters. I just absolutely asked for help and sat at the feet of everyone I could and tried to bring myself back from the brink.

What was the turning point where what you learned became something you wanted to share, where you realized you needed to write a book, where you realized you wanted to be a healer for healers?

I happened to be working around that time on a project that looked at why collaboration was so challenging between the domestic violence field in Seattle, King County and the child protective services field. I was seeing how secondary trauma—the idea that workers could have a wide array of trauma exposure responses that would affect their lives and work—was coming up over and over but not being talked about at all. So through my personal work and through this research project, I had a forum to start developing some curriculum around secondary trauma. I had had so much ego around my work, had been so arrogant and self-righteous, and all of that was now shattered. I was now really coming from a place where I thought that if any of what I had been through, if any of my struggles, any of my insanity, if any of my near psychotic break could be of service to other people, I would be so happy to share that. What I found was people were so desperate for help because secondary trauma just wasn’t getting talked about regularly. There is still very much this belief that if you’re cool enough and tough enough and committed to your cause enough, you’re going to suck it up. That exists in 2010—and it really existed back in the day—so I think because I was willing to be out there and say, “Oh here’s how I totally lost my mind,” I think that broke through the isolation for a lot of

people who were really struggling and gave folks some traction.

Why do you think that “suck it up” ethos is so dominant in this field?

I think we’re scared. To do this work and feel the vulnerability every single day is difficult and scary. If you can be fueled by rage or critique or dogma, you don’t have to ever come to this tender, vulnerable spot of interdependence, of being part of the same web as the people you help. I think many of us would choose to live that way as long as we can. The more we realize our interbeing, the more we realize how much is beyond our control. That is very hard for us. The thing I’m coming to understand for myself more and more is that a part of what contributes to the heartbreak and the overwhelm we experience is that there is so much we can’t control. Funding, governmental decisions, choices our clients make, environmental impact—we can’t know or dictate what will happen. There is one thing, however, that we always have the capacity to control, and that is our ability to bring our exquisite quality of presence to what we do and how we are in the world. That is what interrupts oppression, that is what transforms trauma. Trauma and oppression doesn’t take root in the same way when we interrupt the isolation surrounding them, if we see trauma as something we all share rather than something one individual or species is being subjected to. In Native American spirituality, that quality of presence is called Eagle medicine. In other circles, it’s called limbic resonance. When you’ve been with someone who is truly present, you get that feeling that you were truly seen or heard. That feeling of someone really getting you, in a profound way. This quality of presence is what is going to cause fundamental shifts in both our immediate communities and the larger society and throughout the world. **Let’s say somebody is not going to make their way through the book and is >>**



PHOTOGRAPHY: MAILE ZAMBUTO



>> desperate for help and says, “I’m dying here. I need guidance.” If you had access to them through this interview, what would you say to that person?

The most efficient and effective thing I can submit to folks is to do something every day to create internal space, because only in that space, which you could also describe as quiet or openness, can you begin to be present for yourself. And the fabulous news is that there are lots of simple and accessible ways to do this. So, very practically, if you can engage in some kind of breath work every day. If possible, get your heart rate up and break a sweat every day, and not while listening to Fox News or CNN. If you can breathe with a commitment to creating internal space, then you are detoxing, you are purging, you are not accumulating everything you’re bearing witness to throughout your day. In order to keep on keeping on for the long haul, we need all of these folks—people in the military, firefighters, ecologists, journalists, police officers, social workers, caregivers, everyone—to have a huge amount of internal space. If breaking a sweat isn’t possible, then any kind of breath work is great. Breathing in a mindful, intentional way has been part of every

tradition throughout the world since the beginning of time. So, whether it’s contemplative prayer, chanting, gospel singing, yoga, dancing, sweat lodges—do something that lets you get some traction to put down the entirety of what you’ve borne witness to in the last twenty-four hours.

And somebody says, “Yes, I love that. I’m going to do that.” And then a coworker says, “Where are you going? Why aren’t you staying here with this amount of work? How can you leave?” Can you give some vocabulary for how to respond to that?

One of the more common things that people say to me is “Look, I’m down with this. I can do this. I can get to the gym. I can get a grip on my addictions. But understand me, I work with some crazy people. Like, you would not believe the kind of people I work with. They’re crazy. What am I going to do about them?” What I tell people is, “Do not to underestimate the power of you getting on your path.” You don’t have to get up in other people’s business. You don’t have to proselytize it. As Stevie Wonder said during a concert I saw, “Handle your business.” The ramifications, the repercussions from that will be phenomenal. Now if you work in an environment where people are

insinuating that you can’t take your lunch break or take a pause in your day and go walk for fifteen minutes—you can do a lot of distance in fifteen minutes—then you need to be very clear about what the expectations of your job are, both legally and the ones you put on yourself. And as far as the expectations that you put on yourself go, just because you’ve never taken a lunch break doesn’t mean you’re not entitled to a lunch break.

In the book you use that analogy of cleaning up a river, and you say that you can keep fishing plastic bottles out of the river or you can work your way up the river and start looking at the factories that are dumping all this stuff in there. In terms of the way that secondary trauma flows through the world, what is the factory that you wish you had access to? Who do you want to get into a room with? What’s your dream?

You know, I’ve known such a broad range of people around the world who are really, really struggling—from top government officials to conservation biologists out the field. My aspiration is to try to get this information to everyone in the world whom it would benefit. Anybody who is struggling, anybody who is suffering in

this way. For me, it’s not so much “if only I had access to this person or that person.” Pain has been around for eons and it looks like it’s going to be around for quite a long time to come, so the question for me really is how are we going to metabolize it and integrate it in such a way that we can cultivate and sustain a quality of presence that will allow us to continue to be of service.

Let me press you on this. When you say your wish is to get information to everybody in the world whom it could benefit, that could be interpreted—to stay in the metaphor—as a fairly “downstream” wish, the same as getting all the plastic bottles out of the river. What, for you, would be “getting to the factories,” the source of how the world’s systems dictate the way that trauma flows through the world and takes its place in people in unhealthy, un-metabolized ways?

The answer is complex, but it points to one of the most important aspects of trauma stewardship. Again, we have to look at the web of life—the idea that nothing happens in isolation, that everything we do takes its place in a larger context. If we start with trauma, it now seems obvious to many people that no matter what form it takes, the effects ripple widely, from

individuals to organizations to society. Trauma’s effects are often seen as purely negative—but positive effects, the ones we cultivate in trauma stewardship, radiate in exactly the same way. In the book, I explain that trauma stewardship must take place on the three levels—personal, organizational, and societal—and that each level sends out ripples that reach the layers above and below. In other words, in one sense, each of us is a factory. We can begin by bringing mindfulness to ourselves and taking responsibility for changing the behaviors that affect people who might be considered “downstream” from us—our communities or clients or children, for example. At the same time, since we are the ones who make up organizations, we are likely to have an influence—maybe small, maybe large—on the structures around us. Organizations, of course, are factories, too. As they become trauma stewards, they begin to alter the way they treat the people downstream—their staff and those they serve. In helping others, of course, we strengthen the entire web of society. As we help our organizations to become clearer about their values, they may have greater impact on governmental agencies and corporations that can seem to have an >>

Trauma stewardship must take place on the three levels—personal, organizational, and societal—and each level sends out ripples that reach the layers above and below.

>>insurmountable stranglehold on our lives. I know that to some people this scenario may sound totally out there and implausible, but one of the things that happens as you become more present—as I have definitely learned—is that almost immediately you will become aware that a change in your actions will produce a concrete response. Of course, when I say that, I always need to add that I’m not saying that people who are already reeling need to feel under even more pressure to remake the world. It is true that in Trauma Stewardship I put a great emphasis on personal responsibility. But in no way am I suggesting that the entire burden lies on the individual. Quite the contrary. We can work very hard in our own lives to clean the waters as far as we can reach both upstream and downstream. At the same time, I believe very much in collective action and in the power of movements to interrupt injustice of all kinds. The more we bring trauma stewardship into our own lives, the better our hope for finding sustainable ways to work for real change.

What’s your greatest achievement in your work? What are you most proud of? If somebody had been able to witness you at a moment that defines what you do, what would that moment be?

What feels indescribably meaningful to me is that the ways that I have struggled and been unconscious and lost my mind and subsequently tried to bring myself back from the brink can be of benefit to others. When I see people resonating with my forthrightness about how out of my mind I’ve been, and how very much of a process it still is for me, that is very meaningful to me. And at the same time, what I’m doing is so self-serving. Working in that ER every graveyard shift, was that of benefit to others? I hope so. Could I provide some comfort? I hope so. Did I provide some

advocacy on issues of racism, sexism, homophobia, and misogyny issues? I hope so. And yet it was also so self-serving because it was the closest I could get to receiving help around previous traumas in my own life. Just to be with others during their times of profound pain, allowed me to reconcile my own history on some level. I would never look at that and say that I just gave and gave. I was in there in large part to save my own life. So it is really my privilege to do this work, and I hope in return it is of benefit to others.

Can you just tell me a little bit about this great concept of a Plan B?

One of the most crucial things in this work is our ability to remember that we are making a choice to do what we’re doing. That keeps us on a liberation-based path. It keeps us from feeling persecuted, like something is being done to us. A Plan B reminds us that at no point are we doing this work because we have no idea what else we would do, because we can’t find our resumé on the hard drive, because our family put us through med school so how could we ever tell them we’re quitting. We have a Plan B and a Plan C and a Plan D so that every day when we come to our work, we are deeply anchored in choice. And accountability. Because we can tell ourselves that a. I can do this totally differently, and b. I can not do it at all if I choose to. So what I remind people is that even if you stay working where you’re working until you’re 100 years old, the fact that you had a Plan B and a Plan C and a Plan D will mean everything. And I hope that there is a culture at workplaces where people can share their Plan B’s, so that other folks you work with can talk to you about it and bring you newspaper articles related to it and support you with it. That provides a very different context for our work. Always remembering we are

choosing to do this.

How do you address the possibility that everybody would suddenly say, “I’m overworked, I’m doing my Plan B,” and then all the healers are gone.

That is a fear among many people who are deciding whether or not they want me to work with any of their colleagues. What I tell them is that we desperately need folks who are aware enough to be able to bring their A game every single day. If folks are not coming to this work from a place of feeling that it is an honor to get to be of service, then I think we want to respectfully, with a tremendous amount of gratitude for their work, and very lovingly help them explore their Plan B’s. Because the stakes are simply too high. In my experience, when people fully understand the impact of this work on them, many people decide to make changes in their lives. I’ve had people come to me years after I worked with them to talk about what has happened for them. They tell me about the blood pressure they were finally able to get under control or the successful pregnancy after years of trying or the marriage they were able to slowly regroup on.

And the person says, “I would love to have a Plan B but I can’t because then all my clients are going to suffer too much, and no one’s going to come in to replace me.”

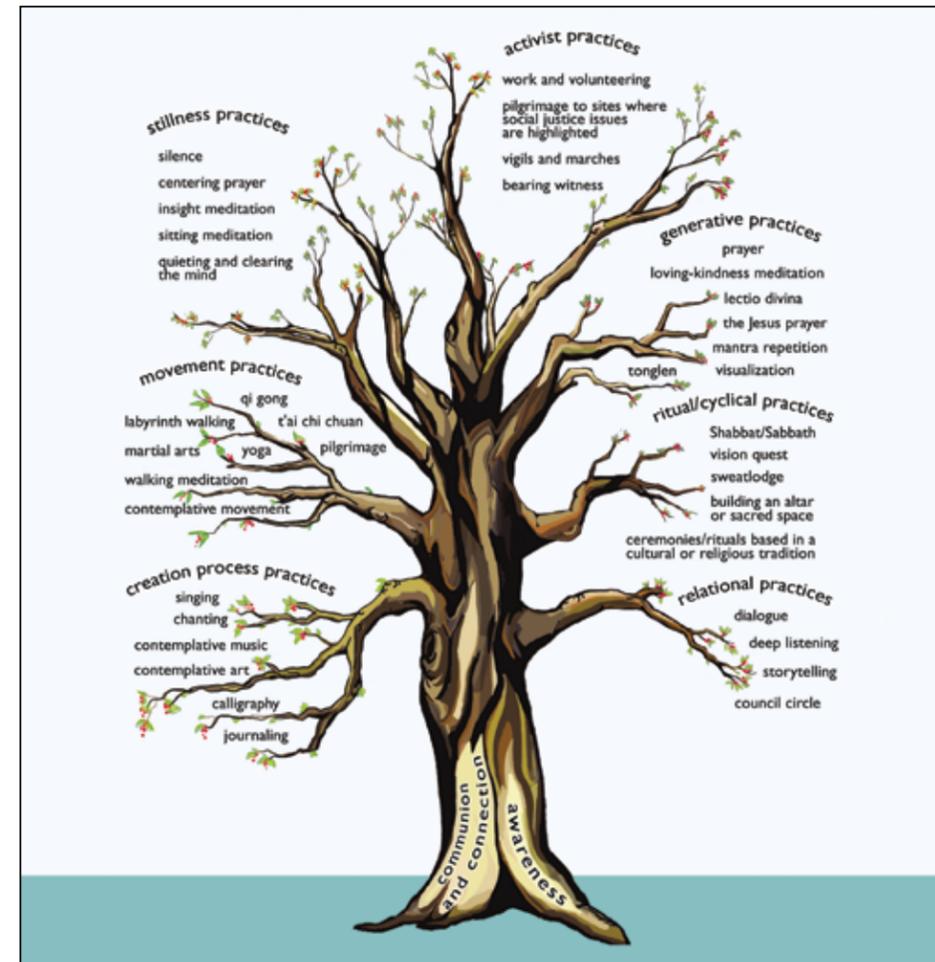
We talk a lot about this idea of grandiosity. You need to find a balance. You want to recognize that very precious uniqueness of what you bring, the beauty of what only you can bring—and yet, simultaneously, you never want to find yourself in a position where you’re saying, “If I weren’t here, this wouldn’t get done,” so that you stay doing what you’re doing longer than it is of benefit to you or the cause you’re trying to serve.

(continued on p. 42)

SIGNS OF VICARIOUS TRAUMA

- **Feeling Helpless and Hopeless** “It’s really hard for me to get out of bed in the morning.”
- **A Sense that One Can Never Do Enough** “There is no way I can ever get all the work done that I should.”
- **Hypervigilance** “I must keep my guard up at all times to keep myself and those around me safe.”
- **Diminished Creativity** “I can’t seem to come up with even a single possible solution to this problem.”
- **Inability to Embrace Complexity** “There is good and bad, right and wrong.”
- **Minimizing** “This person is making a bigger deal of her experience than it really is.”
- **Chronic Exhaustion/Physical Ailments** “I am tired all the time.”
- **Inability to Listen/Deliberate Avoidance** “The best part of my day is when I don’t have to do my job.”
- **Dissociative Moment** “Can you repeat that? My mind was somewhere else.”
- **Sense of Persecution** “My superiors are trying to make my job harder.”
- **Guilt** “It’s hard to enjoy anything good in my life.”
- **Fear** “I always feel like I’m waiting for the other shoe to drop.”
- **Anger and Cynicism** “I may be a little more jaded than I used to be.”
- **Inability to Empathize/Numbness** “Feelings? What feelings?”
- **Addictions** “I can’t start this afternoon’s meeting until I grab a cup of coffee.”
- **Grandiosity: An Inflated Sense of Importance Related to One’s Work** “If I wasn’t here, this wouldn’t get done.”

THE TREE OF CONTEMPLATIVE PRACTICES



The Center for Contemplative Mind in Society, a non-profit organization based in Northampton, MA, provides resources and training for an education that includes reflective insight as well as critical thinking. Contemplative practices offer methods for developing this insight, through skills such as listening, mindfulness, and self-awareness of thoughts and emotions, empathy, and compassion. While contemplative practices are rooted in the religious and spiritual traditions, they have an important place in intellectual and ethical inquiry, including secular educational environments. These practices, when incorporated into a daily practice, can improve overall wellness and promote a state of calm in the individual. For more information, please visit www.contemplativemind.org.

IMAGE SOURCE

The Center for Contemplative Mind in Society



MEDITATION FOR A MINDFUL EXISTENCE

Meditation practice, in essence, is a time of connecting to yourself and your experience of the present moment in a deeper and more direct way. Though there are many styles and methods, meditation can be distinguished from any specific belief system or worldview, and can be seen as a kind of skills training. It is a training in three strengths: **concentration**, **mindfulness**, and **lovingkindness/compassion**.

by Sharon Salzberg

CONCENTRATION

We often notice that our minds tend to be scattered. We think of making a telephone call and end up subsumed in a cascade of associative thinking. Our thoughts return to an incident three years ago, and we become obsessed with regret about not speaking up when we should have. Or our minds leap forward to worry over the intricacies of a situation that might never come to pass. This quality of repeated distraction wastes our life's energy.

Imagine gathering all that energy back into yourself, so that it empowers you, so that it becomes available for you to use consciously. This is what concentration does. Concentration is steadiness of mind, the mental skill we are exercising when we are focused. In meditation we focus on a chosen object of concentration (the breath, a visualization, a phrase) and practice repeatedly letting go of distractions and returning our attention to this object.

MINDFULNESS

Through meditation, we come closer and closer to the actual living reality of our bodies and minds. We do this through refining our power of mindfulness, the ability to connect fully and directly to our experience in the moment, no matter what it is. We see different aspects of our inner world for what they are—passing thoughts and feelings— without becoming lost in habitual reaction.

For instance, we might have the habit of concluding, “If I feel anger it means I’m a bad person,” so we try to deny the anger churning inside. Or our tendency might be to get swept up in the firestorm of anger and lash out. With awareness, we learn to draw close in a skillful way to what we’re feeling, learn more about it, and, based on the insights we gather, make conscious choices about how to respond in any situation.

LOVINGKINDNESS OR COMPASSION

Taking the time to pay careful attention to our experience opens our hearts to loving ourselves genuinely for who we are, with all our foibles and imperfections. When we undertake spiritual practice based on a motivation to learn to love both ourselves and others, we can befriend ourselves no matter what we might be experiencing inside.

Devoting some time to meditation is in itself an act of caring for ourselves. If we are primarily accustomed to taking care of others, this is a bold move. We discover that our own renewal transforms how we relate to the people in our lives. The calm and openness we develop through meditation enables us to see others more clearly and lovingly. We might become more inclined to step forward and deepen our connection to someone, to let go of past hurts more easily, or to offer a friendly gesture to someone we might have ignored before. Through meditation, loving ourselves becomes the gateway to loving others.

HOW DO I DO IT?

Meditation instructions usually sound simple, but following and accomplishing them often proves challenging. Meditation reveals how all the elements of our experience change continually. It is natural in meditation to go through many ups and downs, to encounter both new delights and newly awakened conflicts from the subconscious mind.

Sometimes you will tap into a wellspring of peace. Other times you might feel waves of sleepiness, boredom, anxiety, anger or sadness. Images may arise, old songs might replay, long-buried memories sometimes surface. Instead of feeling discouraged if you end up with sleepiness when you wanted peacefulness, remember that the core components of meditation

are concentration, awareness and lovingkindness. We can practice these no matter what we are experiencing. Success in meditation is measured not in terms of whatever may be happening to us, but rather how we are relating to what is happening.

HERE'S HOW YOU CAN BEGIN:

Sit comfortably, with your back erect, without being strained or overarched. It's fine to sit in a chair or on an arrangement of cushions on the floor. If necessary, you can also lie down. Close your eyes if you feel at ease doing that, or keep them slightly open, without staring or fixing your gaze. Take a few deep breaths, feeling the breath as it enters your nostrils, fills your chest and abdomen, and releases. Then allow the breath to become natural, without forcing it or controlling it. Let your attention rest on the feeling of the natural breath, one breath at a time.

You may find a place where you feel your breath most distinctly: at the nostrils, or the rising/falling motion of your chest or abdomen. If there is a particular place, you can rest your attention there. If you wish, you can silently, very gently, repeat words like “in” “out” to support the awareness of the breath, or perhaps a word meaningful to you, like “peace,” or “love.”

If your mind wanders, don't be concerned. Notice whatever has captured your attention, let go of the thought or feeling, and return to the awareness of the breath. In this way, meditation teaches us gentleness and an ability to forgive our mistakes in life more easily and to go on.

At the end of your meditation period, lovingly acknowledge those you feel connected to—your family or your community, maybe the whole planet. This forms the bridge between our inner work and our resolve to act with more awareness and love in our daily lives. ♥

One of America's leading spiritual teachers and authors, Sharon Salzberg is cofounder of the Insight Meditation Society (IMS) in Barre, Massachusetts. She has played a crucial role in bringing Asian meditation practices to the West. The ancient Buddhist practices of vipassana (mindfulness) and metta (lovingkindness) are the foundations of her work.

john Prendergast

John Prendergast is Co-founder of Enough, the anti-genocide project at the Center for American Progress. John is co-author with Don Cheadle of the forthcoming Random House book, *The Enough Moment*. The following is excerpted from an interview by Peter Hermann. Visit our website to read the interview in its entirety.

“One night in 1983, when I was in high school, I was holed up at my house with another basketball injury, and suddenly this footage comes on the TV, the first footage coming out of the great Ethiopian famine. It was like a rock hit my heart. I just could not believe human misery could exist on that scale. I decided that as soon as

I could walk, I would go.

I spent the next few years traveling in Africa, trying to understand the cause of that extraordinary misery. I dedicated myself to affecting my government’s policy so that it would be a voice of fairness for the people there.

Not to sound melodramatic, but for twenty-five years after that moment in front of the tv, my heart also sank into an abyss. Depression and melancholy were constant companions, and it’s only been in the last few years that I have practiced self-care and addressed some of the underlying roots of that melancholy, the unaddressed issues of my childhood. I started to care for my heart that had slowly, steadily been



encased with defensive walls, not only from the human suffering I had immersed myself in, but also my own past demons. I realized I didn’t have to have a terrible emptiness in my stomach every day, that I didn’t have to be filled with a deep sadness every time I woke up in the morning.

Taking care of my heart also had enormous implications for my work. It has become much more sustainable, because I feel a lightness now, an enthusiasm, a real positivity, whereas before it was all heaviness and difficulty.”

rebekah Windmiller

Rebekah Windmiller is an Expressive Arts Therapist, a licensed Creative Arts Therapist in New York State, and the Director of the New York Expressive Arts Studio Community Workshop.

“Expressive Arts Therapy is a unique, philosophical approach to healing. It is the only form of art therapy that works to integrate all the arts and encourages interplay between them.

My work is very life-inspiring and life generating, despite the trauma and addiction and illness I encounter. The arts are the intermediary between the

struggle and the emergence from trauma. Art is a place where beauty can arise from torment. And artistic expression brings a sense of wonder to the therapeutic experience that is deeply restorative.

This is true not only for my patients but for myself. I have been a dancer and choreographer for 30 years. During that time, there were periods when I wasn’t dancing or expressing myself in this way. I found that, during those times, I would begin to absorb way too much trauma from my work. Vicarious trauma happens slowly, over time. You don’t realize

that it is happening until its effects have taken root. For me, dancing is sustenance, it allows me to move, not to get stuck. It is a real mind/body experience.

For anyone contemplating work in a trauma-related field, I would most definitely encourage you to keep your own creative life alive. Whatever moves you—even if it is just 10 minutes a day, doodling in a sketchbook—that creativity will sustain you and allow you to approach your work, and your life, from a healthy place.”

sarah Tofte



Sarah Tofte is a Researcher on Sexual Violence for Human Rights Watch who wrote last year’s report exposing the rape kit backlog in Los Angeles and across the country.

“I want this to be a marathon for me, not a sprint. The things you encounter during the day—the pain or the frustration—can keep you awake at night, or they can drive you to work harder. You have to find comfort in the things you do accomplish, rather than dwell on the things you don’t, or can’t. And you have to give yourself a break. You have to remind yourself that you didn’t create the problem, and that you’re not responsible for solving it. But that can be hard to keep in your head.

Survivors I am in touch with are usually talking to me because they reported their rape and they wanted a response that they didn’t get. This shakes them, and they start questioning themselves. ‘Am I somehow at fault? What did I do wrong?’ It becomes really

hard for them to understand or make any sense of. And the levels of despair that touch these people, it all bleeds over. Sometimes it feels like change just isn’t coming fast enough. So maybe I can help it come faster if I work 10, 12, or 16 hours a day. But that’s not reality.

In the beginning of my career, I’d feel so compelled to try to make everything better as fast as I could for these victims. But I’ve learned that, sometimes, just sitting with them, listening to their despair, allowing them to feel it and express it, without trying to fix it all right away, is very effective. So many of them just want to be heard.

I’ve seen a lot of colleagues burn out from the stresses of this job. So I try to make time in my life for family and friends. That’s very important. I have

an 8-month-old son and I make it a point to be home for bedtime. It isn’t always easy, but I’ve made that a priority. And I think it helps to center me. See, I choose to do this work. And implicit in that choice is a commitment to be well myself. I want and need to be present for the victims who come to me for help. One thing I do—and maybe it is silly—but I keep some mini dark chocolates with me. In the Senate building, where I often am, there’s this beautiful picture window. And sometimes, after a particularly taxing day, I’ll just stop and look out that window and eat a little dark chocolate. It isn’t much, but it’s a moment of beauty, you know? It’s the sum of those small moments that add up to a sustainable life.”

“When...Joyful Heart got involved with the problem of untested rape kits in Los Angeles, they truly energized the effort to eliminate the rape kit backlog. Their collaborative spirit mobilized the Mayor, Police Chief, and City Council and helped save the rape kit testing program from being de-funded.”

At present, there is a backlog of more than 180,000 untested rape kits in police storage facilities in the United States. To find out more about this issue and what you can do to bring about change, please visit www.joyfulheartfoundation.org.



healing is happening

“You have started a movement, like a drop of water in a still pond, that is going to have a long-reaching impact for healers and the clients they serve.”

“I think I’m on my way to finding my true center.”

“Enlightening, caring, refreshing, emotional. You are on the right path. Your message is a message of hope and life.”

“Words cannot describe the impact this experience has had on my life.”

“I am so utterly restored.”

“I sat with my clients today and felt...present. I can actually feel the difference, and I bet they can, too.”

“Time to change, time to care, time to find wellness.”

“...medicine for the soul, the spirit...”

PHOTOGRAPHERS: CATHRINE WHITE, MAILE ZAMBUTO AND LISA DENNING.

yolanda Jimenez

Yolanda Jimenez has been the Commissioner of the Mayor's Office to Combat Domestic Violence in New York City since 2002.



"We get the newspapers delivered to the office every day. They get marked with little yellow tabs, highlighting a domestic violence incident. Each yellow tab represents someone we weren't able to help. Each yellow tab is someone I wish I could have touched, someone I wish would have had contact with one of our agencies. Those little yellow tabs are proof that the conversation in the community needs to be ongoing.

Despite this, I believe unequivocally that the rewards of doing this work far

outweigh the challenges. When I visit our centers and see children reading with their mothers, I see more than just that. I see the bond that's being created; I know the backstory of the withdrawn child and family in crisis. To witness that stabilization, even just in that moment, is so heartening. Children don't need to be old enough to verbalize the violence they're witnessing at home to be affected by it. So seeing small moments of peace or stability or happiness restored to these women and

their children is deeply rewarding.

Knowing that our work is in some way helping is in itself a source of strength for me. Finding the time to care for myself is an ongoing challenge, though I try to make it a priority. I live by the water and walk there often, a practice that I find tremendously healing.

The little yellow tabs, they'll still be there in the newspapers on my desk in the morning. But to know we're touching people's lives in a positive way helps keep me going."

oscar Smith

Oscar Smith is a member of the NYPD Scuba Team. He sat down with *Reunion's* Peter Hermann, to talk about his work and the toll it takes. Read the interview at www.joyfulheartfoundation.org.

PETER HERMANN: Can you go up to another cop that you know well and say, "I'm having a hard time."

OSCAR SMITH: That's a sign of weakness. Cops all have that honor thing. Like a bunch of Spartans running around. They have organizations where you can talk, like group therapy, one-on-one therapy. But then guys aren't going to see you as the pillar you're supposed to be. "The one who's going to cry is also going to die."

How do you think things should be? What's your ideal scenario to avoid burnout in the police department?

The ideal thing would be a group where you can talk inside each precinct. It would be with the people you work with, and you'd get together to talk and share things. And ideally, your commanding officers would be twenty-year veterans. So they've seen it all, and they can say to you, "I know exactly what you're going through. You did your best. The

guy jumped off the building. You tried to talk him down. It didn't work." Not many cops get praise for their work. That would help them not feel so guilty.

What are you most proud of in your work?

The people I help. Knowing I left an impression on them. Like when people sit down and they tell a story about a bad cop, someone will say, "You know, I met this one cop, and he was fantastic." And that one good story will hopefully pass on to other people.

judi McCreary

McCreary is a producer and writer who has penned plots for many primetime dramas, including *Law & Order: SVU*, a task that takes her into the darkest precincts of what human beings can do.

"I've worked in television for fifteen years and specifically around issues of sexual violence for ten. Although I frequently get story ideas or inspiration from the very real abuse cases in the criminal justice system, I always remember that I'm viewing it from a distance. I'm neither the victim nor the first responder. I'm a storyteller, trying to give voice to a never-ending malady.

But even though there's a buffer of distance, I'm still very much affected by the case files I read and the photos I see. Sometimes I find it difficult to get back into the light and I struggle with

moments of depression and despair. I'm reluctant to latch onto vicarious trauma as the reason for this because I'm not an individual who deals with the real life horror associated with sexual trauma. I don't want to diminish what those healers do by claiming in any way that I'm like them.

However, I do live in a very dark place. I have to in order to depict the horrible truth in this type of fiction. I do make efforts to get back into the light, so to speak. I take solace in my family. I find peace by spending time with my daughters. I take pride in my young

grandsons, laughing at their antics and thinking of all the things I need to teach them so they can become good and decent men in the future.

Survivors need to know they're not alone. I know firsthand how much you just want to crawl into a cave and lick your wounds alone. Without real support, real fellowship, these symptoms can fester. My real hope is that if anyone who's been hurt and is in the process of cave dwelling will relate to a moment in an episode and realize there are people out there who'll help them without judgment."

elena Hull



Elena Hull is a licensed creative arts therapist, a licensed marriage and family therapist and the clinical director of Midtown Marriage and Family Therapy center. She is also a Retreat Specialist with Joyful Heart and helped to create the Foundation's retreat model.

"Working in a healing profession, your greatest capacity is how you respond to something. If you're stressed out or anxious or you don't have the time,

you're not responding to what is happening; you're cutting off from it because it is too much. So much of working with suffering is having the spaciousness and

the time to be fully present for what is happening. As healers, we have to hold our own wellness as our number one responsibility."

Lani Yamasaki



Lani Kamau Yamasaki is the Founder and Executive Director of *'Ano'ano Aloha*, a charitable non-profit focused on community social economic development and also operates Lani Yamasaki Communications & Design. For nearly three decades, she has worked within her community to facilitate trauma recovery and empower individuals.

“Holistic healing is the *kuleana*—lineal privilege and responsibility my family has honored since ancient Hawai'i. Generally, traditionally schooled Hawaiians do not apply the term 'healer' to themselves. As humans, we are the vessel through which *Ke Akua*—God and our *'aumakua*—ancestors impart their influence to facilitate healing by working directly with the client's spirit and *'aumakua*. As inherently spiritual beings, everyone has the ability to heal themselves. For me to participate in the process at all, permission must be granted. Trust must be established for healing to begin to occur spiritually, mentally and physically.

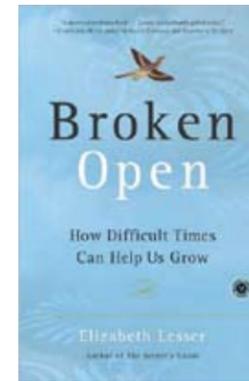
It can be challenging to work cross-culturally. Many traditions integral to the

Hawaiian experience are usually not understood by mainstream Western culture. To facilitate healing within any community—whether it's Hawaiian, Filipino, or Chinese—respect is essential. You must acknowledge and understand the values, customs and belief systems that have shaped the person you're serving. This must be integrated or trust cannot be established and healing will not occur.

Hawaiian culture has a spiritual foundation and values. Paramount in healing is the value *aloha*—love and compassion. When *aloha* is exchanged, it means “my spirit honors the divinity in your spirit.” Achieving *lokahi* (a value) is important. It reflects a balanced relationship between *Ke Akua* and the spiritual

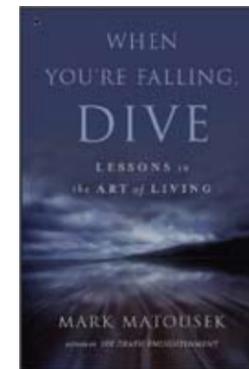
realm, humanity and nature. Health and sustainability are achieved when these realms are in balance. If the *'aina*—earth is healthy, so are we. It's essential for us to do our personal homework before we try to facilitate healing. We must be *pono*—in balance ourselves. If we are not *pono* and bring our baggage to work, then we compound the *kaumaha*—sadness and grief, inadvertently increasing the trauma of our clients and colleagues.

I release it all at the end of the day through the practice of *ho'oponopono*. As the sun sinks into the dreamtime, I release any burdens to the care of God and my ancestors and ask for their help in achieving inner peace and balance. I ask for their guidance in my life. And, I express my gratitude.”



BROKEN OPEN: How Difficult Times Can Help Us Grow

By Elizabeth Lesser, co-founder of the Omega Institute, the world's largest center for spiritual retreat and personal growth



WHEN YOU'RE FALLING, DIVE: Lessons in the Art of Living

By Mark Matousek, co-chair of V-Men, an international organization to end violence against women



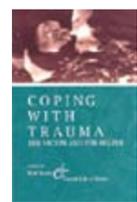
HELP FOR THE HELPER: Self-Care Strategies for Managing

Burnout and Stress

by Babette Rothschild with Marjorie Rand

A valuable tool for any trauma

worker, Rothschild's book is based on neurobiological and social psychology research. It is a frank assessment of the challenges trauma professionals face in maintaining their own wellness, as well as a guide implementing better self-care practices to sustain personal wellness and professional integrity.



COPING WITH TRAUMA: The Victim and the Helper

Edited by Rod Watts and David J de L Horne

This concise and accessible book brings together the

insights and contributions of leading Australian trauma specialists. *Coping with Trauma* examines the impact traumatic experiences have on those who survive them as well as those who work to guide survivors beyond trauma. Vividly written and extensively researched, this a valuable resource for any healer.

Life throws curve balls. Sometimes they hit us head on, knock the wind out of us, leave us lying on the ground, shaken and stunned. We have two choices: We can stay there on the ground, wondering what just happened; or we can stand up, brush ourselves off and steady ourselves for whatever is coming next.

In *Broken Open: How Difficult Times Can Help Us Grow*, Elizabeth Lesser shares how she learned to give herself permission to come undone in challenging moments. In those moments of doubt and confusion, she sat with her suffering—rather than deny it—and she cradled herself in the knowledge that when the suffering passed, she would begin anew. Lesser writes: “When we descend all the way down to the bottom of a loss, and dwell patiently with an open heart in the darkness and pain, we can bring back up with us the sweetness of life and the exhilaration of inner growth. When there is nothing left to lose, we find the true self—the self that is whole, the self that is enough, the self that no longer looks to others for definition, or completion, or anything but the companionship on the journey.” In the depths of her despair, Lesser was met with discovery.

Mark Matousek embraces this same idea of plunging—despite fear or pain—into self-discovery amidst suffering. In his part-memoir, part-guidebook, *When You're Falling, Dive: Lessons in the Art of Living*, he compares humans to the American lobster, “which dives for a few days each year to the ocean floor to slough off its old shell and wait for a new one, a naked, pink-skinned glob of flesh trying not to get smashed too hard before its second skin grows back.” To accept and embrace this vulnerability is a transformative first step toward healing.

Both Lesser and Matousek explore their own metamorphoses and also the life-altering experiences of others. Spiritual teacher Ram Dass spoke at length with Matousek about the stroke that left him partially paralyzed. Despite the challenges he has encountered, Dass now considers the stroke to be an act of grace, one that has given him the gift of perspective. Dr. Rachel Remen, who was diagnosed with Crohn's disease at age 15, tells Matousek: “When we try to avoid loss or plow through our pain, our lives are actually diminished. On the other hand, there's an extraordinary wisdom and clarity that emerges in people who genuinely meet their pain, not in theory but in life.... The process of wounding actually awakens us to our strength.”

The ways in which we suffer are unique to us, but the reality of suffering is universal, as is the healing that must follow. Lesser and Matousek explore this theme deeply and honestly in their respective books. And those curve balls we take in the eye, the ribs—the heart? Lesser and Matousek would likely both argue that no matter what kind, how hard, or even how many come our way, we all have the ability—and more importantly, the choice—to turn toward the pain. And by honoring our suffering, we move toward healing and self-discovery.

—By Melissa Glassman

PEACEFUL RENEWAL PLAYLIST

1
WENYUKELA
by Ladysmith Black Mambazo

2
**FOR THE JOY
OF IT ALL**
by Karunesh

3
**GENTLE
AWAKENING**
(From Peace Dance)
by Dean Evenson & Soundings Ensemble

4
QUIET
by Paul Simon

5
LONG TIME SUN
by Snam Kaur

6
ARIADNE
by Dead Can Dance

7
MERMAID
by Sade

8
RIVER
by Enya

9
LIGHT & HEALING
by Soulfood

10
**MAY THE ROAD
RISE TO MEET YOU**
by Jackopierce

10 EASY STEPS TO CREATING A PEACEFUL HOME RETREAT

You, yourself, as much as anybody in the entire universe, deserve your love and affection.
— Buddha

By Allison Talis

WHEN YOU ENTER A RETREAT CENTER, you are submerged in a sea of calm: your shoulders relax, your breath deepens, your parasympathetic nervous system is engaged and relaxation begins. The words form in your mind: “I wish I could stay here forever.”

What is it about these places that captures and delights our senses and fills us with a sense of calm and peace? More importantly, how can we create this sanctuary for ourselves in our own homes?

A good place to start is getting clear on your intention. What do you desire from your retreat center? We all need a place where we can take refuge, a space to seek clarity, a personal space where we can withdraw, be still and relax. For some, that space is also one to reflect, pray and meditate.

I live in a small Manhattan apartment, so setting up my retreat space took some creativity. I wanted to infuse my home with the love, gratitude and healing energy I felt in these larger retreat centers.

1 A grounding Welcome Home mat greets me at my doorstep. A small Om symbol hangs outside the door. These details welcome me home with a sense of peace.

2 When I come in the door, my shoes come off. This makes me more comfortable and I am consciously not bringing in the “muck” from outside.

3 Sometimes I make a ritual of lighting a candle for myself, my family and all beings, before I do anything else. This is a simple but powerful act, reminding me to imbue my time and space with awareness, love and compassion.

4 Try putting on soothing music, instead of the television. It can be your focus or simply the backdrop as you read, journal, cook dinner, do your work or just close your eyes and breathe.

5 No yelling in the house. Make it a rule and lead by example.

6 Alone time can be a challenge to schedule, so consider including your loved ones in some of your practices. Children generally enjoy doing yoga poses and breathing exercises. Have journaling, painting or other creative sessions with your family. This may even enhance performance when it comes time for homework, since a relaxed, open mind can approach academic work with more ease. If incorporating your loved ones is not an option, or you’re really craving some time alone, there’s always the shower. Splurge. Buy yourself some delicious lavender sea salts or scrubs. Honor yourself and your body with gratitude and care.

7 Place pictures of beautiful and peaceful images throughout your home. Use images of anything that soothes you—pictures of water, spiritual images, gardens—anything that upon viewing brings you a sense of peace.

8 We may also use objects to remind us to relax. On any mantle or counter-top, placing little statues of anything you love can create a sacred space—angels, animals, stones, crystals, religious icons, pictures or anything that resonates with you.

9 Essential oils like Lavender, Roman Chamomile, Clary Sage and Neroli Rose have calming and relaxing properties. For full effect, be sure you use 100 percent essential oil. Use them to scent your sheets, your clothing or your space.

10 Take the time: Whether it is five minutes or sixty, begin to make time for yourself in your retreat space. Once it is a part of your routine, it will seem as simple and effective as other daily tasks.

The more you can integrate wellness practices into your everyday life, the deeper the root they will take, thus enhancing your life and the lives of those around you. The size of your retreat space is not important; it is the intention you put into it and the quality of presence you bring to it that matter. ♥



MAKING A JOYFUL NOISE

SERVICE EVENT: LOS ANGELES



Last November, on a sunny Saturday morning in LA, the Joyful Heart Foundation joined philosophy to raise awareness about the need for domestic violence support services throughout California. Facing one of the worst state budget crises in history, the State of California eliminated their domestic violence services budget, forcing many shelters to turn away or cut services to families in need.

To respond to the crisis, philosophy and the Joyful Heart Foundation brought together more than 75 volunteers, including advocates, JHF Board members, survivors and supporters to assemble 600 "healing and wellness kits, one for every domestic violence shelter bed in Los Angeles. The kits were designed to meet the immediate needs of women in shelters and also to inspire them with a sense of joy and possibility in the midst of this crisis.

THE KITS INCLUDED:

- a personal message from Mariska Hargitay
- philosophy's Joyful Heart charity shower gel
- apparel by Beyond Yoga, Liz Claiborne and Michael Stars
- a journal from Compendium and a pen from TransPerfect
- tote bag, provided by art of grace
- terry cloth robe by Baltic Linen
- a LUNA bar

PHOTOGRAPHY: MEGAN SOREL

Top: Mariska Hargitay helps load a truck with 600 wellness kits for Los Angeles area domestic violence shelters. Bottom: Volunteers who helped assemble and deliver wellness kits.



CREATE YOUR OWN SERVICE EVENT

Be the change you wish to see in the world.
— Mahatma Gandhi

Facing issues as daunting and pervasive as sexual assault, domestic violence or child abuse can be overwhelming. The scope of these problems is so large that it can feel there is simply no way to have an impact. But you *can* make a difference.

- ▶ Call your local domestic violence shelter to ask them for a wish list. Often they'll request items like toiletries, diapers, laundry detergent, school supplies or make-up.
- ▶ Host a drive at your school, your workplace, your sorority or in your neighborhood, asking people to donate wish list items. Encourage those who donate to write a short note of encouragement to accompany their donation.
- ▶ Deliver the collected items to the shelter of your choice as a show of support and solidarity. Sometimes the smallest actions have the largest impact. That's what we call making a joyful noise!



TAKING ON GOLIATH

By Ella Burnside

On November 8, 2008, my English teacher gave my class a paper to write: the assignment was to write about something in the world we wanted to change, and then do it. I wrote about ending sexual violence and domestic abuse. Then I got some friends together and organized a fundraiser for Joyful Heart. By the end of the fundraiser, my team and I raised over ten thousand dollars. All from an English paper assignment.

My name is Ella Burnside; I am 16 years old, and a 10th grade student at Christian Academy in Louisville, Kentucky.

The assignment was designed to get us thinking about an issue about which we cared deeply, be it recycling, animal testing, or even just a petition to get a stop sign installed in a neighborhood where a lot of children play. For me, it was a paper on the issues of sexual assault, domestic violence, and child abuse. More specifically, it was

helping the Joyful Heart Foundation.

Armed with this big, awesome idea for a fundraiser, I knew that there was a lot I still needed to learn before the actual planning could begin. It was also apparent to me that I would need an extraordinary amount of support from many different people to pull this thing off. I began by learning statistics, talking to a Special Victims Unit detective, and really searching my own heart to understand where my passion was coming from. I needed to make sure that my motives were pure, and that I really did want to take on this huge task. I also connected with Joyful Heart. I began working with Christine Russo, Joyful Heart's program manager; her help and endless support proved to be invaluable and was an enormous blessing to me personally.

The next step in the planning process was developing a team. I already had the help of Christine, and the unwavering support of my parents, but I knew I needed

more help. I built a team of seven friends, my aunt, and my grandmother. With my dad's input I was also able to enlist the help of professional graphic designer and communications guru, Cary Meyer, from Southeast Christian Church in Louisville, Kentucky. Mr. Meyer designed the invitations and logo for the fundraiser. He also helped me with some ideas for the name of my fundraiser based on the theme that had been chosen. We decided to name the event Taking on Goliath, for many reasons. First and foremost, my faith in God is a very big part of who I am, so naturally God was the center of my fundraiser from day one. The other reason was the simple fact that I am a young person taking on an adult and Goliath-sized problem. It helped that our friend Danny Flanigan and his band, The Rain Chorus, had written a song called "Goliath" with lyrics that fit the theme perfectly.

(continued on p. 42)

PHOTOGRAPHY: JASON SCHINDLER

Clockwise: 1. Ella Burnside 2. The team: Top row: (left) Laura Cook, Jordan Jarboe, Shannon Inmann, Ella Burnside, Mary Proctor, Elizabeth Britton, Dr. Judith Peoples. Bottom Row: (Left) Hannah Johnston, Kristen Shaffer, Makenna Mowery. 3. Danny Flanigan 4. Fundraiser guests

Robin Renzi

HERO OF THE HEART

Me & Ro jewelry designer reveals her activist side. She's passionate, she's determined—and she's turning up the volume on the issue of sexual violence.

By Meaghan Morelli

CREATIVITY comes easily for Robin Renzi, the prolific designer and CEO behind the New York City-based jewelry company Me & Ro. Taking her inspiration from ancient cultures, the natural world, and “the human need both to adorn and to communicate through jewelry,” Renzi’s work is at once old and new. With contemporary designs blending with thousand-year-old beads, fine metals and precious stones come together in unique, elegant, understated ways. Renzi founded Me & Ro in 1991. Since then, her designs have adorned celebrities and found their way into feature films and several television shows. More significantly, however, they have raised public consciousness for issues which

Renzi is deeply passionate about, including sexual assault and domestic violence.

Renzi is the creative mind behind Joyful Heart’s signature item, the Fearlessness pendant. A small pendant with a big impact, it is now worn not only by Joyful Heart founder and president, Mariska Hargitay, in her television role as Detective Olivia Benson on *Law & Order: SVU*, but by thousands of Joyful Heart’s supporters. Reunion’s Managing Editor, Meaghan Morelli, sat down with Renzi to discuss her commitment to Joyful Heart and the issues of violence prevention and healing.

MEAGHAN MORELLI: You say that you are “inspired by the human need both to adorn and to communicate through jewelry.” Most of your work does seem designed to communicate.

ROBIN RENZI: Jewelry through the ages has traditionally been a deeply personal thing. It’s used to mark all the important milestones in life: marriage, birth, anniversaries. In ancient Egypt, when you died, you’d take your jewelry with you. It’s a very personal form of self-expression. Now, pieces are handed down from generation to generation and they hold so much meaning and history. Jewelry marks the important moments in our lives and then it outlives us. These pieces that I design, that I wear, someday, my daughter will



PHOTOGRAPHY: BLAISE HAYWARD

Left: Me & Ro designer and founder, Robin Renzi, with her daughter, Ella. Right: Joyful Heart founder and president, Mariska Hargitay, with Renzi.



PHOTOGRAPHY: MICHAEL PARMELEE

“I mean, quite frankly, I know very, very few women who haven’t experienced some kind of sexual violence or exploitation. I have a daughter. **This is a very important cause to me.**”

wear them, and maybe her daughter. I’ll be gone, but the jewelry and the sentiment will remain. Not everything I design is necessarily meaningful; sometimes jewelry is just beautiful. But most of my work captures a little bit of my heart.

MM: And the Fearlessness necklace, Joyful Heart’s signature piece? It certainly carries a message.

RR: The Fearlessness pendant is like a tattoo. Wearers seem to infuse it with a real power or significance, which in turn gives strength to the wearer. It’s like a way to manifest the reality of courage—or a way for a survivor to embrace her courage, to acknowledge it. People don’t talk about this issue—rape, sexual abuse. I mean, it’s better now than it was 20 years ago, but people still don’t want to talk about it. And there are still so many misconceptions. But these girls wear this necklace now, they identify with it. Then other girls see the necklace and wonder “What does that mean?” It’s another way to get people talking about this issue.

MM: Mariska—or her character, Detective Benson—wears the Fearlessness pendant on her show, *Law and Order: SVU*. How did that come about?

RR: When Mariska saw the pendant—someone on the set showed it to her for the first time—she really related to the word and to the feeling it inspires. She’s so sensitive and she really appreciated both the aesthetic and what was behind it. The fact that she’s wearing the necklace now and taking on this violence every week on her show and through Joyful Heart—she’s busting down the walls around this. She’s dismantling the taboo of staying silent. She’s talking about it. She’s giving survivors a voice. And that gives young girls the courage to talk about it, too. It’s all about overcoming that fear.

MM: How did you come to support Joyful Heart? And in such a dedicated and meaningful way?

RR: Mariska called me up and asked if I would help her out. I said yes before she was finished asking the question. This is a cause that’s really close to my heart. One of my closest friends suffered through this. I mean, quite frankly, I know very, very few women who haven’t experienced some kind of sexual violence or exploitation. I have a daughter. This is a very important cause to me. And, you know, working with Joyful Heart makes me realize how important it is for people to

make these changes themselves, instead of leaving it up to others. It’s like that Margaret Meade quote: “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.” I love that quote. And it’s true.

MM: By contributing so much of your time, effort and artistic talent to Joyful Heart, what change do you hope to promote?

RR: I want to end it. No more rape. No more abuse. Period. It should never, ever happen. Short of that, I want people who suffer this violence—every girl, every boy, and every woman—to have a place to go to get everything they need: medical care, comfort, healing, and refuge. I want them to be believed. I want them to know that they are not alone. When it happens, there needs to be this public outcry, this collective “How dare he!” We need to change the social consciousness. I believe Joyful Heart is doing that. With someone as visible and as fearless as Mariska at the forefront of this organization and this movement, we are starting to, like I said, bust down the walls and break through the taboos. Joyful Heart is making a real and honest difference. And I want to help in any way I can. ♥

TAKING ON GOLIATH

(continued from p. 39)

Our efforts and energy were rewarded: on September 17, 2009, my idea for a Joyful Heart fundraiser became a reality. There were one hundred people in attendance and many more who made donations. The fundraiser was an enormous success and we raised over ten thousand dollars for Joyful Heart. I am extremely proud of what my team and I were able to accomplish together; God blessed my fundraiser with an intensity that still takes my breath away. However, although my fundraiser has concluded, and was an intense, beautiful success, the issues of sexual assault and domestic violence are far from resolved.

People tell me all of the time how proud they are of what I did. However, I did not do it alone. I am very proud and blessed to have been part of such a wonderful team, to have such generous sponsors, and to have so many businesses that were willing to donate silent auction items to the fundraiser.

Since the start of my fundraiser I have said that there is a big disconnect between watching a T.V. show like *SVU*, and planning a fundraiser. It is the difference between being aware of a problem, and having the passionate response of "I have no choice; I have to do something." I don't believe that passion like that comes from a person; passion like that comes from something bigger.

The idea that "for every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction" reiterates to me how much it is going to take to reverse the problem we have on our hands. Sexual assault is a Goliath-sized issue and if we are going to get anywhere in the battle against it, it is going to take a Goliath-like number of passionate Davids to step up and do something. When Joyful Heart talks about our society needing a 'Joyful Revolution,' they are telling the truth. It is going to take a 'Joyful Revolution' to enable us to beat Goliath. ♥

WELLNESS WARRIOR

(continued from p. 24)

In Trauma Stewardship, there are people who take care of people; there are people who take care of the planet; there are people who take care of animals. There was that horrible story of the frogs: the man who saves the frogs from extinction and suddenly there's a disease and they all die. But how do you compare the level of suffering in a child services worker with someone who's dealing with frogs?

We are so seduced by this pull to compare suffering. That is a path I never want to walk down. You know, politically we get into those conversations where we ask: who had it worse historically, Blacks or Jews, bisexual folks or transgender folks? Whatever it is. And it is just rampant in the workplace as well, where we are set up to compete against one another. It has a tremendous amount to do with systematic oppression and how that plays out in societies and communities. I will never engage in a conversation comparing suffering. I'm happy to help articulate distinctions about how trauma sits differently on different people and different causes, but nothing good comes from arguing about who's got it worse. Sometimes we need to be strategic with resources, but asking whether an oncologist at a children's hospital has it worse than someone who works at the Humane Society is rooted in a false notion of scarcity. And what I have found is that there is space in this world for everybody's suffering. And many would say that there are also sufficient resources available to alleviate that suffering if we can interact with it in deliberate, intentional and mindful ways.

Well, you are a spectacular resource for doing just that. Thank you for your great and profound work. ♥

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HEARTSHOP



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HEARTSHOP



4

1. MICHAEL STARS: SPREADING THE JOY!

Michael Stars teamed with Joyful Heart founder and president, Mariska Hargitay, combining their creativity to create a gorgeous, limited-edition charity tee. For every tee purchased, Michael Stars will donate another tee to a woman in need and \$5 per purchase to the Joyful Heart Foundation.

This collection consists of four styles featuring empowering words such as Love, Heal and Survival, inspired by Joyful Heart's mission. Each style comes in black or white. Tees are 100% Supima Cotton and made in the USA.

2. ME&RO FEARLESSNESS BRACELET

Me&Ro designer Robin Renzi has created a Fearlessness bracelet commemorating Joyful Heart's 5-year anniversary and honoring our mission to heal, educate and empower survivors of sexual assault, domestic violence and child abuse and shed light into the darkness that surrounds these issues.

There are four versions of this piece available for women, two in 10K gold and two in sterling silver, and a fifth variation available for men in sterling silver.

The slate measures 7/8" long by 3/8" wide and is inscribed with "Fearlessness" on the front and "Joyful Heart 2005 - 2010" on the back.

100% of the net proceeds from the sale of the bracelet go directly to the Joyful Heart Foundation.

3. FRAN'S CHOCOLATES "BOX OF JOY"

This collection features the award-winning Gray and Smoked Salt Caramels from Seattle-based artisan chocolatier Fran's Chocolates. The Salted Caramels are made with organic ingredients and offer a delicious mingling of complex flavors—rich, smooth chocolate, soft and buttery caramel and the unexpected boldness of the gray and smoked salt.

The "Box of Joy" includes an assortment of (19) Gray Salt Caramels in dark chocolate, (19) Smoked Salt Caramels in milk chocolate, and two (2) Red Foil Wrapped 65% Dark Chocolate Hearts that arrive in a brown linen box finished with a hand-tied satin ribbon.

Fran's Chocolates is proud to support Joyful Heart and 50% of the net proceeds from each sale of a Fran's "Box of Joy" are donated to the Joyful Heart Foundation.

4. TINY PINE PRESS GRATITUDE CARDS BE JOYFUL. BE GRATEFUL. PASS IT ON.

These beautifully crafted cards make spreading the message of gratitude a little easier. Letterpress printed on 100% cotton using soy ink, these cards also announce your respect for the environment. Each card features a delicate Swarovski crystal on the front and the Joyful Heart mission statement on the back. With each purchase, you will create a ripple of gratitude, extending all the way to Joyful Heart program participants, since all the proceeds from each sale will benefit Joyful Heart programming and the survivors we serve. All that generosity makes all of us at Joyful Heart very grateful.

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