Empowered Joice

INTERACTIVE E-ZINE | SPRING 2021

STORIES OF HOPE AND HEALING

...WARRIOR'S SECRETS

...LOST HER, FOUND ME

...A LOVE LETTER TO SAFETY

... BREAKING THE SILENCE OF INCEST



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INSIDE

FROM THE EDITOR WHY AN INTERACTIVE E-ZINE? 6

The joy and power of an interactive E-zine...

APRIL IS SAAM — SEXUAL ABUSE AWARENESS MONTH

The exciting part is a series of Facebook Live conversations...

OPPRESSION

Oppression is the cause of sexual abuse. Each time I read another sexual abuse story...

HOLLY PERREAULT ...WARRIOR'S SECRETS At the end of that show I walked over to...

TRICIA SCHULTHEIS ...LOST HER, FOUND ME

14

6

7

8

It was not until I hit my lowest point physically, mentally, emotionally...

MICHELLE WHITE HART ...SAFETY, TRUTH AND INTIMACY

I somehow skipped over this vital awareness that...

CLAIRE O'LEARY ... BREAKING THE SILENCE **OF INCEST**

I couldn't voice my opinions or ask...

20

28









BUILDING RESILIENCE IF SOMEONE YOU KNOW IS IN CRISIS

If you or someone you know is in immediate danger and needs...

ARE YOU READY TO SHARE YOUR STORY

33

36

40

33

Giving voice to your story helps you heal. Seeing it, hearing it...

RACHEL GRANT MY TWELVE COMMANDMENTS 34

Through the years, I have found that coming back to and reconnecting with...

MICHELLE WHITE HART A LOVE LETTER TO SAFETY

You can't heal what you can't feel. Which doesn't mean...

MICHELLE WHITE HART **RECEPTIVITY TRAINING TO** BUILD SAFETY IN THE BODY

You have treasures buried within, waiting to be unearthed...

WE SURVIVED ... WE THRIVE 43

We Survived ...We Thrive is a sponsored page that allows survivors to...



















13



WHY AN **INTERACTIVE E-ZINE?**

The joy and power of an interactive E-zine is that you can explore to your heart's content.

Simply click on an image or orange link to view a video or see read more in depth information.

Click on a photo to get insights on that person or an artist's image to peruse through additional art from that artist.

Listen to the authors' sharing their stories on audio and video. Explore video and see the glory of story through movement. Enjoy additional art or buy a print if you fall in love.

Explore to your hearts content.

APRIL IS SAAM — SEXUAL ABUSE AWARENESS MONTH

As you can imagine, it was a busy month for those of us who are advocates for sexual abuse survivors.

I chose to use social media to create awareness this year. I included encouraging posts for survivors, self-care reminders for advocates and activists especially during this busy time and of course information for the public:

- What to do when someone you know discloses their abuse
- Facts like over 30% of women and 7% of men have been sexually assaulted as a child
- The repercussions of sexual abuse
- How to start a conversation with your kids about sexual assault and consent
- The financial burden of sexual abuse/assault
- Crisis Information

And more...

The exciting part is a series of Facebook Live conversations and the grand finale, Celebrating Voices Heard where we came together as a group of survivors and advocates in conversation on April 30th. It's only the beginning...

Join us on Facebook for ongoing conversations. The Facebook Live conversations are continuing on Wednesdays at Noon Mountain Time. Celebrating Voices Heard will be an annual event and is expected to grow exponentially over the coming years.

FROM THE EDITOR ... OPPRESSION



Oppression by Claire O'Leary

Oppression is the cause of sexual abuse. Each time I read another sexual abuse story, I'm reminded that we as women are still oppressed—sexual abuse being the worst of it. But, we can still heal.

Holly Perreault in Warrior's Secrets talks about the secrets we keep and what triggers us to finally open up and share that we've been abused. My personal story, Breaking the Silence of Incest, depicts how I used writing and art to break my silence and what I discovered about myself in the process.

In her article Lost Her, Found Me and her poetry sprinkled throughout, Tricia Schultheis reminds us that we all have so many different stories of trauma. We're sexually abused or assaulted by our parents, siblings, neighbor or stranger

then we live in silence, afraid, embarrassed, filled with self blame and shame and we lose ourselves in the process.

We store all of these emotions in our bodies, struggle with the effects for years—substance abuse, dissociation, eating disorders, disease, anxiety, PTSD, compulsions, depression... feeling unsafe in so many ways. Yet, somehow, we survive—even thrive.

Michelle White Hart shares her story of overcoming feeling unsafe in *Safety*, *Truth and Intimacy*. Then in our *Building* Resilience section she gives us specific ways to overcome lack of safety in A Love Letter to Safety. Rachel Grant shares her rules to live by in My Twelve Commandments. Might we choose to use a similar idea in our life?



Each time Iread another sexual abouse story. I'm reminded that we as women are still of pressedsexual abouse being the worst of it. But, we can still heal.

HOLLY PERREAULT ... WARRIORS SECRETS



Something About Amelia is still available for viewing.

Do you have any secrets that you are keeping? Massive, brutal, awful, revolting, appalling secrets?

My secret was changing the lives of two young children. As a child myself I had no idea until January 9, 1984. I was 14 and watching a TV program called Something About Amelia with Ted Danson and Glenn Close that I realized my secret could be hurting someone else. At the end of that show I walked over to my mom who was 'putting her face on' (as she called it) to go to work and I just blurted out my secret! I often call this my 2X4 moment of GOD hitting me over the head. It was that clear to me: I had to tell someone.

It was the next day when I got my first glimpse into the destruction of this secret. I was with two detectives and a social worker at my step-sister and -brother's school. I can still see it today, sitting in a room off the cafeteria holding both of their tiny hands and with my heart beating out of my chest, I asked them if we shared this same secret.

I would not realize it until 27 years later; but their answer destroyed a piece



Bright eyed Holly at 2-years old

of me and set me up to carry pain and shame for all three of us in the future. Our common secret.... our stepfather, Robert had been brutally sexually abusing all three of us.

My abuse had started at the tender age of three. I know I was three because, that is what my mother told me. When a 3-year-old provided that type of information in the 1970's, most mothers were not believed by anyone. Especially if the man is a popular and decent man in the community and a hero to a family who just lost their patriarch, well it just could not be true. I never told again, and unfortunately, my mom never asked. The abuse continued until I was 11, and he remarried the littles (which I call them) mother. He literally left my bed and went into theirs and continued his horrific abuse on the two of them. When I finally blurted that secret out, I was 14, they were only 10 and 7. The abuse had been going on for three years already.

At the end of that show I walked over to my non who was "putting her face on as she called it to go to work and Ijust blurted out my secret!



Dulled eyes and smile at 4-years old

How many more years would this have gone on if a network hadn't been brave enough to put a provocative show on prime time TV and why is abuse not showcased today in any of the shows we watch?

Because I was now the ripe old age of 14 and the littles were too young to go to court, I told our stories on behalf of them in a room full of people including Robert, staring at me from his seat just feet away, with his defense attorney glaring at me. I was not alone in telling my story. His sister took the stand that day and told her secrets she had been holding for 35 years. He had sexually abused her through adolescence. What would have happened if she had the support to tell just one person? How would all our lives have been different?

Like me, she never realized how her secret would play a part in my life and of course, that of the littles, in the future.

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Victims are not offered

10

a shortened sentence from the hornific abuse and no one whalps our soul in a box and provides it back to us with a pow. For victims, sexual abuse is a lifelong sentence.

Robert went to jail — twice. His defense attorney was well known in our small community for going after his victims no matter how old they are. Someone made the horrible decision to agree to a plea bargain. He was charged with indecent liberties which is generally when a person is charged with taking liberties in the physical presence of a child, but no contact is required.

What really happened was years of rape, forcing siblings to be sexual with each other, and hideous sexual acts with a child that are illegal even with adults.

He got out after a year and because his wife at the time did not believe any of it, she invited him back into her house... with the littles. He served more time for breaking parole than he did for his combined 16 years of horrific sexual abuse that he bequeathed on us. I always wondered if those who have murdered the souls of children with their abuse were held even half as accountable as those who murder human beings, would the world be a different place?

That decision to not charge him for a larger crime would come back to haunt me 20 years later.

I learned by accident that he was no longer on the sexual predator list. Brace yourself my friends, this will make you angry... [Washington State has a strange law created to protect those falsely accused. After a time, it invites those with good behaviour off the list to protect those who are innocent, charged and put on the predator list so their life is not ruined forever.] He was invited off the

list for good behavior by the state of Washington. As I sat listening to the detective tell me about this, I felt so sick to my stomach and so enraged. Good behaviour translated to me was he just did not get caught. I know the abuse and patterns he inflicted and that he had not gotten any help. I am extremely doubtful he stopped abusing.

Victims are not offered a shortened sentence from the horrific abuse and no one wraps our soul in a box and provides it back to us with a bow. For victims, sexual abuse is a lifelong sentence. Although we may find ways to thrive with it, we can never be relieved of it.

I got married at 18 to the safest man I could find. A United States Marine. Before we were married, I told him about my experience but that I was all good, did not have or need counselling. Seeing into the future, I would often joke that I could end up as that 40-year-old having a nervous breakdown. You have no idea, how close to the truth that was. We raised a family, I had a successful job, and was so proud of myself for never giving Robert the power over me again by having "issues" caused by the abuse. However, that was a lie. I had so many issues, but many invisible to the eye as they were deeply rooted in my heart and I was not letting them take control. I was a workaholic, probably a shopaholic, and my husband and I struggled constantly with communication. I never felt satisfied or good enough which of course I blamed on him. My biggest secret is I left myself open to vulnerable relationships that went against my values and hurt all of us and others. At 14, the hard lessons of secretkeeping did not stick with me. When I was 40 the wrath of keeping secrets finally came crashing down and led me to my personal rock bottom, crying out for help.

THE WARRIOR'S PRAYER

I am what I am. In having faith in the beauty within me, I develop trust. *In softness I have strength. In silence I walk with the gods. In peace I understand myself and the world. In conflict I walk away. In detachment I am free. In respecting all living things, I respect myself. In dedication I honour the courage within me.* In eternity I have compassion for the nature of all things. *In love I unconditionally accept the evolution of others. In freedom I have power.* In my individuality, I express the God-Force within me. *In service I give of what I have become.*

I am what *I* am:

Eternal, immortal, universal, and infinite. And so be it.

It was when my husband and I were at our "how to divorce and not screw up your kids meeting" with a counsellor, that I received the best gift of my life and set me on a path to recovery. He was very clear "get help with your childhood abuse or you will never be satisfied and will continue to make the same mistakes". The truth was, Robert still had so much power over me, because the abuse was always riding shotgun with me. I may have thought it was taking a back seat, but often, it was doing the driving. Although I didn't even take a sleeping pill, didn't drink socially and drugs were a hard no for me, I checked into an intensive 30-day in-patient trauma program for abuse survivors within 2 weeks of that session.

It was there I learned of the excruciating guilt my heart and body were carrying around like a shackle.



I had to be convinced every day, for 30 days, that I was a child who had the courage to break the cycle of abuse with this man. I had to be assured that I was a child who sat in court, faced our abuser, and told strangers the unthinkable things he did to us. Along with individual therapy, psycho drama, grief work for my inner child, and one EMDR session that stopped the most awful memories occurring in my mind the staff and my new supportive friends had to wrap their arms around me and pour reassurance into my soul. I finally started to believe them and began forgiving myself, but the work continues every day in this area. My husband was able to learn so much during family week and heal in some ways as well. We continued with our divorce but 12 years later, we still have a relationship and have even spent some holidays with our respective partners, together with our children. My childhood was stripped from me before it even started and as an only

The truth was, Robert still had so much power over me, 11 because the abuse was always riding shotgun with me. I may have thought it was taking a back seat, but often, it was doing the driving.

child during these times, I did not have any modelling of what was and was not a child's responsibility.

As an adult I subconsciously carried the shame of letting the "littles" down. My subconscious would remind me, I should have known they were being abused, thought about it sooner, recognized the signs, asked them questions, shouted from the rooftops about my abuse, said no to his hideous demands. My list of "should haves" went deep.

It took 30 days in the intensive arena of the program and several more years outside of that to realize, I was holding my inner child accountable for something that even adults cannot get right at times. When we know better, we do better. I have spent the past 12 years forgiving, being forgiven, falling in love and designing my life in a way that would allow me to tell my story in hopes others can tell theirs much earlier.

I now live in Northern Ireland with a wonderful Irish man. I left the intensity of working as a leader for 30 years in the tech industry and went back to school. I want to combine my experiences in business, recovery, and resiliency with the new skills I am getting and advocate and support others in this community and in the in the United States.

So, I ask you again. Do you have a secret?

A secret you are keeping that there may be a tiny chance could be destroying others right now, as you are reading this. A secret that you may share with others and by talking about it would set you both free?

As an adult survivor community, we must armour up and put the

perpetrators on notice that this is going to stop. We must send a message to all those suffering victims who are unable to use their voice that we will be their voice. Finally, we must set ourselves free to live the life we were meant to live before the sparkle in our eyes were dimmed and we were deprived of our childhoods. We will no longer keep the perpetrators' secrets. We can stop the cycle one survivor at a time and one abuser at a time. We can move from survivors to thrivers and become warriors. I know this because I did it.

The work of a warrior is difficult and daunting as hell. The enemy is all the secrets that we have kept. Make no mistake, it will leave you bruised, scarred, and begging to retract them all. However, warriors have allies, supporters, experts, and many others who have gone into the arena before them. You will gain a sense of freedom you never knew you were missing and a calmness to provide you peace going forward.

Please join survivors who have gone before you as well as encourage those who will go after and tell your story. Using our voices as our arsenal and our stories as our armour we may be able to start a revolution that will begin to make a difference for others.

Warriors still must stay safe. If you are ready, find a safe person to tell. It may be a helpline, a counsellor or survivor coach, the church, an ASCA (Adult Survivor of Child Abuse) meeting, or just a friend, partner, or even a parent. It will get easier to tell your story but opening the wound can be very painful and it could take a long time for healing to start. Ask for what you need, be kind and gentle with yourself and save the harshness for the perpetrator. It will be challenging but the results will be worth it.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Holly Perreault is an adult survivor of childhood sexual abuse (CSA). She has been a champion and advocate for survivors of sexual abuse since she was an adolescent. She is the Northern Ireland Ambassador for National Alliance of Adult Survivor of childhood abuse. Holly is editor and publisher of two books: *Missy's Secret* and *Dillon's Secret*, written to help children end their own sexual abuse. She is a public speaker and an adult survivor recovery advocate.

Holly is in her final year studying Therapeutic Communications and Counselling at Ulster University in Northern Ireland. Her dissertation research is on how to enhance opportunities for abuse survivor recovery. She helped start and cofacilitate the first Adult Survivor of Child Abuse (ASCA) meeting in Northern Ireland. She is a Certified Professional Life Coach and hoping to start an organization for intensive trauma recovery programs soon.

Holly Perreault is available for speaking engagements, podcast interviews and blog contributions. You can find Holly on LinkedIn, Instagram, and Twitter. View her speech Survivor Story - Secrets and her Survivor Interview at Stop Child Abuse Now Radio Program

carried the shape of letting the "littles"

down.

As an adult I ¹² subconsciously

THE ONE

Tricia Schultheis

My soul is the moon Is the clouds Is the land Is the birds Is the rocks Is the ocean Is the sand

My soul is the red Is the yellow Is the blue Is the river Is the mountain Is the old Is the new

My soul is the air Is the flower Is the feather Is the crystal Is the cave Is the bee Is the weather

My soul is the tiger Is the rabbit Is the tree Is the fire Is the wind Is the you Is the we

My soul is the frost Is the egg Is the sun Is the web Is the spider Is the root Is the one

TRICIA SCHULTHEIS ...LOST HER, FOUND ME



I came into this world as a true Sagittarius: fiery, freespirited, compassionate, always ready for an adventure, and a spark for life that lit up the room.

Like every young child, I was pure potential and lived as my authentic self. Born the middle child of five, my father departed in a plane crash when I was only four years old. This tragic event led my mother to eventually selling our home in New Jersey and venturing to the mountains of Colorado to start a new chapter. Somewhere along my journey through youth, I lost that spark for life that I once had and began drowning in the image and material -driven programing of the collective consciousness. For years I struggled to see my own value and potential and suffered through many traumatic and unfavorable experiences before reclaiming my self-empowerment and self-love. It was not until I hit my lowest point physically, mentally, emotionally, financially, and spiritually that I was gifted with a source of desperation and willingness to heal my past, restore my livelihood, and find my purpose in life.

As an adolescent I always seemed to go against the grain of mainstream society and never really felt like I "belonged." I was highly sensitive and often questioned my existence and the meaning of life itself. Reaching the age of twelve, I began to feel extremely insecure and uncomfortable in my body and on this earth.

The inner anxiety I felt led me in search of an escape from my reality through drugs, alcohol, and sex.

I became riddled with fear and selfdoubt and started down a long and dark road filled with addictions, body image and social identity issues, toxic relationships, physical, emotional, sexual abuse and trauma, near death experience, chronic fatigue, chronic cystic acne, and many other traumatic events, unhealthy habits, and serious health concerns. I lacked self-love, self-worth, self-respect, and had no boundaries whatsoever when it came to my personal relationships. With a faulty perception of who I truly was, I constantly sought validation and approval from outside sources, giving away my personal power to people, places, and things in an attempt to find purpose, meaning and fulfillment.

Although I existed in this state of victimhood for many years, my little glimpses of spiritual phenomena and synchronistic experiences had always nudged me to know that there was something much greater to life than what I had been shown and led to believe. **However, I was so caught up**

14

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Thit my lowest

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financially, and

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spiritually that I was

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in the drama of my own life that I ignored all of the signs and continued down a destructive path until the day I hit my rock bottom, finally surrendered, and made the choice to do something different.

Reaching the age of sixteen, I had been arrested three times, ran away from home, attempted suicide, and dropped out of high school. It seemed as though my family was terrified of having me around yet equally fearful of losing me. In every attempt to save my life and find me help, my mother sent me across states to a "behavior modification program for troubled teens." The facility I was enrolled in ended up being extremely abusive, mentally, emotionally, and physically. All outside contact was limited and monitored so there was no way of making my family aware of the exploitation and neglect that was taking place inside. One of the many abusive situations that played out was being pulled off a top bunk bed by my ankles, held down on the ground, strangled, and verbally abused by an adult male who ran the facility. My nine months spent in confinement there haunted me with nightmares for the following ten years.

Once finally released from the boarding facility, at the age of seventeen, I moved to downtown Los Angeles to attend a prestigious art school and continue to unknowingly seek out my life's purpose.

By that point I was carrying layers of pain and trauma as well as continuing my battle with drug and alcohol addiction, encompassed in severe anxiety, self-doubt, and depression.

Although Texisted in this state of victimbood for many years, little glimpses of spiritual phenomena 15 and synchronistic experiences had always nudged me to know that there was something much greater to life than what Thad been shown and led to believe.



One day I met a man on the train. We seemed to have everything in common. Coming from a small town, I was excited to have finally met someone in the big city that I could relate to. We exchanged information and continued to talk and get to know each other over the course of several weeks. When he first came to my apartment, my roommates were gone to work that day. We chatted over a few drinks and he leaned in to kiss me. My ego was flattered by his overwhelming interest and sense of attraction towards me. He then started to become a little more assertive and I told him that he needed to slow down.

He refused to listen to my request. I told him that he needed to stop. Again, he refused to listen.

He then aggressively grabbed my arms, held me down, pulled up my dress, pulled down my underwear, and continued on to force himself inside of me. I yelled for him to get off of me and to stop as I struggled to remove myself from his powerful grip. It was all a blur and when he was finally finished, I was in a paralyzed state of powerlessness and began to tremble and cry with my head buried in my hands. He told me that I belonged to him and that no one would ever touch me again other than him. I told myself that I deserved it and I felt a wave of shame and unworthiness envelope my entire being. I didn't know what to do or what to say. I had lost my voice.

A few days later the man came knocking at my apartment door. I was terrified. "How did he get in?" I thought. My apartment building required a key fob in order to access any doors or elevators. I kept guiet and told my roommates to do the same. He violently banged on the door and shouted for me to let him in. After he finally gave up and left, my roommates demanded an explanation. I struggled to even partially share with them what had happened, leaving out as many details as I could. They were appalled and insisted on calling the police. I acted like it didn't bother me and it was no big deal, but on the inside I felt humiliated and wanted to scream. It was my fault, I told myself. I put myself in that situation. I shouldn't get the cops involved. I deserved it. I'm not worthy of love. The voice inside my head wouldn't stop. My only escape was more drugs, more alcohol, and more self-sabotage. I blocked the man's phone number and never heard from him again.

This wasn't the first time something like that had happened. At this point along my journey, I had been involved in many experiences of sex without consent, as well as sex without intention.

Almost all of the encounters were reckless, occurred when I was thoroughly intoxicated and left me feeling full of shame, guilt, confusion, and fear. Through authority figures, the media, societal programming, and my personal trauma, the constant misrepresentation of the act of sex led me to believing that it was "bad" or "wrong", which then led me to carrying great sexual fear and repression within myself. I didn't feel safe connecting with anyone, I couldn't fully trust, and I didn't know how to say no. It took me

Hwas all a plur and when he was finally 16 finished, I was in a paralyzed state of powerlessness and began to tremple and cry with my head puried in my hands.

Fast forward to the age of twentythree. I was an insecure mess, hiding behind layers of makeup and hair extensions, working as a flight attendant, and dating a man who was twice my age. Even though I "played happy" on the outside and everything seemed somewhat in order, I was so far removed from my true authentic self that I wouldn't even recognize that girl if I ran into her today. I had thousands of dollars in credit card debt and a million irrational thoughts racing through my mind. The relationship I was entangled in was extremely toxic and abusive on all levels. I was manipulated; gas lit, and emotionally tortured. Towards the end of our time together, I began to feel numb and worthless whenever we were intimate and was contemplating suicide on a regular basis. After three years of narcissistic abuse, I finally found the courage and strength within me to leave. I had no idea what was in store for my future; I just knew that I couldn't live in such distress any longer. The ending of that relationship was the beginning of my healing journey.

many years to realize the sacredness of my body, and to understand that sex is indeed the powerful, spiritual, and sacred act of two souls coming together in divine union.

Allowing my pain to become a catalyst for growth, I got serious about healing and facing my shadows.

I entered into a twelve-step recovery program and began to inquire inward. The sense of community and raw vulnerability that I found within the program completely blew me away and provided me with great comfort being surrounded by such

Towards the end of our time together, I began to feel numb _17 and worthless wherever we were intimate and was contemplating suicide on a regular pasis.



By completely surrendering to the source that created me, and walking into the unknown, my heart began to open more and more.

Tricia shares her journey of healing from the heart

honest and compassionate people that I could relate to.

I found myself living a sober life and began to notice blessings all around me.

One year into sobriety I nearly lost my life in a terrible car wreck that left me with a severe concussion, a new outlook on life, and once again questioning my existence. I knew that I was still here for a reason and this time I wouldn't quit until I found out why. By completely surrendering to the source that created me, and walking into the unknown, my heart began to open more and more.

Through the recovery program, I met my twin flame, the love of my life. It was a magnetic soul calling as soon as we met, and has been ever since, consistently reflecting each other's greatest wounds to one another, pushing each other into loving unconditionally.

Shortly after our meeting, I experienced a spontaneous kundalini awakening; an intense, difficult, and profound spiritual initiation experience that provided me with a deep understanding of the sacredness and oneness of all things, as well as lifted the veil of illusions and attachments that needed to be stripped away from my consciousness in order to heal.

Everything that I had been through finally made sense, and everything that I was running from began to surface.

It felt like my entire world was flipped upside down and all that I had thought to be true of myself and of life was quickly being dismantled. In times of feeling deeply ungrounded and lonely, I remained steadfast in my spiritual efforts knowing that a magnificent force was guiding my way forward.

I spent the next several years of my life in regular solitude, focusing solely on healing and purging what no longer served me. I knew that if I wanted to help others, I needed to first heal myself and release the deep societal programming and energetic imprints within me that were preventing me from living as authentic being. I became a spiritual warrior and began diving into every single emotional trigger that came up. I was presented with mentors, teachers, people, places, synchronicities, and resources that helped me along my path.

Through holistic wellness practices and relentlessly facing the parts of myself that I never wanted to see, my intuitive gifts grew stronger and I began to free myself from the suffering of my own mind.

I immersed myself in nature and set daily intentions to live from my heart.

I also began using plants and raw food as medicine. I detoxed from chemicals, spent time in deep meditation and introspection, journaling, and using self-healing techniques such as Reiki, yoga, sound healing, EFT tapping, colon-hydrotherapy, mirror work, and working with the moon cycles, plant kingdom, and natural elements.

The art of natural healing came natural to me and led me to enrolling in a holistic wellness practitioner program to pursue higher learning and expand my self-healer toolbox.

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Leaving behind old patterns, releasing trauma, reprograming my belief system, and detoxifying my body, has allowed me to open to new ways of being and gain levels of clarity and freedom that I never knew existed.

I now feel immense gratitude and radical forgiveness for every single experience that has been placed on my path; for they have shaped me, molded me, strengthened me, prepared me, and awakened me to my purpose of helping others reclaim their own inner power, as well as activate the healer within themselves and remember their divine life purpose. Forever a humble student of life, seeing every experience as an opportunity to grow and expand, I continue to embrace this everunfolding journey of wholeness by nurturing my relationship with the present moment and channeling my child-like wonder that I had once lost. Thank you to my Divine Creator for guiding me back to the light and reminding me in every moment that I Am Love.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Tricia Schultheis is a <u>Holistic Life</u> <u>Coach, Spiritual Mentor and</u> <u>Reiki practitioner</u> who helps you reactivate the healer within and reclaim your birthright to be a magical empowered badass.

A survivor of physical, mental, emotional and sexual abuse and trauma, Tricia has recovered from alcoholism, drug addiction, and codependency. She shares her story to remind others that they are never alone on their journeys and to encourage them to never stop seeking their true authentic selves.

You can reach Tricia at her <u>website</u> on <u>instagram</u> or on <u>facebook</u>.

MICHELLE WHITE HART SAFETY, TRUTH AND INTIMACY



Dissociation Integration by Michelle White Hart

It didn't occur to me to check if I ever felt safe in my body until this concept was shared with me by a brilliant trauma release coach.

Up to that point, I had cultivated a lot of body awareness from years of embodied movement and dance which contributes immensely to feeling safe.

However, I wasn't aware of how triggered I was in transformational group trainings which valued honesty and expression of feelings occurring in the present moment. I had a deep seated fear of having any negative feelings exposed, so I tried to hide them while trying to participate because I knew relating training was "good for me." Oy!

In group circle work, I would participate frozen, shut down and unable to focus without realizing that I was completely activated — feeling like I was amping and braking at the same time which felt very "dis-regulating" but I had no language for it, so I didn't think it was "a thing" to mention to anyone.

This is also called the fight, flight, freeze response.

I was so used to automatically shutting this very uncomfortable feeling off

with food or collapsing or pushing myself through it, that I somehow skipped over this vital awareness that I wasn't feeling safe.

The more others shared their feelings, the more I was enraged they were getting attention and terrified that my negative feelings would be found out.

And now as I look back, in most of those triggering situations, I felt so unsafe that I hid it from myself and then attempted to hide that I was 'uncomfortable' from others — as if they were two different things... I was dissociating and had no clue.

Discovering that in these moments I was actually feeling unsafe and unpacking why was really helpful. Learning how to catch it in the moment, instead of going unconscious and freezing up and have simple tools to work with it was really, really empowering and soothing to my Inner Child and nervous system. Finally, there was an adult on board in these terrifying situations — me!

But the truth is, I wasn't dealing with group interactions or going too deep.

I probably should have done a lot more work on this with Sandy Dow, that brilliant trauma coach, but I thought that I had a decent handle on it because of my years of feeling my body and somatic movement.

I did in many ways have a lot of skill, but what I've learned is that there are many elusive layers of trauma to unpeel however "seemingly benign."

20

I somehow skipped over this vital awareness that I wasn't feeling safe.

In fact, that "seemingly benign" assessment is part of my childhood family trauma complex that's been quietly running the show, "Oh that's nothing! That's not trauma! Trauma looks like sexual abuse or a car accident. You're fine! No need to make waves about a little discomfort here and there."

Which translates to, "No need to feel the discomfort, or get support, or acknowledge your feelings, or trust your body or your feelings. Otherwise, you're causing trouble. You're trying to get attention. You're imposing on your already busy parents who are already burdened with two other children to take care of."

"Just ignore it and move on. Don't be a bother like your sister who is always upset or complaining about something or pointing out something nobody wants to deal with and demanding attention and making others uncomfortable and then getting humiliated by Dad for it."

"God. Forbid. Don't. Do. That. "

When Dad humiliates my sister, he's scary. He seems angry. He's joking but it looks like he could hurt her...? No! It feels like he could hurt me if I say anything!

I never realized that 'til this very moment! WOW! No wonder I was quiet. I actually was very afraid. Though I don't think he ever hit us he may have spanked us a few times...

Somehow my body registered tremendous fear in these instances. So I got the memo not to share my feelings, not to stand up to him, not to take any kind of stand that might rock the boat.

And my mother did nothing — she thought he was being harmless and funny and laughed along with him. She was of no support, in this, either.

Idid in many ways, have a lot of skill, but what I've learned is that there are many elusive layers of transma to unpeel however, "seemingly benign."

"Just be a good girl and get A's. Swallow any discomfort. Don't be needy. Don't ask for anything and Mom and Dad will love you more for it. They'll take care of you. You'll be safe."

Yikes! So I shut off my feelings to take care of my parents and sacrificed my sovereignty and power in exchange for food and shelter and "so-called, safety."

This was not a real feeling of safety. It was the closest to safety I had access to — it wasn't sourced in my own body - it depended on someone and/or something outside of me, who didn't make me feel entirely safe. And so began my patterns of co-dependency in relationships (and with money!)

I see how important it is now to identify what makes you feel safe and what doesn't and what made you feel safe when you were younger and what didn't and what you chose to sacrifice for it!

I chose to sacrifice feeling and speaking about my feelings, "to keep the peace." Speaking my truth became unsafe for me, particularly in a group setting.

And even one-on-one was pretty scary. I could get angry and explode if I said nothing for too long — which is something my mother modeled very well. Every month, when she had PMS, she would explode.

I realized the menstrual timing much later. While it got us to do what she wanted, it created a lot of fear in me and though I don't do it often, it has obviously not been very effective in my relationships.

I either exploded where I felt I could possibly get away with it or I ever so stealthily let go of certain friendships I felt I no longer could tolerate.

I'm happy to say that I just had a success in this area with two good friends whom I had trained with extensively in a somatic transformational group over a ten year period.

Recently, we were hanging together in the kitchen and one of them was monopolizing the air time. Though I tried to share what was going on for me, we got interrupted and we never returned to it. I was feeling tender about sharing and didn't assert myself.

It bothered me that night and I couldn't stop thinking about it, so the next day I mentioned it as non-reactively as I could in a voice message on our group thread. I said I wasn't sure how to bring this up, but I wanted to be honest and was open to any feedback on how to address something like this with our little group.

The whole thing was very uncomfortable for me, as I didn't want to seem ungrateful as my friend had cooked us a wonderful meal and I thought perhaps I should just let her have air time as she clearly had a lot going on...

I was afraid she would be upset about it because she used to have this issue more often and had worked on it quite a bit...

But I left the message because I knew I wasn't able to let it go without saying something.

We proceeded to have a 3-way phone conversation about it which was helpful and it seemed somewhat resolved. There were ensuing voice messages about how awesome we were as a team for being real with each other.



I was beyond grateful that they were so supportive of me initiating this even though it wasn't easy for my friend and I shared a very heart felt deep gratitude on the voice thread and cried even.

I was so raw from this. It really was a big deal to be doing this together, as a group — though small — a group nonetheless, without a "teacher" leading us.

Then there were other messages and a period of 2 weeks went by and when we got together again, the friend who had taken up the air time asked if we wanted to revisit and complete on it.

I was feeling like I could go either way and was prepared to let it go. It seemed done enough to me. But as I look back, I see that I was a little afraid of the intimacy this would bring up. Having to reveal mild uncomfortableness, though seemingly innocuous by this point, but uncomfortablenesses that would reveal my not so butterfly and rainbow feelings.

But my other friend said very honestly, that though

I was afraid she would be upset about it because she used to have this issue more often and had worked on it quite a bit.

she'd rather skip it because it was not going to be all light and fun, she knew it would be better for us to take the time to truly complete now that we were in person together.

In that moment I respected both of them so much. One for fearlessly leading us and not letting us drop the ball on ourselves. And the other for revealing her squeamishness with humor and kindness and for her courage and support of our leader in that moment!

She helped bridge my squeamishness to where we all wanted to expand and grow and made the whole situation feel more safe. I was now ready to dive in.

Because of our extensive group training together, we settled on a timed structure. We each took 5 minute turns and gave each other 1 minute feedback and after the first round, it seemed a second round of 3 minutes per turn would be useful.

She helped bridge my squeamishness to where we all wanted to expand and grow and made the whole situation feel more safe. I was now ready to dive in.

I was feeling humiliation rising within me, like a cold heat. A part of me felt like my request was being seriously dissed and I could feel inklings of rage percolating.

24



You Can't Heal What You Can't Feel by Michelle White Hart

I could see that I was still not feeling met. Much to my surprise, I brought it up.

Though I wasn't showing it, inside I was massively irritated that she was focusing more on not beating herself up than addressing how her behavior had hurt me.

I said it felt like she was doing a great job not beating herself up for taking up too much air time and really owning that she had healed guite a bit in this area, but that it didn't seem like she was addressing that it had had an impact on me.

This was huge for me to stick with myself after all of this deliberation and I was on the verge of just dropping it because I wasn't feeling optimistic that we would be able to resolve it. So she asked what I needed from her.

I said maybe I needed an apology, but I wasn't sure it was okay to ask for that.

She said she didn't think an apology was necessary because she didn't try to hurt me. Nor did she want to rush and apologize just to make me feel better because it wasn't going to do either of us any good.

Though I agreed a fake apology was not what I needed, I hadn't asked for a 'fake one!' Because of our structure, I couldn't make my rebuttal yet. I had to wait for my turn.

I was feeling humiliation rising within me, like a cold heat. A part of me felt like my request was being seriously dissed and I could feel inklings of rage percolating. It felt like we were in a "polite" power struggle as I wrestled within to keep it under wraps.

Surprisingly, instead of shrinking and collapsing, I found myself leaning in while feeling this intense cold heat. I actually felt very alive. I stayed engaged with her as she connected deeply within herself and to me while she spoke.

I could feel her sensing into herself, not knowing but open to finding what was needed and what felt right for her.

It's hard to even remember exactly what she said, but I felt we were in it together.

She shared that she was in reaction by all of this and feeling like she was trying not to go down the rabbit hole for having taken up too much air time, because she had grown up having to fight for attention.

And that's when I got that she was as "hurt" by the situation as I was!

Me bringing this up had opened up a childhood wound for her too. What a revelation!

I realize now, that I was a little verklempt by all the emotion that had moved through me and could have easily said, "Well that's good enough for me! Thank you! Lets' get off the hot seat, now, shall we?"

My capacity for intimacy is developmentally young. But thanks to our structure which was proving to be guite the alchemical container, I rose to the occasion.

And I could now get where she was coming from.

She was on the flip side of not being seen and heard, growing up and having to assert herself and grab the air time in order to get any kind of much-needed attention.

I, on the other hand, did not 'allow' myself to speak up for fear of humiliation and because it felt very unsafe. I expected people to just give me 'equal' time if I listened to them, without having to ask for it.

I felt compassion for her in this moment of recognition and my heart opened. She affirmed she would never want me to feel disregarded and I got it because she had been disregarded herself. I could truly receive her caring.

And in that moment, I went from feeling humiliated, the beginning of rage and in a power struggle, to feeling like I was met. Lo and behold! I felt seen and heard without her having to apologize!

She did it! She was true to herself and she was able to meet me.

And so, though I didn't think I needed to share after I gave her that feedback and could easily have skipped over an opportunity to take up 'air time' - to stick with our structure, I took my 3-minute turn.

Being seen and heard like this is true intimacy.

The bringing this up had opened up a childhood wound for her too. What a revelation

And the most important ingredient, drumroll please - I felt a healthy degree of safety inside of myself with these 2 friends who were slogging through this inside of themselves every step of the way.

Not really knowing what I would say, much to my surprise, I dove into a play by play. I disclosed how I had felt intense humiliation, that we were in a power struggle and that I had flashback deja vu of being in the transformational group training we had been in together, cringing about being exposed and seen as wrong in front of that group.

I got to reveal all of that "negative stuff" and own it, unapologetically, which was incredibly liberating! And I totally received my friend's caring and thanked her for the experience so that we could all go through this together.

Dang! That is nothing short of a miracle!

This was a huge deal for me. I was vibrating afterwards — discharging all the energy that had been alive inside of me during the whole conversation and possibly discharging some stored trauma from the past.

This experience makes me feel so much more optimistic for the possibility to be in an intimate relationship, actually.

Just being able to accept and feel lack of safety or fear or not so fun feelings is tremendous intimacy with myself. A necessary first step on the way to sharing the challenging part of my truth with someone else and to ask them for what I want.

This creates intimacy.

And intimacy creates emotional fulfillment and lots of other good stuff!

I want that. And navigating safety is essential to intimacy.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Michelle White Hart is a Sacred Visibility Coach who has studied and taught somatic movement for over 25 years. After she did her first Yoni Steam (aka V-steam) she realized she wasn't embodying her feminine power center aka Yoni/Womb.

It felt so grounding and soothing to her nervous system to inhabit her whole pelvis. She could not believe how calm, present and at home she felt. It was a confidence that felt unhyped and sourced from her essence.

That's when she knew something very important was missing from her visibility work with women. She was compelled to create Womb Power to help women feel and embody their sacred feminine power and she incorporated the Yoni/Womb focus into her sacred visibility work where she helps women unwind protective patterning that is holding them back from being seen, being themselves and being with others.

INFINITE YOU

When I lost you, lived in fear Hard to cope without you near

Gave away your power, gave away your truth Forgot the essence of infinite you

He took it away from you time after time You gave him your sparkle, you gave him your shine

The mirror was dirty, the shame cut you deep The guilt kept you quiet, unable to speak

Hiding behind a mask of pretend The lies, the deceit, will it ever end

Kicked to curb, thrown to the street An instant decision of crippled defeat

The ending came fast and the truth was revealed All that you needed to let go and heal

Shedding the layers now, shedding the pain Nowhere to hide, no one to blame

The core of your magic now back from the blue The reactivation of infinite you



26

Being seen and heard like this is true intimacy.

Tricia Schultheis

CLAIRE O'LEARY BREAKING THE SILENCE OF INCEST



Will They Still Love Me? A panel from Claire O'Leary's artist book Silent No More.

I didn't go to therapy because I was an incest survivor. I went to therapy because my life was a mess!

My unresolved trauma was wreaking havoc on my life. I was married to a functioning alcoholic. My daughter had run away from home - twice. I was the "yes-girl" extraordinaire always giving, giving, giving. I was angry all the time – exploding over little things like the toilet paper being put on the dispenser in the wrong direction. And, if I'm honest with myself, I was a shopaholic. What I discovered is that my unresolved trauma from being an incest survivor had taken control of my life and was causing all my issues.

I worked with my Transpersonal Psychologist on mother issues, father issues, ex-husband & current-husband issues, as well as my father's incest abuse from the age of 16 to 18. But there was one memory I chose not to go explore deeply no matter how many times my

therapist asked me about it: the incest when I was 5.

Though I wasn't sure who it was at the time, I felt like it was no big deal. It was one time, he didn't hurt me. It was only 15 minutes. So any time my therapist brought it up, I would choose not to discuss it. There were so many other issues that felt more pressing.

But, years later at 58, I was still a "yesgirl." I couldn't voice my opinions or ask for what I wanted. Heck I didn't even know what I wanted! I'd been a yes girl for so long I had no clue who I was.!

Meek and mild. I had no voice. What I didn't realize was why.

I often used writing as a healing modality. One morning, as I finished journaling, a little girl standing in the doorway flashed before my eyes. "Wow, I haven't seen her in over a year." I thought to myself. "Who is she and why is she coming to me now?"

I'd done enough personal work to know this was something I needed to look at. I gatherd my journal and my pen, practiced some deep breathing until I was calm and centered - almost in an altered state. I started writing...

Tears streamed down my face as I relived those moments from childhood.

For the first time. Ι allowed myself to remember everything, everything, feel see everything, hear every word that was said.

I saw the small trailer, the kitchen, the bedroom where everything happened. I wasn't supposed to go into the room that my 18-month-old sister was sleeping in. My uncle took my hand and led me into the room with him. My 18-month-old sister laid on the bed. I remembered how it felt to have him touch me at the young age of 5. Suddenly I knew that it was my uncle who molested me at that young age.

We heard the front door open. We knew it was my parents coming home so he was out of there in a flash saying "put your underwear back on and come out." I stood in the doorway, afraid to walk out into the kitchen. My uncle stood by the kitchen sink as though nothing happened. "Will they still love me?" I wondered. I felt that I'd done something wrong. Even though my uncle took me by the hand and led me in there- even though I said "no."

I knew I'd disobeyed my parents when I walked into that room, as they'd specifically told me, "Don't go in the bedroom, you'll wake up Jeannette." I was getting in trouble and he just stood there. My parent's sat at the kitchen

I couldn't voice my opinions on ask for what I wanted. Heck Tdidn't even know what Twanted ITd been a yes girl for so long I had no clue who Twas!

I lived by the decision of that 5-year-old until I allowed myself to go back there. Allowed myself to remember - to feel it. to heal it.

table. "We told you not to go in the bedroom so that you wouldn't wake up Jeannette". I heard my mother say. Tears streamed down my face as I tried to explain. "Don't talk back," my father said. I was silenced.

"Why didn't he tell them he took me in the bedroom", I wondered.

I made a decision in that moment that in order to be loved, I had to be anything anyone wanted me to be and to do anything anyone wanted me to do.

I became "the good little girl" at home, at school, with friends. As I got older, I became a "yes-girl" at work and in close relationships. I married a man who was abusive, realizing it was abusive behavior for many years.

The fear of being unloved and unaccepted always in the back of my mind - always saying "yes" when I meant "no." I took on the belief systems of those around me even though I didn't agree with them. I didn't know who I really was or what I believed in.

Unable to voice or even know my own opinion, "Will they still love me?" was my mantra for over 50 years. I lacked self-confidence. Even with my second husband, if I did something I felt he wouldn't agree with, guilt would ensue.

For the first time, 29 I allowed myself to remember everything. feel everything, see everything, hear every word that was said.



Who Am I? A panel from Claire O'Leary's artist book Silent No More.

Fifteen minutes had changed the track of my life from a joyful little girl to one who would live the next fifty years as a "yes-girl" who had no clue who she was.

When I stopped writing that day, I felt a weight that I didn't know I'd been carrying lift from my shoulders as I realized I was still living by the decision I'd made when I was five. I now knew that I no longer needed to live by that decision.

In that defining moment, I knew it was time to empower other women who'd been through the same.

I knew unequivocally that I had to help other survivors find their voice. It took a while to change my longstanding habits. But today, I empower women to become more confident, feel comfortable in their skin, and be seen and heard. I help them shatter the long-held silence of their sexual abuse. I am the founder of Voices Heard – the interactive e-Zine that empowers sexual abuse survivors to shatter their longheld silence through story-telling and expressive arts. My hope is that they heal not just themselves, but others as well through sharing their story.

Whether your story, like mine, is incest, date rape, marital rape or work related, if you (or someone you know) have been through the trauma of sexual abuse, don't wait like I did until you're 58 to heal from your unresolved trauma. I understand how incredibly challenging it can be to confront memories of sexual abuse, but I encourage you to find the support to do so as soon as you can. You deserve to heal.

If you need resources, if you're struggling with feeling unseen & unheard, if you're uncomfortable in your skin or searching for more self-confidence, reach out. If you're still silent about your abuse don't stay silent any longer.

Your voice deserves to be heard.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Claire O'Leary creates a safe space for sexual abuse survivors to share their story in creative ways. She is shattering the silence of sexual abuse one voice at a time.

Claire is the founder of Empowered Voice Traveling Exhibit, which showcases the stories of sexual abuse survivors as well as founder and Creative Director of Voices Heard - the interactive e-Zine that empowers sexual abuse survivors to shatter their silence. Through sharing their story, survivors heal not only themselves but others as well.

Her Creativity Unleashed program encourages survivors to unearth the root of their story & nourish their creativity through expressive arts.

Claire shares her own story as a Speaker, Mentor and Advocate. She lives in Colorado with her husband and enjoys being a mother and grandmother to her adorable grandson. She's an avid reader, meditates and dances her heart out any time she can.

You can reach Cllaire via email, her website, Facebook, and Instagram.

Iam no longer silent. Tempower women to 30 become more confident, feel confortable in their skin and be seen and heard. Thelp them shatten the long held silence of their sexual abuse.



CREATIVITY UNLEASHED COMING IN MAY 2021

Creativity Unleashed encourages survivors to unearth the root of their story & nourish their creativity through expressive arts.

Through Creativity Unleashed, you will heal with a small group of women like yourself who are dedicated to healing their sexual abuse. Giving voice to your story through expressive arts helps you heal. Seeing it and hearing it helps others heal as well.

UNLEASH YOUR CREATIVITY

DURING THE 9-WEEK PROGRAM YOU WILL:

- Learn how to share your story through simple art techniques effectively • Use a story board to effectively organize your thoughts and ideas
- Create an artist book or art of your choice using simple effective techniques • Learn how to share your story vulnerably yet powerfully
- WOW your audience with public speaking techniques that will have them intrigued from your very first words
- Get published in <u>Voices Heard</u> quarterly e-Zine (if you desire)
- Be part of the Empowered Voice Traveling Exhibit (Live and Online)

ACCELERATE YOUR HEALING AND RECOVERY

- Expand your capacity to hold grief, loss and more
- Learn simple practices for when you're triggered
- Let go of anger, mistrust, and not being enough
- Share your needs and desires confidently at home and in business
- Reclaim who you are at the core
- Love yourself unconditionally
- Release your story once and for all
- Become the strong confident woman you know you can be
- Embrace your prosperity
- Shatter the silence of your sexual abuse

LEARN MORE & REGISTER

BUILDING RESILIENCE

IF YOU OR SOMEONE YOU KNOW IS IN IMMEDIATE DANGER AND NEEDS MEDICAL ATTENTION, CALL 911.

NATIONAL

RAINN Hotline: 800.656.HOPE (4673) Live Chat 24/7 Crisis Text Line: Text "START" to 741741 Website

National Domestic Violence Hotline: Select "chat now" Or call **1-800-799-7233** (If you're not alone text LOVEIS to 22522) Website

Giving voice to your story helps you heal. Seeing it and hearing it helps others heal as well.

Voices Heard is the interactive e-Zine that empowers sexual abuse survivors to shatter their long held silence through storytelling, and expressive arts.

IF SOMEONE YOU KNOW IS IN CRISIS...

COLORADO

CCASA Hotline: 800.799.SAFE (7233) **Website**

Advocate Safehouse Hotline: 970.285.0209

Response Hotline: 970.925.7233 **Website**

Colorado Crisis Services:

844.493.TALK (8255) Text TALK to 38255 4 pm – 1 2 am, 7 days a week

ARE YOU READY TO **SHARE YOUR STORY?**

SHARE YOUR STORY

...for you ... for them

BE ONE OF THE VOICES HEARD! Join Us!

Submit art, video, poetry or a personal story for a future edition.

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JOIN THE MOVEMENT

MY TWELVE COMMANDMENTS

By Rachel Grant



Through the years, Thave found that coming back to and reconnecting with these have played a huge role in my remaining resilient.

In her book "The Happiness Project," Gretchen Rubin sets out to discover ways to be happier.

As she begins thinking about what sorts of resolutions she'll make to improve different areas of her life, she notices some "overarching principles" — and names these principles her "Twelve Commandments."

Intrigued by this idea, I set about writing my own list. Coming up with this list wasn't a complete breeze. I had to pause often to decide whether a commandment was really something I believed in or was inspired or whether it was based on some external expectation. I loved doing it though!!

HERE THEY ARE, MY 12 COMMANDMENTS:

- 1. Be good to myself and others
- 2. Love outrageously
- 3. Stop holding my breath
- 4. Smile at strangers
- 5. Say it out loud
- 6. Be hardcore
- 7. Stay in touch
- 8. Don't miss this moment
- 9. Have great adventures
- 10. Don't wait for things to be perfect
- 11. Laugh deep belly laughs
- 12. Relish being wrong

Through the years, I have found that coming back to and reconnecting with these have played a huge role in my remaining resilient. They serve as an anchor, helping me to remain grounded and connected and present when life's storms arrive.

What are your 12 Commandments — what principles underpin your life — hold you, guide you, inspire you!?



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Rachel is the owner and founder of Rachel Grant Coaching and is a Sexual Abuse Recovery Coach. Rachel holds a Master of Arts in Counseling Psychology and is the author of <u>Beyond Surviving: The</u> <u>Final Stage in Recovery from Sexual</u> <u>Abuse</u> and <u>Overcome the Fear of</u> <u>Abandonment.</u> You can download both free on her <u>website</u>.

She works with survivors of childhood sexual abuse to help them let go of the pain of abuse and finally feel normal.

Her program, **Beyond Surviving**, is specifically designed to change the way we think about and heal from abuse. she has successfully used this program to help her clients break free from the past and move on with their lives.

Reach Rachel here or on Facebook.

60 DAYS

Tricia Schultheis

Alcohol I've missed you, but it's time for us to part How can I love you so deeply when all you do is break my heart

A manufactured friendship, a pain I cant describe I thought you made me who I was but you were killing me inside

Alcohol you used me, you tortured me with guilt and shame I'm giving it to God now, I'm surrendering the game

Desperation, isolation, excuses and lies Alcohol I'm finished, can't look you in the eyes

60 days without you, one day at a time So I keep coming back here to get you off my mind

Thank you all for loving me when I couldn't love myself Every day I struggle, but this shit seems to help

Everything feels pure now, everything is real Each day I go without you, the more I grow and heal

Living life on life's terms is not an easy ride But now that I can feel again nowhere for me to hide

Time to cut my losses, time to step up to the plate For if I go back to where I was death will surely be my fate

Although my past does not define me, it surely took its toll And I'm forever grateful life has led me down this road

I'll ask my higher power for the strength of one more day In moments of anxiety and fear, I will try to pray

My intuition tells me this is where I need to be A spiritual awakening so I can be set free

The answers to my problems is what I still seem to lack But someone told me things get better so that's why I keep coming back

A LOVE LETTER TO SAFETY

By Michelle White Hart

Drowning for A's by Michelle White Hart

What does safety or lack of safety feel like in your body? Well, if I'm feeling fear, there's a good chance I don't feel safe!

Funny how that seems so obvious, but I literally didn't realize how important safety was until I discovered how unsafe I felt a lot of the time. I had just gotten so used to that feeling that I would automatically override it.

Emotions like fear can be felt in the body as sensations. When you feel fear, if you put your attention on your body, you will notice some sensations occurring - you may feel tightness in your throat or heart, tingles pulsing, throbbing, cool, hot, etc... It doesn't matter what the sensation is, because it will be unique and different each time you feel fear – there will be something unique each time for you to feel, so it's not about what the sensation is, it's about feeling it in that moment. That's

where the healing begins. That's how you cultivate receptivity, which can teach you how to notice when you are feeling safe or unsafe and how to make good choices depending on which one you feel.

We can be thrown off as easily by good things happening to us as we can by bad things. They both heighten sensation and emotion in the body. We actually need training to be able to expand our receptivity and "having" threshold in order to allow more good!

Receptivity training teaches you to receive and feel all feelings and sensations - "good" or "bad."

"Too much" good stuff registers the same as bad stuff on the nervous system.

It can throw us into overload and overwhelm because it's more energy/ vibration than our system can handle. When we are overwhelmed or overloaded we don't feel safe - so we unconsciously push the good stuff away, we shut down all feeling and sensation and we feel disconnected.

It's a survival reaction — useful when we were younger and necessary sometimes when we are older. It throws us way off course then we have to slowly and carefully rebuild that trust and safety and bring ourselves back to the land of the feeling, aka, the land of the living!

Receptivity training assists you in having more of what you want.

It trains you organically to expand your capacity for feeling — feeling what you "don't want:" — the uncomfortable or painful as well as feeling what you "do want: " — the positive or pleasurable.

As we know, you can't heal what you can't feel. Which doesn't mean you have

As we know, you can't heal what you can't feel. Which doesn't mean you have to feel the whole enchilada at once. That will likely overload you. So you do it in stages. Incrementally.

The added bonus of Womb Power's Receptivity Training is that it helps you awaken your womb/yoni/root area. We need a lot of quality attention here due to being enculturated to ignore it!

This is where we store and hide our vital energy and DESIRE! Our true desire does not emerge when we don't feel safe.

to feel the whole enchilada at once. That will likely overload you. So you do it in stages. Incrementally. Even just feeling discomfort or good stuff for 15 seconds can have a profound effect in beginning to dismantle a pattern of fear.

When you can feel more of yourself, you feel safer.

Your body is your home!

The more you inhabit it, the more you can access your "true" power and the more courageous vou become.

But it's not a race! Find your own pace!

For myself and my clients, some deeper desires are emerging because of this womb/yoni receptivity work.

Womb Power slowly and gently brings consciousness to and de-armors the tissue in the yoni/womb/root area, in particular, that has shut down so as to decrease the impact of both physical and energetic overloads — like too much good news or unwanted attention. This protective survival pattern has trapped vital energy and depleted life force reserves in the process.

Too much good stuff registers the same as bad stuff on the rervous system. It can throw us into overload and overwhelm because it's more energy/vibration than our system can handle.

When you start to de-armor, that trapped vital energy finally gets to recirculate and fuel you to follow through with your passions — projects that seemed out of reach, required courage or demanded energy.

In resurrecting this desire also comes clarity of what you truly want that you may not have allowed yourself, that you have set aside to make others feel safe, or that felt too scary or bold. where I push myself beyond my capacity and traumatize my nervous system in the process which then makes it so incredibly hard to move forward. I still, on occasion, "override" my system and shut down my natural flow and intuition in order to complete a task.

For example, I'll be super exhausted and yet because I have a deadline that I'm afraid I'll miss, I won't rest and it feels like I'm literally pushing dead weight forward and moving at a snail's pace. And yet, I sometimes refuse to rest because my nervous system was trained to operate under tremendous stress. It "likes" the difficulty on some level. It got used to it.



Feeling my Feminine Circuitry by Michelle White Hart

With clarity comes knowing. Your "embodied feminine knowing" — your "I know that I know" — will guide you. You'll know exactly what you need from your body's wisdom, not what your head thinks you need. You'll know what step to take next without terrifying or traumatizing your nervous system.

Your head thinks you need to hurry up, push harder, make more money, etc... but that usually slows you down!

I have been unwinding a push pattern

During a somatic training, I received a somatic memory that my body felt like I was drowning from age 10 through 16. Due to my family dynamic, I was determined to get straight "As" even though I was one to two years younger than everyone at a highly academic private school.

I later found out that this kind of steady pressure over an extended period of time was a form of developmental trauma. I learned to push myself to get "As," no matter what. I learned to be a good girl and not share my challenges or feelings. I had no idea I was under that amount of pressure – I thought it was "normal" to have to work so hard.

This led to being burned out by the time I graduated from grade 13, at the ripe old age of 16.

I lost my period temporarily and from then on, I was on auto pilot. I coasted for a few decades, working in the film industry, challenging myself as little as possible. University actually felt like a picnic compared to high school. I chose classes that were fun and interesting to me.

Luckily, I eventually found my way to somatic movement training. With a few decades of somatic movement and receptivity training and more recently with a new focus on yoni/womb receptivity training – I have learned to access my embodied feminine knowing. And knowing what I know now, it doesn't have to take that long for my clients! Phew!

Your embodied feminine knowing knows what pace is best. Recently, mine told me to do nothing with regard to my next business step! Whaaaaat? Really? It's OK to say No???

That was HUGE! I rarely allow myself to just be OK with where I am — to NOT move forward in my business!

Acknowledging and truly feeling that in that moment, knowing that taking any kind of action would be "too much" because I had just been receiving how good it felt to be where I am currently in my business was an important step for me.

I was receiving what it felt like in my body, how much I am enjoying what I am doing. There is challenge for sure, but not SO MUCH challenge that I am on my edge hanging from my fingernails.

It feels like the right step, possibly for the

With clarity, comes knowing. Your 'embodied feminine knowing' - your I know that I know'will guide you.

38

first time in my life. I'm not in, "over my head" and I'm not under-challenged. And I'm not "terrorizing my nervous system!"

"Doing nothing" felt VERY "new." Allowing myself to "stay put" felt like a breakthrough in my personal power – in my sovereignty!

Like, "I'm the boss of me!" like, not some idea of what is right is the boss of me.

This almost felt like a "runner's high!" as though I had broken through invisible but visceral shackles that had been holding me back for lifetimes.

I could feel my Inner Child do several cartwheels inside! Like, "I'm free!' Like, "I'm free to be 'me'!"

As I write this and really feel into this experience, it actually felt like 'soul retrieval! ' I've never really known what that feels like. And Now I do.

Later, I could feel inklings of an incremental step bubble up – super incremental – and super bubbly with excitement! It was playful, spacious, easy. It felt do-able, safe. Not a push, or scary.

A baby step. What a concept! I used to think baby steps were not worth doing, because they were too small!

But I've truly learned, you gotta slow down for to speed up.

- Slowing down
- Feeling sensations & emotions
- Titrating between discomfort and 'good' stuff
- Inhabiting your body
- cultivates receptivity, trust, safety and body awareness

When you add in:

Connecting to & de-armoring your Yoni and Womb

It creates Safety on Steroids and Awakens your Desire & Vitality

This paves the way for:

- Clarity & alignment
- Embodied Feminine Knowing
- True Power
- Courage
- Creativity
- Magnetism & manifestation
- Desire that will fuel you to go for what you truly want and make it happen!

Be patient. Desire emerges the safer you feel within your body.

Trust the process. Trust your body's wisdom. It takes practice. It doesn't happen overnight.

My deep down desire was buried for decades. Cultivating a relationship with my body has slowly helped to unearth it. And connecting to and de-armoring my Yoni/Womb has really helped accelerate the process – organically, not too fast.

Desire and your embodied feminine knowing will guide you and give you the answers. I've decided I still don't want much business coaching – just a micro-dose here and a micro-dose there. That's titration vs overload.

Even my Business Shaman agrees with me! What I need more than business strategies is to go inside, into my yoni/ womb and unlock my true desire, my embodied feminine knowing and my true power. That's where my answers and energy to implement them are.

What do you need?

RECEPTIVITY TRAINING TO BUILD SAFETY IN THE BODY HALF HOUR PRACTICE:



Receptivity Training by Michelle White Hart

I offer you this short version of a Womb Power practice to drop into your body and cultivate your embodied feminine knowing. If it resonates, do it! If it doesn't, don't!

Here's what the Receptivity Training looks like.

The first 15 minutes is a gentle movement practice to warm you up and help you get in your body:

- We start with fluid easy flowing movement for the first song
- Then fluid stretching for the second song
- Fluid muscle engagement for the third song
- And faster, fluid pattern-breaking movement for the fourth song

This will help you be present and drop in for the second 15 minutes, which guides you into tracking your sensations and receiving your yoni/womb area.

Technology set up for ideal sound

You'll need to start the playlist on **Spotify** first and then hit play on the video:

The ideal set up is to play the video on one device, eg. computer or tablet. And play the Spotify music playlist on a separate device, eg. phone or tablet. This way you can control the audio levels to your liking — raise the level of the guidance or music to hear it best.

You will need to sign up for a free membership to Spotify, but there might be a few commercials every 20 minutes.

How to do the Training:

You can do either section first. If you're tired and don't want to move, jump to the meditation section, 15 minutes in and go to the 5th song on the Spotify playlist. But if you've got a lot of energy and you want to find a way to slow down enough to do the meditation section, then start from the beginning.

There's no wrong way to do this. Listen to your body. If what I'm saying isn't resonating, do what feels good to you. This is YOUR practice. Take what you want and leave the rest in each moment.

Each time you show up to do the practice you may take a different piece of my guidance. Your body might want to do something entirely different than how I'm guiding and that's okay! My guidance is simply a container and springboard for you to feel your body and follow what feels good to you in that particular moment.

Let yourself explore and trust that your discoveries are more important than anything. Even if you discover you simply can't do this practice and don't want to! That's your truth! That's gold! That's a taste of soul retrieval!

May you continue to cultivate receptivity strengthen your and safety and beyond in an environment that resonates for you! Whether it's with this practice or with other practices there are infinite ways and modalities to cultivate your receptivity.

You have treasures buried within, waiting to be unearthed. Blessings on

And if you want the space to be held for you to learn how to feel your sensations more and expand your ability to feel, I offer private sessions in addition to weekly Womb Power classes.

You are welcome to come to your first Womb Power class as my guest. Just register here and let me know you'd like to come. The classes are small and you're welcome to share in the circle at the end of class or jump off anytime. You get to do it your way .;)

40

You have treasures puried within, waiting to be unearthed.

If you are present to your own body then you're doing the practice. Even if you are distracted and can't be present for yourself, just knowing that is doing the practice. You really can't do this wrong.

My wish for you:

your journey!



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Michelle White Hart is a Sacred Visibility Coach who has studied and taught somatic movement for over 25 years. After she did her first Yoni Steam (aka V-steam) she realized she wasn't embodying her feminine power center aka Yoni/Womb.

It felt so grounding and soothing to her nervous system to inhabit her whole pelvis. She could not believe how calm, present and at home she felt. It was a confidence that felt unhyped and sourced from her essence.

That's when she knew something very important was missing from her visibility work with women. She was compelled to create Womb Power to help women feel and embody their sacred feminine power and she incorporated the Yoni/Womb focus into her sacred visibility work where she helps women unwind protective patterning that is holding them back from being seen, being themselves and being with others.

Michelle also offers a Yoni Moon Lodge — a safe, online intimate group experience that includes, Yoni Steaming, meditation and sharing. Learn more about the upcoming Yoni Moon Lodge.

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Our We Survived, We Thrive section lists survivors who support our efforts. Want to join us? Email me.



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