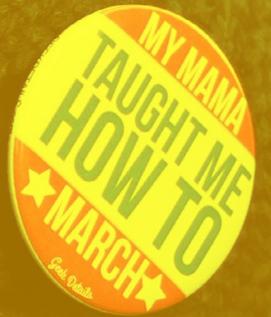




Life Matters Journal

V. 7, ISSUE 3 — JUNE 2019



THIS ISSUE'S THEME:

Small Ways to Make a Big Difference

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Readers,

Those most often remembered in connection with many life, peace, and justice issues are leaders or people who did “big” things. Their accomplishments earn national holidays, like Martin Luther King, Jr., or coins and statues bearing their likeness, like Susan B. Anthony. These people gave up their freedom, as did Nelson Mandela when fighting the Apartheid government of South Africa. They risked their lives, as did St. Gianna Baretta Molla, who chose a riskier cancer surgery in order to protect the life of her unborn child. Such people are wonderful examples of the great good that one person committed to human rights and dignity can do. But at least for myself, and I’m fairly confident for others as well, that example can sometimes be discouraging. If we hear about the people who get their names in the history books and the news, it can feel like if we don’t have the resources or wherewithal to do those things, we can’t really make a difference.

Dispelling that discouragement is one of the goals of this issue, “Little Ways to Make a Big Difference.” The pieces are about ordinary things people can do to foster respect for life in the world around them. Christy Yao provides simple advice for instilling the values of pro-life feminism in children. Sarah Terzo writes about ways people with disabilities and others who might have a hard time doing traditional activism can make a difference right from home. Photographer Laura Schaefer discusses how to use one’s creative talents in support of life issues. I hope these stories and others in the magazine will inspire you to stand up for nonviolence and the dignity of all people wherever you are, whatever your life situation, and in whatever ways you can.

Yours for life, peace, and justice,

Kelly Matula



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Life Matters Journal

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This journal is dedicated to the aborted, the bombed, the executed, the euthanized, the abused, the raped, and all other victims of violence, whether that violence is legal or illegal.

We have been told by our society and our culture wars that those of us who oppose these acts of violence must be divided. We have been told to take a lukewarm, halfway attitude toward the victims of violence. We have been told to embrace some with love while endorsing the killing of others.

We reject that conventional attitude, whether it’s called Left or Right, and instead embrace a consistent ethic of life toward all victims of violence. We are *Life Matters Journal*, and we are here because politics kills.

Disclaimer

The views presented in this journal do not necessarily represent the views of all members, contributors, or donors. We exist to present a forum for discussion within the Consistent Life Ethic, to promote discourse and present an opportunity for peer-review and dialogue.



New Hampshire Repeals Death Penalty

By Kelly Matula, PhD

On May 30, 2019, a bipartisan coalition of lawmakers made New Hampshire the twenty-first state to abolish the death penalty¹ when the Senate followed the House in voting to override the governor's veto of a bill to end capital punishment in the state.² The override narrowly reached the two-thirds majority required by the state's Constitution³ in both houses, passing 247 to 123 in the House and 16 to 8 in the Senate.⁴ These margins were slightly narrower than those by which the original repeal bill had passed before the governor's veto.⁵

In response to the veto decision, Republican Gov. Chris Sununu tweeted, "I have consistently stood with law enforcement, families of crime victims and advocates for justice in opposing a repeal of the death penalty because it is the right thing to do. I am incredibly disappointed that the Senate chose to override my veto."⁶ However, it is important to note that, while support for capital punishment has typically been a Republican position, there were more than a few Republicans whose votes showed that they disagree with Gov. Sununu that continuing this violent practice is "the right thing to do."⁷ The roll-call records for the veto override votes show that 26 Republican House representatives (of 167 Republicans in the New Hampshire House)⁸ and 4 of the 10 Republicans in the Senate⁹ voted to override the governor's veto. Thirty Republicans may not seem like many, but the number is encouraging given the traditionally stark split on this issue between the U.S.'s two major parties. And given the narrow margins at play in these particular votes, those thirty individuals' votes made a great deal of difference.

Indeed, the recent history of New Hampshire's death penalty has been marked by other narrow votes. Two other attempts to end the practice within the last two decades were blocked by gubernatorial vetoes,¹⁰ one in 2000¹¹ and one by Gov. Sununu just last year.¹² And in 2014 a repeal law failed to pass by a single vote.¹³

A *Washington Post* article covering the repeal called the debate about the law "largely symbolic" because New Hampshire has not executed anyone since 1939 and does not currently have the means of executing its only death row inmate, Michael Addison, whose sentence has not changed because the law was not written to be retroactive.¹⁴ Lawmakers who opposed the repeal took a similar tack, arguing in part that since the death penalty law had been "narrowly crafted" — the punishment was only available for those found guilty of murder in a small number of specific circumstances — it did not need to be repealed.¹⁵ However, no law protecting people from the violence of capital punishment — no matter how infre-

quently it had been practiced before the law was passed — should be considered symbolic. From "infrequently" — or, more concretely, "not in eighty years" — to "hopefully never again" (provided Addison's sentence is also overturned, as eventually happened to inmates left on death row after Connecticut banned the death penalty in 2015)¹⁶ might appear to some to be only a small change. But that small change makes a world of difference for the people and the culture of the state in which it has been made. It can help the state in question to, in the words of state Sen. Bob Guida, a self-identified pro-life Republican, "transcend" the practice of executing people and recognize that "we're better than that."¹⁷ While Gov. Sununu's tweet included "advocates for justice" among those who were against the death penalty repeal,¹⁸ Sen. Guida and others recognize that it is only by abolishing the death penalty that states come closer to acting in ways that are truly just.

Now, thanks to a committed group of New Hampshire lawmakers — who tried just one more time, even though it had been less than a year since the governor had vetoed the last death penalty repeal bill, and some of whom took a stance that is historically unusual in their party and helped a law narrowly pass — there is one more state in the United States where the death penalty is illegal. Debates and moratoria are happening in other states,¹⁹ so hopefully in the coming years that number will continue to rise, state by state, until the United States no longer puts criminals to death at all.

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Addressing Maternal Mortality in Developing Countries

By Ryan Everson

In America, we have the luxury of forgetting the many challenges our brothers and sisters across the globe face. Diseases such as malaria and typhoid fever are out of sight and out of mind. We can trust that the food we purchase is healthy. We have easy access to medicine, and we often take all of this for granted.

The World Health Organization defines maternal mortality as pregnancy-related death that occurs during pregnancy or within 42 days of the end of the pregnancy.¹ Maternal mortality is another issue many Americans forget about — but in developing countries, it's much more present. North America has lower maternal mortality than any other region of the world. In 2015, there were only 580 maternal deaths in North America,² but the rest of the world is a very different story. Sadly, there are over 300,000 maternal deaths around the world each year.³

The maternal mortality ratio (MMR) measures how many women die per 100,000 childbirths within a given population. According to the United Nations, maternal mortality has declined 44% globally since 1990.⁴ Progress is being made, and it should certainly be celebrated. However, not all countries have progressed at the same rate, and some have hardly progressed at all. Maternal mortality in Sub-Saharan Africa has only dropped 10% since 1990. According to the UN, 62% of maternal deaths occur in this region.⁵

The causes of maternal mortality are numerous and complex. One leading cause is postpartum hemorrhaging, which is excessive blood during childbirth.⁶ Other women die from diseases like malaria, as women are more vulnerable to such diseases while they are pregnant.⁷ Interestingly, unsafe abortions account for a fair number of deaths as well. In fact, according to researchers, botched abortions are responsible for at least 20% of maternal deaths in Africa.⁸

Many of these deaths are a result of poor healthcare and poor infrastructure, as women do not have well-equipped doctors near their homes. Even if a doctor is reasonably close, shorter distances may take a long time to travel due to poor roads and a lack of cars. If an American woman needs an emergency C-section, or if part of the placenta is stuck inside of her, she will almost assuredly have a nearby medical provider who can competently address her needs. But in Africa, these complications take countless lives every year.

One may look at these infrastructure issues and conclude that there's no way to make a real difference in addressing them. The average American can't donate cars to people in the Sahara desert

or build a hospital on the Congo River. However, many maternal deaths have a very simple solution.

Due to the impoverished and remote nature of communities in Sub-Saharan Africa, many women do not have access to the most basic of healthcare, including clean delivery kits (CDKs). According to the Maternal and Neonatal Directed Assessment of Technology (MANDATE), these kits help facilitate the "6 cleans" of birth: clean hands, clean perineum (pubic area), clean delivery surface, clean umbilical cord cutting instrument, clean cord care, and nothing unclean introduced into the vagina.⁹ By ensuring these conditions, CDKs help ensure the mother does not subject herself to unnecessary medical risks during delivery.

Addressing maternal mortality in impoverished countries is not just for those with extraordinary wealth. We can all pitch in to protect the lives of pregnant mothers. For just \$5, you can guarantee that a pregnant mother will have access to basic sanitation and medical equipment that will help her deliver her baby safely. If you would like to donate, go to www.globalgiving.org/projects/unfpa-clean-birthing-kits/. \$5 may not be much to us, but it can literally save the life of a woman in need. Small actions truly can make a big difference.

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Raising (Pro-Life) Feminist Children

By Christy Yao

Anyone can tell you that parenting is hard. As hard as parenting might be already, the task becomes even more challenging when one wants to raise children with intentional values. And as hard as that is, it is even harder when those values are counter-cultural. Then, it is extra hard when those values don't always fit in with the "mainstream counter-culture." If anything falls into this category, it's the values of pro-life feminism.

There is a wealth of information and advice for raising feminist children. There is a fair amount of information for those who want to raise their children to be pro-life, especially if the right to life is part of a faith tradition. Much of the advice for raising both feminist and pro-life children is similar: see the humanity in each and every person. This article aims to build on this common principle and to combine information from both feminist and pro-life sources to create a unique set of guidelines for raising pro-life feminist children.

1. Start at home

In a University of Michigan study, it was shown that American girls 10-17 years old spend two more hours on chores each week than American boys of the same age. Boys are also 15% more likely to get paid for their chores. Parents can combat this by having both mothers and fathers do chores contrary to traditional gender roles and care for the children. Boys need to be taught to be competent at housework, and that caregiving is not just feminine. Helping with care for pets, younger siblings, or older relatives can help boys to be more comfortable with caregiving.¹

2. Be intentional about teaching

It is important to have conversations about human rights and equality early on, because it is very hard to un-learn behaviors. If unjust views are going to change, there has to be a break from the status quo.² Pro-life education must be intentional. When children are young, it is good to talk to them about virtues. These talks can morph into conversations about dignity as they grow older. It is helpful to discuss current events with children and to turn hypotheticals into real-life situations. Children should learn leadership, starting with small tasks and moving into larger projects. Perhaps the most important lesson to intentionally teach children is to have compassion, not condemnation, for women in crisis pregnancies.³

3. Relationships are key

It is important to encourage children to have relationships with those different from them. Children who have friends of the opposite sex learn better communication and problem-solving skills. Boys who have female friends are less likely to view women as sexual conquests when they are older. Boys especially benefit from

having both strong male and female role models.⁴ It is also important that children have relationships with both younger children and older adults.⁵ If possible, it is extremely beneficial for children to have relationships with those with disabilities.

4. Respect and consent are vital

Children thrive on consistency, so it is important that behavior is consistent with values. Parents should be quick to correct children when they display behaviors that are not in line with their values, such as making sexist jokes or using "girl" as an insult. Children should also learn the value of "no" and "stop," especially in relation to touching others. This will teach them the value of consent and help them to respect others.⁶

5. Teach that all people have unmeasurable value

In her book to her daughter, *Dear Ijeawele, or A Feminist Manifesto in Fifteen Suggestions*, Chimamanda Adichie explains that it is not enough for men to treat women well. Men do not "allow" women to be successful — women can be successful on their own. An example Adichie gives is the British prime minister saying that her husband has "allowed her to shine."⁷ In a similar vein, pro-life parents must teach that people at all stages of their lives have equal value. There are various ways one can show their children that people of all ages have immense worth. Children can learn the value of infants by helping care for a baby. Children will see that although caring for babies takes selflessness and sacrifice, it is well worth the work. Parents can show their children that older adults have value by helping their children to form relationships with older adults. This will help children not to view older adults as a burden.⁸

As in all things, parents must teach their children with love. Children make mistakes, children are disobedient, and children break rules. Parents must be firm yet forgiving. If parents are going to try to foster pro-life feminism in children, it is imperative that parents show their children unconditional love above all else. That is the heart of pro-life feminism.

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How to Avoid Two Extremes of Pro-Life Advocacy

By Rachel Crawford

Editor's Note: This article was originally published on [the blog of the Equal Rights Institute](#) on November 30, 2018. The piece has been printed in Life Matters Journal with the permission of the author, who also gave permission to edit it for length and clarity.

Mastering the art of pro-life advocacy requires a delicate balance of candor and affability.

We should not be so afraid of making people uncomfortable that we are unwilling to share the truth. I have seen this happen in some Christian churches when leaders want to be welcoming but are so focused on building community that they sacrifice the richness of the faith for the sake of attracting new people. Their idea of evangelism is to make Jesus “cool” by selling people a shallow, feel-good message that isn’t different in kind from a motivational speaker.

In response to this culture of misplaced compassion, some Christians take the opposite approach and overcorrect. They want to dive into advanced theology immediately, and call out sinful behavior of those they encounter without bothering to build relationships first. This cart-before-the-horse method can be just as unhelpful as the feel-good approach.

I have seen the same two extremes arise during abortion dialogues, and I would like to make a case for a balanced approach to pro-life activism: we need to be both winsome and truthful when we talk about abortion.

If you want to see a clear example of an unbalanced abortion conversation, go onto Twitter and search for “pro-life” or “abortion.” You will see two main types of pro-lifers: 1. Those who tweet

about abortion without any careful consideration of how their words will be perceived by pro-choice people, and 2. People who are throwing insults at individual pro-choice accounts and organizations like Planned Parenthood or NARAL.

It is an ugly, unproductive place. Often, I will scroll through and wonder why these people even bother. I suspect for many of them it is because they honestly don’t know of a better way.

How many pro-life advocates can say they have ever had a single conversation with a pro-choice person that went well? How many can say that they have seen someone change their mind on abortion because of a conversation that they had with them? I think if people got a taste for this type of activism, they would never want to look back. When you witness someone change their mind on abortion, it changes you. I have watched people go through that critical moment when it all comes together and the pieces finally click. On the one hand it is exhilarating because you think to yourself “Yes! She finally gets it!” but on the other hand it can be an incredibly painful experience for them. One time my heart sank on campus as the girl I was speaking with looked me in the eyes and said, “This isn’t okay. This really is killing a baby, isn’t it?” As she looked at me, realizing what she had been defending a few moments earlier in the conversation I could see how disgusted and sad she was about abortion, but also with herself. There was some combination of shock and disbelief in her eyes that I have seen happen many times since. There is something incredible about witnessing that sort of change in perspective on the abortion issue. Think about the passion that a conversion experience like that creates. People who are pro-life that used to be pro-choice are not apathetic and silent.

They are some of the most devoted pro-life advocates that you will meet, and *many of them would never have changed their minds if a patient pro-life person hadn't bothered to try.*

I've also worked with advocates who want to put an end to abrasive and smug Twitter-type activism. They don't just want to preach to the choir and go to protests. They want something better. However, they are so turned off by the negative approach that they try to overcorrect and don't want to tell pro-choice people why they are wrong. They may go on the March for Life, donate money to pro-life organizations and even wear a pro-life t-shirt, but refuse to have an honest conversation with their pro-choice roommate.

In an effort to be as fair as possible to those who think that my balanced approach is too idealistic or unneeded, I want to interact with what I have seen to be one of the most articulate cases for the strong-arm pro-life approach. I have a friend I'll call "Max," who both advocates for and lives by this type of activism. I'll give some background, attempt to charitably present his case, and then respond.

Max is passionately pro-life and otherwise politically involved. He is one of those people who starts debates on Facebook, and they always start the same way. He will pose a question to his Facebook friends, usually sharing an article of some sort along with his thoughts. His style is much more direct and argumentative than mine. People argue back and forth with him for a while on topic but often get so frustrated that they eventually comment something that completely derails the conversation. Max's friends get angry, gang up on him, accuse him of not caring about people, and try to discourage him from starting posts like this in the future.

Max and I have talked about his Facebook debating before and about abortion dialogue in general. He knows about my work with ERI, my dialogue experience, and my style. We also have a really strong friendship, a great deal of trust, and the ability to disagree strongly but still come out of it with respect for each other. The other night we argued again about his approach on Facebook because this time his post about abortion hadn't gone anywhere productive and other friends were sending him private messages about how angry he came across.

Max's defense of his approach essentially boils down to two points:

1. He feels like people who comment on his Facebook posts are so closed-minded on this issue that no matter what he says or does they won't change their minds. He argues that the people who actually comment on Facebook posts are the types of people who already have strong beliefs about various topics and are there to push their view(s), not actually engage other ideas in good faith. I've heard some people in the apologetics world label this kind of solidified stance "foreclosure" for a specific issue, in contrast to open-mindedness. Max says his goal in talking with the people in foreclosure is to create cognitive dissonance for the bystanders who are not participating in the debate but who are watching the public dialogue, and he thinks his more direct, snarky, or cutting responses are not counter-productive towards that goal.

2. He says his goal is to inject ideas into the public square so that people must encounter them, and if they reject the ideas, then they are culpable; in so doing, he feels he has given them the opportunity to accept the truth (placed a stone in their boot, so to speak) and has placed the onus on them to embrace it or not. He emphasized

to me that he thinks what matters is getting the ideas out there in a way that clearly shows his position is superior, and his way of delivering the ideas doesn't matter very much given his priorities and audience. In his words, he shouldn't have to "police his tone" because people are not going to change their minds anyway. In his mind, even if he is "turning some people off," such an outcome is justified if he can make them think. His goal isn't to change their minds; it is to make them uncomfortable.

I think my friend is ultimately failing as a pro-life advocate online in three ways.

First, Max enters the conversation already assuming that the people won't possibly change their minds. In doing so, he is creating an excuse for his behavior. It is much easier to say, "I shouldn't have to police my tone. Facts are facts, truth is truth, and it doesn't matter how you slice it, so people just have to deal." Of course truth is truth, but the way people are able to hear and process truth varies from person to person. Sure, I could yell a calculus lesson in English to a group of Spanish-speaking first graders. It might be the truth and it might be an accurate lesson, but if I am ignoring my students' ability to process the information then I am a terrible teacher. As my former colleague Tim Brahm says, "It is foolish and short-sighted to just blast people with the truth, with no thought as to how they are going to respond to it."

Sure, I could yell a calculus lesson in English to a group of Spanish-speaking first graders. It might be the truth and it might be an accurate lesson, but if I am ignoring my students' ability to process the information then I am a terrible teacher.

Second, he is giving bystanders a lame excuse not to become pro-life because they see him acting poorly and, as a result, they feel more justified in dismissing his position. Of course, objecting to becoming pro-life because pro-life people are jerks is super unreasonable, but it is undeniable that the behavior of advocates affects many people on a subconscious level. Pro-life advocates have a responsibility to bring others to their position by presenting themselves and their arguments in the best way possible, and that means eliminating the lame excuses as well as defeating opposing arguments and collaborating on practical solutions. Additionally, if you make a really bad impression, you've now colored their future interactions with the pro-life movement and through that made it more difficult for them to change their minds.

Third, I think that he is aiming for a lower goal than he should be. He should be trying to help people become pro-life, not just throwing truth at them and hoping it sticks. Creating cognitive dissonance is a great intermediate goal, but it should not be our ultimate one. More is needed to help people cross the conversion threshold. People need to work through a series of intellectual and emotion-

al obstacles. It is certainly more difficult and time-consuming to walk with someone through that journey, but with something like abortion the stakes are high enough that we have a responsibility to reach for it. Max argues that at least he made them angry and made them think. This reminds me of when people say, “If people hate what you’re doing then you must be doing something right.” This assertion can lead into very dangerous rationalization territory.

How angry someone is after your conversation is not indicative of how well you’ve made your case. You don’t need to be hated to be effective, and just because you made someone angry doesn’t mean you made a difference. Allowing the other person to leave the conversation in a positive emotional state is not mutually exclusive with having successfully shared the truth about abortion. I think it is short-sighted to assume that you have to choose between the two, and this mistake is stunting the potential of pro-life/pro-choice interactions. But it goes beyond a lack of vision. Mastering the art of navigating the emotional landmines surrounding abortion while simultaneously trying to respond respectfully to the other person’s arguments takes a tremendous amount of patience. It is incredibly difficult to be the pro-life advocate who sits there and listens carefully to a pro-choice friend explain why they think it should be legal to kill unborn children. Sometimes it makes you want to pull your hair out trying to imagine how someone would want to justify something so obviously wrong. But just as the meek, introverted pro-life advocate needs to find the courage to speak up, so too should the frustrated, strident pro-lifer find the patience to listen and moderate her response.

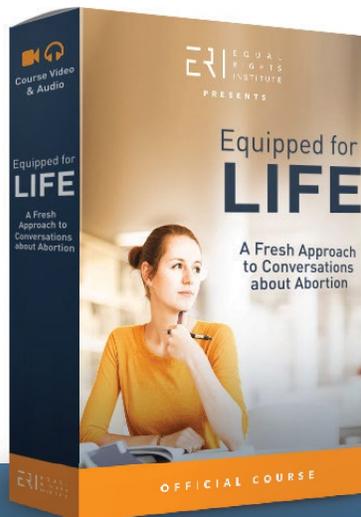
We need to strive for the balanced approach: sharing the truth clearly and doing so winsomely. If people become angry with you during a conversation about abortion, it may be because they hate the truth and they are mad at you for sharing it. But if you dismiss every conversation that ends badly with the rationale that the ending is their problem, then you will miss the opportunity to grow and will fail to take responsibility for any bad behavior or mistakes on your part. You shouldn’t automatically assume that you made a mistake if they get mad, but you also shouldn’t automatically assume you did not make a mistake.

How angry someone is after your conversation is not indicative of how well you’ve made your case. You don’t need to be hated to be effective, and just because you made someone angry doesn’t mean you made a difference.

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Healing the Heritage of Trauma:

A Review of *The Body Keeps the Score* and *Running On Empty*

By Aimee Murphy

*All of your flaws and all of my flaws
They lie there hand in hand
Ones we've inherited, ones that we learned
They pass from man to man
—“Flaws” by Bastille*

Pain and suffering do not exist in a vacuum. And as much as we might try to keep our hurt locked away and hidden from the world — so that it is unable to touch those we love — our wounds, our flaws, and our traumas profoundly impact all of us in our day-to-day lives. I speak from the gutting realization that this experience is my own: trauma affects our bodies, relationships, and future with an insidious subtlety. We've heard the phrase a million times: “hurt people hurt people.” As human animals, we pass on flaws and trauma from generation to generation through neglect, abuse, and violence — both physical and emotional. Without healing, the inheritance of suffering is almost inevitable: this “Heritage of Trauma” impacts us all, and the only way to stop it is to step out of the cycle and refuse to pass it on to the next era of children.

In a peculiarly personal effort to face my own inner demons, I picked up *The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma* by Bessel Van der Kolk, M.D., and *Running on Empty: Overcome Your Childhood Emotional Neglect* by Jonice Webb, PhD. I began reading these books on a journey of self-discovery, in order to explore my life experiences and their connections to my chronic pain, my mental health, and my relationships. In reading these science-heavy and clearly colloquial books, I came to learn what trauma and childhood emotional neglect are.

I became educated about how survivors look and function in the world, and how trauma-related pains hurt ourselves and get passed on to those we love. Lastly, I gained practical knowledge of how we all can make an effort through quotidian actions to change the world in lasting ways and build a culture of peace, because when we heal one branch in the family tree, that healing benefit will be the proper and dignified inheritance for future generations.

The Pain

In *The Body Keeps the Score*, Van der Kolk speaks in depth about the intertwined nature of brain and body in trauma. The clinical assessment of trauma shifted dramatically with the advent of the diagnostic criteria for PTSD in 1980. With the new diagnosis available to physicians, the medical community was able to piece together many disparate symptoms into the one comprehensive diagnosis that made sense of what people experience after traumatic incidents.

During a traumatic incident, the brain may be engaged on many levels, from our reptilian brain through our mammalian brain all the way up to our rational brain. Van der Kolk explains that during a trauma, if no social support seems available, and fighting back or fleeing seems impossible, the brain will revert to the most basic, reptilian response that exists: freeze. However, if this immobilization happens, the victim is also more likely to suffer from post-traumatic stress as the body attempts to act out the trauma and potentially engage in fight, flight, or freeze. I related to this on a

personal level: my ingrained response to trauma over the years has been to freeze in the face of it, and I'm certainly not alone in this.

Post-traumatic stress involves the sensation of constantly being drawn back into the past by various visual, olfactory, auditory, and other sensory triggers. Because this dissociation happens, I learned, it is common for the trauma victim to be unable to integrate new experiences properly into their life and their emotional self. It's kind of like a part of us gets "stuck" in that traumatic moment (and the aftermath), and this "stuckness" causes a whole domino effect of other psychological and physiological effects.

When the brain gets pulled back into the traumatic memory fragments in flashbacks, the body stays on a high level of alert. Van der Kolk describes the physiology of chronic pain and illness that follow trauma: "In PTSD the body continues to defend against a threat that belongs to the past. Healing from PTSD means being able to terminate this continued stress mobilization and restore the entire organism to safety."¹ He goes on to describe the various ways that this stress reaction manifests in the body, including chronic pain, fibromyalgia, memory and attention problems, irritability and sleep disorders, muscle tightness, epigenetic changes, etc. I saw so many of these conditions reflected in my own life — and despite the fact that I was fully aware that I was a survivor of several traumatic experiences, I hadn't realized how my trauma from decades ago was still damaging my life today.

Many trauma survivors engage in destructive behaviors, not only with themselves, but also with those around them (who are almost invariably those they love). People with PTSD almost unfailingly have an extremely difficult time maintaining harmonious relationships with others; this is in part because, as Van der Kolk declares, "Trauma almost invariably involves not being seen, not being mirrored, and not being taken into account."² Many trauma survivors have explained that they didn't tell anyone about a traumatic incident in the weeks after it occurred; so in the period when we need support, comfort, and mirroring the most, we often find ourselves isolated in shame. As social animals, humans are built for community; so when trauma victims find themselves isolated in shame, this causes a lack of synchrony between them and other people, and ultimately, their amygdalas become overactive. The amygdala releases stress hormones during a stressful event, consistently well before we might realize what is going on. If recovery after a stressful event is blocked for some reason, in the future we may not be able to discern whether situations are dangerous or safe. Dr. Van der Kolk writes, "You can get along with other people only if you can accurately gauge whether their intentions are benign or dangerous... Faulty alarm systems lead to blowups or shutdowns in response to innocuous comments or facial expressions."³ When trauma enters, it can tear families, relationships, and communities apart if it isn't healed and integrated properly. In an effort to numb out the pain and escape from the constant barrage of psychological reminders, the trauma survivor may resort to alcohol, medication, illicit drugs, or reckless behavior. This sort of activity, meant

Many trauma survivors engage in destructive behaviors, not only with themselves, but also with those around them (who are almost invariably those they love).

to anaesthetize the victim against the inner turmoil of their trauma, has the power to destroy peace in our families and throughout our communities.

—

Running on Empty (and its successor book, *Running on Empty No More*) came very highly recommended by my therapist as an educational tool to help navigate my own journey in growth to emotional maturity and self-knowledge as a young adult. I was, quite understandably, hesitant to pick it up because I love my parents dearly, I know that they love me, and would never want to blame them for any wrong-doing nor ill intent. So as I read, I found myself caught somewhat off-guard by how relatable the text was.

In a way that is meant to compassionately inform, Jonice Webb shares her research on a newly-understood phenomenon: Childhood Emotional Neglect (CEN). She outlines the ways that emotionally neglectful parents distinguish themselves: "either they emotionally fail their child in some critical way in a moment of crisis, causing the child a wound which may never be repaired (acute empathic failure) OR they are chronically tone-deaf to some aspect of a child's need throughout his or her childhood development (chronic empathic failure)."⁴ Dr. Webb even explains that the experience of CEN is often passed down unknowingly from generation to generation, perhaps because we have a society that has been so uncomfortable with displaying powerful emotions and has, in particular, shamed men as "weak" for showing any sadness. Our entire culture is steeped in emotional illiteracy and suppression, and this approach to emotion often gets tacitly transferred from parent to child, often unintentionally.

When I read through the list of common traits of adult children who experienced emotional neglect, I got choked up and felt seen in a way I hadn't before. Dr. Webb described feelings of emptiness, a sense of counter-dependence, constant unrealistic self-appraisal, a sense of no compassion for oneself (but plenty of compassion for others), consistent guilt and shame, a lot of self-directed anger and blame, difficulty nurturing, poor self-discipline, alexithymia (inability to identify or describe one's own emotions), and the ever-evasive "Fatal Flaw" (the feeling that "if anyone knew the real me they would hate me").⁵ All of these aspects of the adult child of emotional neglect result in a vicious cycle that I personally like to call the "Sneaky Self-Hate Spiral": my anxiety, added to by perfectionism, multiplied by alienation from others and from myself, all melds into one mess of emotions. I related to many of the patients that Dr. Webb cites in her pages, as they talked about how big emotions like anger or frustration or grief cause a downward spiral into vicious self-hate.

As Dr. Webb explains, as many survivors of CEN grew older, they unfortunately were subconsciously sent the message that emotions were unacceptable. When we humans receive this message, we fail to integrate fully; many survivors go so far as to do their best to dull

the physiological sensations of emotions because they view them as bad and unwanted, and then fail to understand what their body is trying to tell them when they have migraine headaches, stomachaches, and other pains. All of these complaints are common when we consistently suppress our normal emotions. When the Sneaky Hate Spiral comes around during the next instance of heavy emotions, it could result in self-harm, irresponsible health choices, or, worst of all, suicidal ideation.

Childhood emotional neglect, while not violent like physical abuse, still causes many hang-ups in self-empathy as its compounds over time. Regrettably, it can result in badly broken relationships between family, friends, partners, and others. Adult children who experienced CEN often display explosive anger, excessive drinking, missed deadlines, and are emotionally distant. These behaviors are a recipe for compounded trauma and pain being passed on to others, not to mention the initial emotional distance and the difficult relationships that likely exist between a child and parent after years of CEN.

Unfortunately, the Heritage of Trauma through both Childhood Emotional Neglect and more severe traumatic incidents get passed down without much thought on our part as adults. In Van der Kolk's writing, he explains how a research study once demonstrated that "...hostile/intrusive mothers were more likely to have childhood histories of physical abuse and/or of witnessing domestic violence, while... withdrawn/dependent mothers were more likely to have histories of sexual abuse or parental loss (but not physical abuse)."⁶ These parents passed down trauma and emotional neglect to their children because they had suffered trauma in their own young lives. Statistics have shown, time and time again, that abused children will go on to experience more mental and physical illness as they grow older, that they will learn patterns of emotional neglect and parenting from their own negative experiences, and without proper healing, can enter into the same awful Heritage of Trauma with their own children. For example, "...girls who witness domestic violence while growing up are at much higher risk of ending up in violent relationships themselves, while for boys who witness domestic violence, the risk that they will abuse their own partners rises sevenfold."⁷ This is all not to mention that the trauma can, and often does, manifest through seemingly unexplained physical illness, and that the physiological strife can result in changes down to the DNA level. At that level, the study of epigenetics has shown that trauma in life can manifest in a change in methylation properties within the body, which can "turn on" or "turn off" select genes that can manifest different disease and syndrome conditions. These epigenetic changes to our DNA expression can even be passed down from one generation to the next in our prenatal genetic code, so that a trauma that affected our grandmothers could cause us to experience a specific physical illness today.

The key, as Webb mentions, is to not run on auto-pilot as an adult. She says, "A parent who grew up emotionally neglected cannot follow her default settings for parenting. Since her default settings were determined by her primary caregivers, those settings will likely result in her passing down her own Emotional Neglect to her child. As a parent, it's vital to work hard to override your

own settings and create healthier ones for your child."⁸ In short, as adults who are conscious of the pain that we endured at the hands of prior generations, we have the responsibility to be fully aware of our actions. We have to make deliberate decisions to not pass on the Heritage of Trauma. We must make a commitment to ourselves to be the last in this tragically long line.

—
*I have crossed the horizon to find you
I know your name
They have stolen the heart from inside you
But this does not define you
This is not who you are
You know who you are*
—"Know Who You Are" from *Moana*

The Salve

When reading through these books, I was unsurprised to see how much overlap existed between them. One important theme stuck out to me as vital for our understanding of how we bridge the gap between crisis and creating a solution: Attachment Theory.

In *The Body Keeps the Score*, this theory is described as "...mastering the skill of self-regulation [which] depends to a large degree on how harmonious our early interactions with our caregivers are. Children whose parents are reliable sources of comfort and strength have a lifetime advantage — a kind of buffer against the worst that fate can hand them."⁹ Van Der Kolk then describes experiments which display this theory of attachment by demonstrating how young children play, with their primary caregiver often as a secure "home base" for them to return to at any point. This ability to return to the parent allows the child to explore new things, but to also have the comfort of knowing that the parent will always be there and attentive to their emotional needs.

Children who grow up without this secure base to return to will likely lack the skills to emotionally regulate themselves; instead of experiencing security, they learned to suppress emotions as inconvenient and undesirable. So, it makes sense that *Running on Empty* would explore Attachment Theory as a necessary foundational theory for how we relate to our children. Dr. Webb describes her emotional safety model through the lens of Attachment Theory as follows: "1) The parent feels an emotional connection to the child. 2) The parent pays attention to the child and sees him as a unique and separate person, rather than, say, an extension of him or herself, a possession or a burden. 3) Using that emotional connection and paying attention, the parent responds competently to the child's emotional need."¹⁰ Both this Attachment method of emotional literacy, and the crucial place of Attachment Theory in Van der Kolk's method of healing from trauma, point to a larger truth in our work towards creating a peaceful world: in order to integrate our trauma and our emotions into our selves, and integrate ourselves into our communities, we must begin with a secure sense of ourselves within the context of those who love us. We must feel seen and heard, respected and reciprocated within the first context: in our families, however our families look.¹¹

To start earnestly on the journey to healing, we must begin with self-knowledge and self-compassion. Often, as children, we learn who we are from mirroring those around us and from being affirmed in our passions. However, many adults who endured trauma and CEN when younger, they must re-parent themselves and affirm their dignity and their identity while on a personal journey of self-discovery. When we can extend self-compassion, we can begin our own healing by rewiring the neural pathways in our brains and creating new mental paradigms. As Van der Kolk says in *The Body Keeps the Score*, “Our great challenge is to apply the lessons of neuroplasticity, the flexibility of brain circuits, to rewire the brains and reorganize the minds of people who have been programmed by life itself to experience others as threats and themselves as helpless.”¹² I learned that survivors of trauma and Childhood Emotional Neglect can begin their healing by learning Self-Leadership, and as they develop new habits of thinking, they will have the core agency to overcome their old feelings of helplessness and take charge of their journey to emotional maturity. Beyond basic Attachment within our families, we as survivors can work as our own Self-Leaders to heal the Heritage of Trauma by actively laying foundations for emotional self-awareness, working to heal ourselves and our relationships.

In an effort to give the reader a taste of what sorts of methods can be discovered from these books, I’m going to share a brief sampling of the major items recommended by Van der Kolk and Webb that can help us build a more peaceful world, both internally with ourselves, and with others.

As both Dr. Webb and Dr. Van der Kolk point out, our journey to emotional growth and healing begins with internal practices: we have to start reacquainting ourselves with our emotions and our bodily manifestations of those emotions. Because traumatized and emotionally neglected people are often alexithymic, they tend to have trouble understanding what is going on with their bodies; beginning the process of mindful self-reflection can bridge the mental gap that exists between mind and body. In *The Body Keeps the Score*, Van der Kolk lays out the necessity of making mindfulness practice the cornerstone of all future healing:

“When we pay focused attention to our bodily sensations, we can recognize the ebb and flow of our emotions and, with that, increase our control over them... Learning to observe and tolerate your physical reactions is a prerequisite for safely revisiting the past. If you cannot tolerate what you are feeling right now, opening up the past will only compound the misery and retraumatize you further.”¹³

Some ways to engage in mindfulness practices include deep breathing, grounding exercises, yoga and slow stretching, physical and occupational therapy, martial arts and self-defense courses, writing to yourself and processing emotions throughout the day, and intentional self-care. I’ve begun to incorporate some of these activities into my daily life, and as I’ve done so, I have noticed how I hold my stress in my body, how I struggle to breathe deeply at times, how I hang onto emotions in an effort to suppress them. Deliberate work on my own self-care has helped me to see how I have neglected my own needs for so long, as well. By following Dr. Webb’s principles from *Running on Empty*, I’m learning to put

myself first (to eat, exercise, and rest when my body needs it), to improve my self-discipline, learn to self-soothe, and overall to have more compassion towards myself.

These mindfulness practices are so crucial and foundational because the work of healing oneself is heavy, difficult, and often painful. For me, it has been probably one of the most worthwhile undertakings of my entire life, but I will not deceive you: it has been extremely hard. Some of the methods that I have been grateful to learn from personal experience in conjunction with my therapists include Internal Family Systems (IFS) therapy, Eye-Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) therapy, and massage therapy. Additionally, Van der Kolk also recommends a few other types of therapeutic work that can help, that I myself would be curious to try: Creating Structures (psychomotor therapy), neurofeedback therapy, and a type of psychomotor therapy that specifically engages our need for communal rhythms: theater. Related to healing trauma, I’ve found EMDR to be among the most helpful modalities at this point; for healing myself after CEN, a combination of mindfulness and IFS have helped me to integrate my emotions. I can’t speak for what will be fruitful for each individual, but Drs. Webb and Van der Kolk have laid out a comprehensive docket of therapy opportunities that should certainly be explored in cooperation with a professional counselor.

Speaking of counselors and therapists, often a relationship with a competent therapist is among the first healthy relationships that a person who has endured trauma or CEN will encounter. A good counselor has the power to help take down emotional walls, build trust, and create opportunities for further growth. Van der Kolk outlines the need for a capable and trustworthy therapist when he says,

You have to find someone you can trust enough to accompany you, someone who can safely hold your feelings and help you listen to the painful messages from your emotional brain. You need a guide who is not afraid of your terror and who can contain your darkest rage, someone who can safeguard the wholeness of you while you explore the fragmented experiences that you had to keep secret from yourself for so long.¹⁴

After establishing a solid relationship with a therapist, I learned that there is a mountain of work to be done for the survivor of Childhood Emotional Neglect in order to start or rebuild relationships with friends, partners, and perhaps most importantly — family. Dr. Webb covers some of the first steps for a CEN adult to ensure that they will not pass on Childhood Emotional Neglect to future generations in *Running on Empty*. These steps include being emotionally “filled up with premium grade”, being mutually interdependent, having a strong and clear sense of self, having compassion, having healthy self-acceptance, being forgiving, being likable and lovable, being giving and caring, being in control, and perhaps most importantly: being emotionally aware.¹⁵ Additionally, Dr. Webb also includes a discussion about healthy boundaries, both mentally and physically, that can begin the path to relationship growth. Of course, I would be remiss if I didn’t mention that Dr. Webb has written a follow-up book specifically on how to navigate relationships (including parental and romantic/partnered relation-

ships) in light of CEN and healing this Heritage of Trauma; it is called *Running on Empty No More*, and it has profoundly impacted my life.

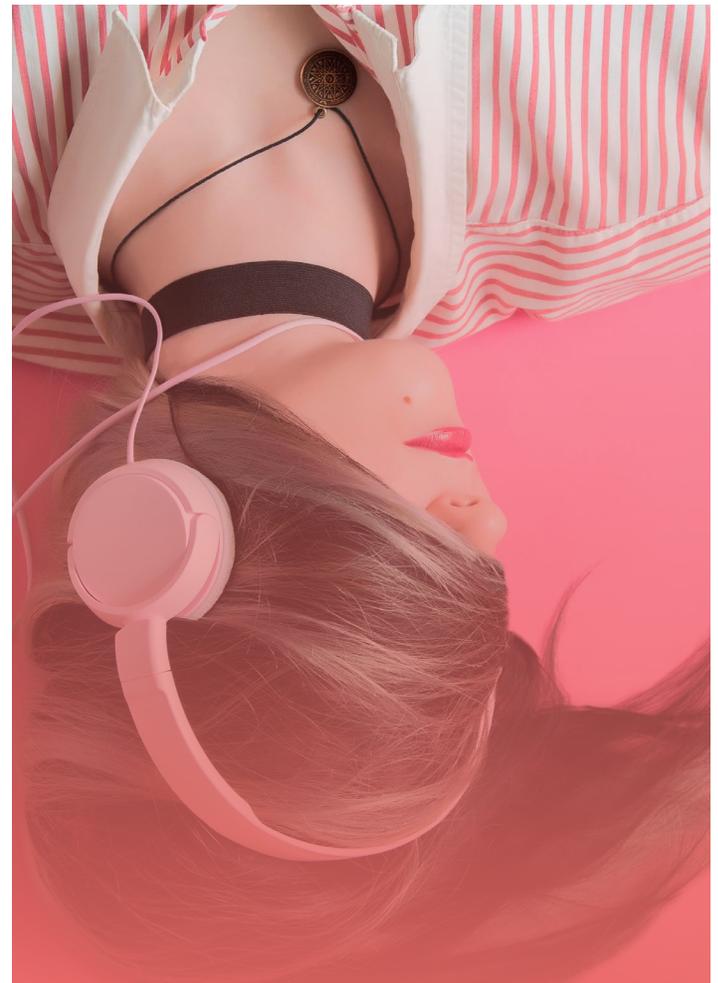
I truly wish that I had the space and the time to share with you every nugget of useful information that I learned about repairing and establishing healthy relationships, about self-knowledge, about trauma, about neglect, about emotions, and about the human experience from these impactful books.¹⁶ Whether we have experienced trauma or not, we have the power to be emotionally intelligent, to be invested in the well-being of others, to listen, to act compassionately, and to refuse to pass on trauma. I must also note that these books were difficult for me to read at times, because there are patient stories interwoven into the academic prose, and many of the patient stories are full of hurt and pain, and some are rife with violence.

If you decide to take the journey which I have already begun in order to reach emotional health and to heal the Heritage of Trauma in your own life, I commend you for your courage; but I also ask you to be patient with yourself, to have compassion, and to have confidence that you will find who you are beneath the layers of pain. Nonetheless, I've learned that there are so many little things that we can incorporate into our lives to heal the Heritage of Trauma and create a more peaceful world, so I encourage every reader to consider adding *The Body Keeps the Score* and *Running on Empty* to their library. Whether or not you lived through these pains, someone in your life almost certainly has. And together, through little actions each day that tell those in our lives that "I see you" and "I hear you", I think we can make this journey to a more peaceful world. To paraphrase and echo what Mother Teresa of Calcutta once said, "If you want to change the world, go home and love your family (whatever your family looks like to you)."

Notes

1. Van der Kolk, Bessel. *The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind and Body in the Healing of Trauma*. New York, NY: Penguin Books, 2015. 53.
2. *Ibid*, 59.
3. *Ibid*, 61-62.
4. Webb, Jonice, and Christine Musello. *Running on Empty: Overcome Your Childhood Emotional Neglect*. New York: Morgan James Publishing, 2014. 4-5.
5. *Ibid*, 71-102.
6. Van der Kolk, 122.
7. *Ibid*, 149.
8. Webb, 187.
9. *Ibid*, 112.
10. *Ibid*, 6.
11. How does this look in practice? I created a little acronym to help me remember: ALIEN - Ask (have curiosity about feelings!), Listen In (listen to what the emotions are saying), Empathy (relate to the emotions and/or underlying reason for them), Name the emotion (say the emotion out loud, "own" it).
12. Van der Kolk, 169.
13. *Ibid*, 211.
14. *Ibid*, 213.
15. Webb, 183-193.
16. If you'd like to read my extensive notes from the books, including dozens of pages of quotes, you can find my note document here: <https://bit.ly/2VKXDBV>. It's a poor substitute for reading the books themselves, but it can give you a more in-depth taste of what to expect from these very fruitful books.

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Heavyfeather Vignettes

By Summer Wright

!:Pigeon with a tumor on his left foot on Fifth Ave. limps toward crumbs tossed from deep translucent bag. Eats food donated by a man with a shopping cart, a more abrupt vision of dearth and dirtiness than me. Still flies fine: city birds, however, prefer to walk.

^:Young girl, green undercut, tosses crumbs. Ecstatic bullhorns peeking from the bus, coupled with a silent-shout smile, protruding tongue. She sees the pigeons boomeranging around the bustle, pecking into crevices. Marvels at her effect upon their lives. I marvel at her.

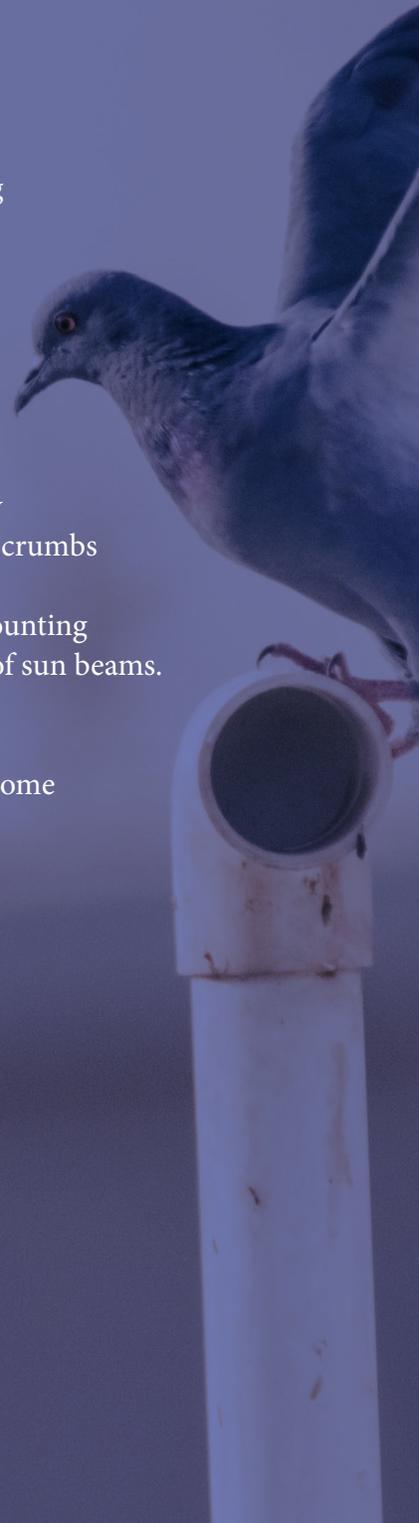
&:My one love leans on the smile I direct to strangers. Unable to beckon even breadcrumbs, she turns in for the night.

#:Sparrows like static TV in Market Square. I eat food donated to me by a woman with angel wings from Bluebird Kitchen and donate them the crumbs as pigeons flock in and in. I toss to the outer ones, feeding timidity, drop pieces on my laces until I am overwhelmed by the swarm. After counting ten, realize I've an audience of hundreds. I laugh like the ebullient god of sun beams.

≠:Daily migration. Bus is packed in the morning. Daytime building windows bludgeon bewildered sparrows. Near-hollow bus on the way home at night. Everyone knows where I'm walking and what I mean, and they choose ignorance, distance from the belly of the bridge.

%:People like sparrows like static channels — but beautiful up close. Unrivaled masterworks. Viewed as personal, every window-bludgeoned wing is a tragedy.

≈:I am as afraid of the riverside geese as they are of me, as we all are of the volatile weather. I am alone past midnight and a statue's shadow makes me call "Hello?" softly. Geese watch my walk silently ("Hello?") until we all emerge from the interaction firmly and fully unharmed. In caution and hostility we understand each other.





At-Home Activism

By Sarah Terzo

When most people think of activism, they think of rallies, marches, and demonstrations. All of these are important and attention-getting activities. But there are many people who find it difficult to participate in them. Many disabled people have trouble with mobility and find traveling difficult, especially since venues may not be handicapped accessible. Others, who may be disabled due to chronic illness, may not have the endurance to be out in public for long stretches of time. Those who have a mental illness may find crowds intimidating, dread a change in their daily routine, or be concerned about experiencing panic attacks or other symptoms in public. Many who are disabled or struggling with a mental or physical illness may feel that there is little they can do to fight for social justice, but as a disabled person myself, I have found important ways to contribute right from a computer at home. Disabled people can be just as valuable as advocates for life and justice as those who are able-bodied. In fact, we have a very important perspective to share.

Social media creates outreach opportunities one can do from home. Sharing Facebook posts or tweets about life and justice issues is a good way to raise awareness. Raising awareness on social media can be easily overlooked, but it does make a difference. Even when people don't actively comment on posts, they see them, which does have an impact. For example, in a series of surveys con-

ducted in 2011, researchers asked people if they had recently seen a picture of an ultrasound, either on Facebook or elsewhere. Over half of those polled said yes. Researchers controlled for factors such as age, education, and background, and found:

...a modest but significant negative impact on support for legal abortion. In other words, Americans who have recently seen an ultrasound are less likely to say abortion should be legal in all or most cases than those who have not.¹

As this research illustrates, sharing pictures, (and likely memes and articles) on social media does have an impact. On days when a person has little energy or isn't feeling well, simply sharing something on social media can make a difference. It is also possible to set up a page on Facebook for any life, peace, or justice issue, invite followers, and share articles and useful information about the topic. This is not too complicated to do, and the page will stay active even if you don't post on it for a while.

One can also research pro-life, pro-peace, and social justice topics from the comfort of home. Many activists don't have the time to read newsletters and monitor online publications, so they may miss valuable information and resources. I have created the blog clinicquotes.com mainly to share the research I have done. I built

ClinicQuotes into a valuable resource that researchers can use. A great deal of research can be done from your own computer. Public libraries often have databases of magazine and newspaper articles going back decades, which can be accessed from any computer. Of course, there are also many online news services to follow, both mainstream ones and those for specific causes.

Disabilities can interfere with concentration and focus, and not everyone has an easy time putting words on paper (or on a computer screen). But for those who can do it, writing can be another valuable method of activism, which can open people's minds to new perspectives and educate the public on peace and life issues. Disabled people in particular have a valuable perspective to share. Writing, whether on your own blog or for an established publication, is something that can be done from the comfort of home. Also, writing articles can equip other activists with useful facts and information and inspire them in what they do. Writing takes place behind the scenes and away from cameras, but it can be extremely effective.

In my own writing, I started small, on my personal blog, but now I write for Live Action, a well-known pro-life group, as well as other groups. I've written hundreds of articles, and some have been seen by many thousands of people. It takes a while to become an established writer, but everyone has to start somewhere. Also, don't overlook the power of fiction to move people and inspire change.

You also don't need to leave home to contact senators and representatives and encourage them to support pro-life, pro-peace, and social justice legislation. Making these phone calls or writing these emails is important activist work, but many people who work full time and lead busy, hectic lives do not find the time to do it.

Finally, one of the most fulfilling things I have ever done is talking with abortion minded women and encouraging them to choose life, which I have also done entirely online. I have a number of pages on ClinicQuotes that reach out to women considering abortion. For a little while, I was getting thousands of visitors a day, and my page was ranked number one on Google, right above Planned Parenthood. I got so many emails and posts from women considering abortion that I needed to enlist other volunteers to help write to them. My happiest moment came when four women I was writing to told me they were choosing life in one day, which happened to be the day of the March for Life in 2018. Sadly, my Google ranking has dropped dramatically and I get far fewer visitors to these pages now. Still, I have photos of some of the babies we helped save to look back on.

Many disabled people can't go to abortion facilities and do side-walk counseling, but we can reach out on Internet forums where women considering abortion sometimes post to ask for advice. Here are a few examples of such forums:

- <https://ehealthforum.com/health/abortion.html>
- <https://community.babycenter.com/groups/a6737098>
- <https://community.babycenter.com/groups/a6325/termination>

[for medical reasons](https://community.babycenter.com/groups/a7815/termination)

<https://community.babycenter.com/groups/a7815/termination>
[for non-medical reasons](https://community.babycenter.com/groups/a7815/termination)

<http://www.scarleteen.com/bb/viewforum.php?f=12>.

Several of these links are to forums on BabyCenter. Be forewarned, though, that in my experience the site tends to not take pro-life posts well. If you want to provide abortion alternatives to a woman there, reaching out via private message is probably the best approach. The forum at ScarletTeen is not very active, but you can check there periodically. Another place to encounter women considering abortion is Yahoo.Answers. If you search for "pregnancy" or "abortion" and set it to the most recent posts, you will sometimes find pregnant people who are unsure what to do. If you have a Yahoo email account, you can reach out to them.

If you do decide to reach out to pregnant women, electronically or otherwise, always make sure you approach them with compassion and understanding, sympathizing with their situation and offering support. I have found that giving information on fetal development can be helpful, as well as offering resources in their community that can help. You can find such resources in these

two directories: BirthRight (birthright.org) which also has a 24-hour hotline for pregnant people who need help (1-800-550-4900) and CareNet (optionline.org). CareNet is a Christian ministry, while BirthRight secular. Both groups operate chains of pregnancy centers throughout the US and internationally.

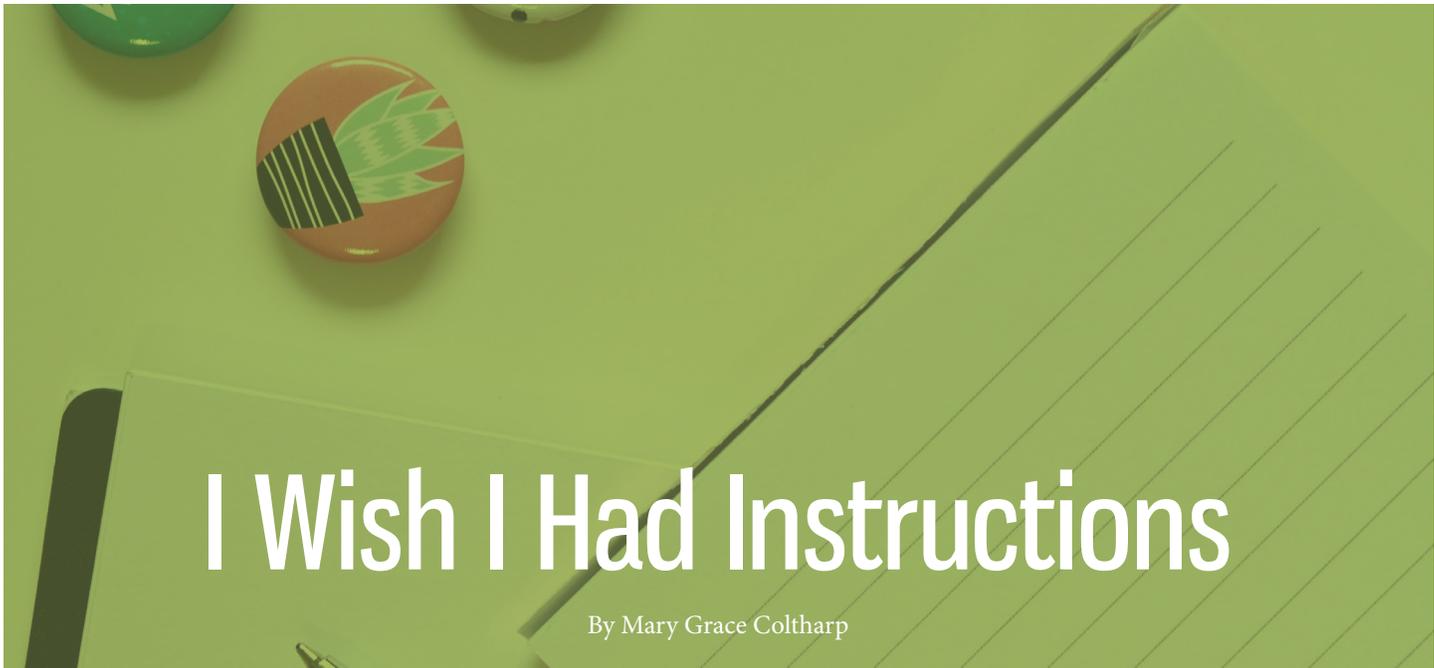
Even if you don't want to focus on abortion, there is another forum I've come across where you can save lives, specifically of people dealing with suicidal ideation or considering suicide. The suicide prevention outreach forum located at suicideforum.com is staffed by trained professionals and gives people the opportunity to both give and receive support. They welcome anyone who has suicidal thoughts as well as anyone who wants to encourage those who are struggling. The forum gives the opportunity to show compassion to those battling mental illness or struggling through difficult life circumstances. SuicideForum is a peer-to-peer forum that is strictly monitored to keep it a safe place. If you feel you have the emotional resources to help and encourage others, posting on the site is a way to make a difference.

Whether it's advocating for social justice causes, educating others on vital issues, or helping people directly, there are many things disabled and homebound people can do to make a positive difference in the world.

Notes

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...for those who can do it, writing can be another valuable method of activism, which can open people's minds to new perspectives...



I Wish I Had Instructions

By Mary Grace Coltharp

Anyone can *think* about the violence and injustice suffered by a fellow human being. It takes no courage to get frustrated and worked up over the problems humanity faces. However, to go beyond thinking and take action is not easy. You may be thinking, “So where do I begin? What am I supposed to do about that right now?” Maybe you have a handful of excuses that stem from feeling overwhelmed or unsure of yourself and that keep you from getting involved.

In middle and high school I was beginning to understand the world in a more realistic light and coming into my own as someone who cared about what happens to humanity. As a young person, then and now, with big goals for how I could change the world, I didn’t know where to begin or what I could do on a daily basis. What I wanted was an instruction manual. From my drive for creating positive change and that desire for direction came the idea for *A Consistent Life*.

Aimee Murphy and I created *A Consistent Life: The Young Advocate’s Guide to Living Peace and Justice Daily* for anyone who wants to help rehumanize the marginalized. The guide is a workbook set up with weekly themes focused on certain groups of dehumanized people that gives the reader daily action-items according to the theme. The topics covered in *A Consistent Life* are as varied as the themes present in *Life Matters Journal*. Each week focuses on a group to rehumanize: human beings experiencing homelessness, preborn human beings and their parents, and human beings who are or have been incarcerated, to name a few. On each week’s informational page, an activist learns more about a particular type of injustice and is prompted to do some of their own research.

Following the informational page are five days of tasks related to the group you are rehumanizing that week. These actions are generally smaller tasks for the first four days leading up to a big-ticket item on the 5th day, which can be accomplished over the weekend. The actions involve working with members of marginalized groups, respectfully dialoguing with those with whom you dis-

agree, protesting or other democratic ways to change policy, and many more.

A few times the guide asks you to read a relevant article or pertinent book or watch a related movie. We recommend starting a book club to discuss what you can learn from nonfiction works or thought-provoking novels and films using the list of resources in the back of the book. Better yet, get a group or partner to go through the entire year with you!

Even if your year of living peace and justice daily is a solo project, you can always involve friends and family in volunteer efforts. People who care about you want to know what you care about, and a volunteer project is an easy way to start some important conversations. One aspect of the book is the tasks which involve using creativity for good, but throughout the year we challenge you to use whatever talents you might have. We also included some reminders to “rehumanize yourself”, as Aimee puts it. Whenever you are working against commonly accepted forms of violence or any injustice, it is vital to take care of your own mental and emotional health along the way.

We created *A Consistent Life* not only to help break down the steps someone can take to make a difference. We wrote it because we know how much the work needs to be done and we know how much power an individual has in the face of evil. Young people especially need to be empowered because we have such potential to set in motion necessary change. Whether you buy the book on Amazon for yourself or a teenager in your life, or simply decide to set goals for yourself, there are ways to make a difference, bit by bit.

We can change our attitudes from “this problem is too big for me to do anything about” to “each day I can do something small until it all adds up.” The culture isn’t going to change overnight, but each of us can chip away at its dehumanizing aspects until every human being is unconditionally respected. Together we can mold a culture which values every life, responds to evil with love, and counteracts injustice with kindness. Step one: start.



Using Your Talent for Good: An Interview With Laura Schaefer

By Herb Geraghty

The AIM Women's Center offers free, confidential care and resources to pregnant people and parents in Steubenville, Ohio. Recently, they added another service: no-cost Mommy and Me photography sessions for mothers who have chosen life. This project is the brainchild of Laura Schaefer, a local business owner who has a passion for both photography and helping out new parents. I was lucky enough to speak with Laura about her work with the pregnancy center and I hope her words can serve as inspiration to anyone else who may want to use their passions and talents to make a positive difference in their communities.

What inspired you to get started with this project?

In March of 2018 I attended a fundraising banquet for AIM Women's Center, and I felt a tug on my heart to give more than just a monetary donation. However, I knew that we would be having another baby that year and I wouldn't be able to volunteer regularly at the center with a toddler and newborn. So in prayer, I asked God what He wanted me to do. He told me to use my talents to bless the women who choose life. So I met with the executive director of the center and offered my photography services to the center. I not only do the Mommy and Me sessions for the women who chose life, I also do headshots and other photography for the center.

What do you hope to achieve with your service?

I hope to give to the women photographs of their newborn child, the child they chose to give birth to. I wanted to bless them with the gift of photos with their baby, especially after a tumultuous 9 months. Photos are so important, capturing moments and memories, and I wanted the women to be able to look back at photographs of their newborn and see just how precious life truly is.

How has the community response been so far?

I haven't told many people that I'm doing this; however, those who do know think it is absolutely wonderful. I like the fact that I get to secretly do this work, hopefully making a difference in the women's lives. I don't do it at all for the praise or recognition. I think that's why I don't go around telling people about it. The women's center is very appreciative and I love working with the staff and volunteers.

What about photography do you think makes it an effective medium to empower women and families?

Photos are moments and memories captured, they are time that is caught in a still moment and that can be looked back upon time and time again. I'd say that because photography captures emotions in the moment, it can be used to empower the women who do choose life for their child in the womb. They can look back at these photos and think "yes, that was so hard, yes it was a tough season, but look at me. I am a strong mother and I have a beautiful child. It was so so worth it".

Do you have any advice for someone else who may want to use their passion and talents for good?

I'd definitely say do it! That's why you were given this gift! I see my gift of photography as a gift for others. I love the opportunity to bless others' lives with photos. Don't worry about not being good enough or that someone else could do it better. If not you, then who? If it's been placed upon your heart, act upon it. Do good anyway. I can tell you from experience it has been so fulfilling.



Thoughts on Language

By Stephanie Hauer

The language we use is vital. The words we choose shape our understanding of the world around us and the ideas we have in response to that world. Language is potent. It can inspire, validate, identify, and promote understanding. It can also demotivate, disrespect, erase, and confuse. The way that we use our words can influence those around us in incredibly important ways. Thankfully, you don't have to be a full-time activist in order to change your language use. Anyone can work to incorporate more sensitive and empowering language habits into their daily life.

There are numerous vulnerable identities and communities that find their dignity attacked by language use. This can be manifested in conscious ways, such as the use of slurs and stereotypes, or in unconscious ways, such as the use of microaggressions and unintentional offenses. This article explores some examples, but it is not an all-encompassing list. Hopefully, learning about the trends present in these five examples will help you notice similar patterns and allow you to interrogate language use across the board.

People with disabilities and/or mental illnesses are people with inherent dignity not lessened by their conditions. In order to reflect the intrinsic value of all human life, there has been a recent shift toward "person-first language." Person-first language takes the form of phrases such as "man with depression" or "woman with Down syndrome," where the individual is mentioned first and the condition comes second. Its direct counterpart is "identity-first language," where the condition is mentioned first and the individual is mentioned second. Examples include "schizophrenic girl" or "anorexic boy."

Both methods of reference are valid, and different people prefer one or the other. Some people prefer identity-first language because they consider their disability to be an important part of who

they are. Others prefer person-first language because it emphasizes their personhood over their condition. Each individual has governance over how they are referred to, and we should all do our best to use the language someone requests. But on a large scale, person-first language is often the default. It shifts the focus to the person, encompassing their capabilities, strengths, and choices. It directs attention to the individual, rather than the condition, which can help them feel like they are not invisible, or that their condition is not the only thing noticeable about them. Person-first language can even encourage people without disabilities and mental illnesses to think about those who do have such conditions in a more hopeful and holistic light.

Another recent shift is in the language around sexual violence. The term "survivor" is utilized with increasing regularity, often replacing the term "victim." As in the disability context, individuals have the right to determine what words are used to describe them. If someone who has experienced sexual violence indicates that they prefer "survivor" or "victim," that is the term that should be used to describe them. Something as simple as swapping out a word can be remarkably healing for someone who has been through a form of sexual violence. By its very nature, sexual assault disregards a person's autonomy and violates their sense of control over what happens to them. Changing your language based on their request is a small way to restore that sense of control and respect their autonomy. It can make a substantial impact on their sense of security and respect.

The use of "survivor" is meant to be empowering and encouraging. "Survivor" carries with it connotations of perseverance, progress, mobility, and even thriving.¹ It is meant to replace the negative connotations of "victim," which can imply helplessness, weakness, and entrapment. The general shift towards the use of

“survivor” is an acknowledgement of the dignity of those who have experienced sexual violence. It shows that their assault does not dictate their entire life, and that they are not wholly defined by their assault. However, some people feel that the term “survivor” has taken on new connotations of forced heroism, obligated healing, and finalized perfection. They feel that being a “survivor” means that one never shows any manifestation of trauma because one has “gotten over it,” and they must now serve as an “inspiration” by making the best out of a bad situation. That is why some people prefer to use the term “victim,” but are fighting to change the negative stigma around the word itself.²

When discussing persons in the womb, the term “unborn” has been the long-standing default. However, more and more people are switching to the term “preborn.” Based on the function of these prefixes, this shift is quite logical. The prefix *un-* comes from Old High German, and it is used in modern English to imply reversal or negation.³ A baby in the womb has not had their birth reversed; it simply has not happened yet. Negation comes closer, since the baby has not been born, but *un-* also implies some level of finality. On the other hand, the prefix *pre-* comes from Latin and means “before.” This is a much more accurate, since the baby in the womb is simply in the stage of life *before* birth. Using the term “preborn” calls attention to the fact that this baby is the same person before and after their birth. While birth is an important marker in the lifetime of the baby, it is not a threshold that determines their personhood.

Language and its relation to racism is a massive topic. Historically, language has been used to dehumanize groups which people in power find undesirable and to justify acts of racial violence. Usage of both overtly and covertly racist language has spread far and wide. One such example is the prevalence of microaggressions. The term “microaggression” comes from the field of psychology, and it refers to “implicit, often unconscious insults directed at people from historically disadvantaged groups.”⁴ Many times, people who use microaggressions aren’t aware that they are using them. An individual microaggression usually doesn’t cause the listener severe distress on its own, but they can add up over time to create a sense of alienation.

Microaggressions can take the form of words, expressions, phrases, or questions. For example, the word “gyped,” which usually means getting cheated in some way, comes from the term “gypsy.” “Gypsy” refers to the Romani people (often in a negative light), and the term “gyped” implies that Romani people are sly, devious, cheating thieves.⁵ Another example is pointedly asking a person of color “where they’re *really* from?” The intention behind this question is usually to find out about their heritage, but asking where someone is *really* from implies that they can’t possibly be an actual local because their skin says otherwise. Microaggressions take on numerous forms, and it can be difficult to completely eradicate them; thankfully, there are excellent resources with lots of information to help people understand and avoid using microaggressions in the future.

Another area that is seeing a shift in language is the realm of gender. Finding language that is gender inclusive is becoming increasingly common and takes on many forms. Removing the suffix of “policeman” and turning it into “police officer,” for example, acknowledges that not all police officers are men. The same is true for

positions like “chairman,” which can be changed to “chairperson,” or for roles like “freshmen,” which can be changed to “first-year student.” When unsure of someone’s gender, the honorifics of “Mr.” and “Ms.” can be replaced with “Mx.” The pronoun “they” can be used to refer to a singular person of unspecified gender; it can seem unusual if you were raised to think of “they” in the plural only, but it is a gender-inclusive way to refer to individuals, according to the Oxford English Dictionary, among others.⁶

Some people express their gender identity differently over time, and may request that others refer to them with a new name and/or pronouns. This type of language shift is incredibly important in validating that person’s identity and has very tangible effects. A study in Austin, Texas showed that transgender youths who could use their chosen name and pronouns at school, work, with friends, and at home demonstrated a 65% decrease in suicide attempts, 34% decrease in suicidal thoughts, and 71% fewer symptoms of depression.⁷ If they could only use their chosen name and pronouns in one of those four contexts, they still showed a 29% decrease in suicidal thoughts.⁷ Clearly, referring to someone with the name and pronouns that they ask for is a powerful choice.

As much as language is important, it is also fluid and variable. Language changes over time. As such, the terminology and phrases that are considered sensitive and respectful today may be considered offensive and outdated in the near future. In linguistics, the scientific study of language, this is referred to as the “euphemism treadmill.”⁸ This theory refers to the process by which a word which was originally introduced to replace an offensive term eventually becomes offensive itself and gets replaced by a new word, and the cycle continues. It can seem exhausting to keep up, running on this metaphorical treadmill. But the benefits that come from a sincere attempt to use language to rehumanize those around us make it worth the effort.

Notes

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8 Pinker, Steven, *The Blank Slate: The Modern Denial of Human Nature*, New York, NY: Penguin, 2003.