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## All of Me—Mind, Body & Spirit

### My Temple Holds the Music to a Greater Purpose; A Journey Intertwined

By: K.L.D

My spirit made love to my mind long before my body escaped its prison and became my temple. You see, I am more than what my monster wants people to believe. I am the conductor of my destiny and it is balance that I seek, because I know that my mind, body and spirit interchange with each footstep on my journey to finding my worth. It is connecting mind, body and spirit as a whole that can be difficult.

I spend a lot of time trying to better my body. I have tried changing myself through working out, eating less, plastic surgery, getting tattoos and piercings, but nothing ever helped me look into a mirror and say, “I am beautiful.” I had this idea that if my body was perfect, my life would be perfect too. The reality is, my body is not the only part of me, nor does it reflect who I truly am. I lose my sense of wellness once I stop listening to my body. When I am depressed, I feel fatigued and tense. When I am happy, I feel good and have energy. My body tells me everything I need to know, but sometimes my brain is too full to hear it.

My body was never loud enough to pierce the pounding of a song full of negative thoughts. My mind is a drum. For as long as I can remember, self-doubt has clouded my brain. Although conscious, I often walk around in a blur allowing it to take full control of my life. Logically, I am fully aware of these thoughts and how they contribute to the loss of my wellness; and I struggle with changing them. I don’t feel beautiful, I don’t feel smart, I don’t feel I have a purpose—so my mind, body and spirit fall apart. The only way I know how to stop feeding these monstrous thoughts is by sharing my story. I use poetry to express the darkness within allowing it to escape from me and move onto the paper, a paper that does not judge. Everybody has their own script to share and by doing so we learn that we will never be alone, we will always have each other.

In terms of spirituality, I was always trying to find happiness through tangible things—be it relationships, careers or finances. What I did not understand at the time was that spirituality is about the activity of stilling your mind and seeing where it takes you. Rather than allowing anxiety to conduct the constant negative thoughts in my mind, I expanded beyond my limitations sculpted by past experiences and used meditation to ask myself the questions; What is my purpose? How can I serve the greater community? Do I have compassion for those in my life?

I do not know if I will ever receive the answers to those questions and that is okay, because I am aware of their existence and how they contribute to my state of being. All three questions have one thing in common and that is helping others; so, who am I? an individual who sees the greater good in those around me. At least that is what my mind, body and spirit lead me to believe.

Continued on page 2

## **Parts of Me** **By: Kayleigh Hilborn**

I wander this path  
 unsure of where to go  
 I feel so disconnected  
 isolated and alone  
 my thoughts and heart are racing  
 I can't seem to slow down  
 and yet I keep on going  
 each tiny little step  
 a step in a new direction  
 its course unknown yet  
 and I catch myself  
 deep breath in  
 steady breath out  
 I feel the sun and air on my face  
 I hear the birds and the wind in the trees  
 I am here and I'm okay  
 connected to something bigger  
 something more than meets my eye  
 in this place where I am open  
 where I start to feel whole  
 where I see, hear and honour  
 all the parts of me

## **Ask REEVES** **By: Paul Reeve**

A person was off work and receiving long term disability. As part of their recovery, they were seeing a psychiatrist, attending a self-help support group, art therapy sessions and going to a fitness center on a regular basis.

The insurance company decided that if they were able to be involved in all these activities they should be able to return to work on a modified basis. The company said they were no longer eligible for the long term care benefits and cut off payments.

The doctor and the individual disagreed with the company's assessment of their work capabilities.

The person appealed the insurance company decision. I was grateful to be able to support them through this appeal process and after many months they were successful in getting all the money owed to them.

I would encourage people to not just accept what authorities decide. Question them and when appropriate fight for their rights.

If you have advocacy questions or you would like to submit to "Ask Reeves" contact Paul Reeve, Advocacy Coordinator, or send a comment to the editor. If you do not see your questions in print, please note Paul responds to all questions on an individual basis.

## **Continued From Page 1**

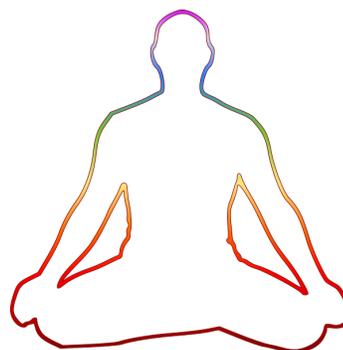
Along my journey of finding a balanced mind, body and spirit I learned a few skills that have helped me with my recovery:

**Be honest with myself (mind)** - It is important not to judge my thoughts or feelings and to be accepting of the truth. We are so disconnected from our core selves that we can end up becoming somebody that society wants us to be. When we know who we are, what we want and how we feel, we will not feel the need to change. Just be you, because there is nobody better to be.

**Know my limits (body)** - It is crucial to know early warning signs. By setting limits in my life, I have been able to prevent myself from falling into a severe depression every time something affects me. I have put boundaries in place to ensure that I do not fall back into compassion fatigue and take the time to provide myself with self-care. Self-Care is a MUST.

**Learn forgiveness (spirit)** - Forgiveness is a hard skill, and necessary. I need to remove the heavy burden of pain from my life that has been destroying me over the years. Once I let go of this suffering, I will be free to just be in the moment as mindfulness suggests. No grudges, tense body sensations—just spirituality and me.

A temple once built with only walls now swings open with doors of awareness. It is an opportunity to take care of myself, to reach my higher potential. The harmony and enlightenment I have been searching for was always there, I just needed to learn how to bring it out of me. I breathe a deep meditation, an honourable moment to keep balanced wholeheartedly. This is my mind, body and spirit together as one.



# Tools for Recovery



**By: Kayleigh Hilborn**

Life often feels like it is passing by so quickly, and then at other times it feels as if it is moving in slow motion. The day to day can become so chaotic between work, wellness, school, family, friends, partners, children, etc. Trying to find the balance, fitting everything in and taking care of ourselves can often feel like an impossible challenge. I know that it has been for me.

For me, it has been easiest to often focus on my physical health (body) – with things like going to the gym, walking more, taking up running and making more conscious choices around the food I eat. My mental health (mind) can sometimes be a little bit trickier. I get so caught up in how “well” I am doing, that I will sometimes miss or ignore the early warning signs that there is a shift happening. I have gotten better at this in recent years by doing things such as journaling, seeing a counsellor and making sure that I take time for myself, and to do the things that help me feel rested and recharged. My spiritual wellbeing (spirit) however, had been a long abandoned journey. I have my beliefs and my values, I have my ways to honour those, and yet, I never gave this area of my life much thought or attention. I do things out of habit or obligation, not with much intention or fulfillment. Recently this has been changing and the benefits have been well worth it. It feels like I am finally starting to honour all the pieces of myself.

I think it is important to note that, while the dictionary has a set of definitions for mind, body and spirit—we may have our own definitions. The ways in which we honour those will be unique to each of us. Whether you have already found ways to honour your whole self, or you are just working on finding that balance, here are some things you could try to continue your recovery journey.

- Stay hydrated – You probably hear this pretty often, I know I certainly do. It is definitely helpful. I know that I feel better when I am hydrated and it makes doing other things that much easier.
- Physical activity – At a level that is comfortable and helpful for you. Go for a walk, jog on the spot while watching your favourite show, do some stretches, take the stairs. There are many ways that we can add a little bit of physical activity in to our day to day lives.
- Meditate – If you do not meditate already, start small. Meditation was something I avoided as much as possible, until recently. I was challenged by my counsellor to meditate for two minutes, twice a day. This ended up not working for me, and instead, I started to meditate for two minutes, once a day, before bed. Now I listen to a guided meditation or some calming sounds each night before bed. I am now falling asleep faster and enjoying more restful sleep, at least on most nights.
- Get creative – Find some creative outlets to express yourself. Create some stories, take some pictures, paint, dance, write poetry, find something that allows you a creative way to express yourself and have some fun.
- Self-Care – Whatever you can do that recharges you and gives you space to be gentle with yourself. Journaling, massage, having a bath, colouring, etc. Find what works for you, and set aside time to dedicate to your own self-care.
- Unplug and be in nature— Many of us often spend a lot of time on our phones, computers and in front of the TV. Taking some time away from our screens is a great way to connect with ourselves and others. Spending some time outside, being around the sites, sounds and smells of nature can be a great way to destress, connect, and feel refreshed. Time in nature recharges my mind, body and spirit.

## ***Feeling Connected***

***By: Kayleigh Hilborn***

When I close my eyes and picture a physical place where I feel most connected and grounded, where I feel that I have had the most success in honouring my whole self – mind, body and spirit, this is the place that comes to mind.

In the Summer I spent six days in Fredericton, New Brunswick. For the first time in a long time, well over seven years, I was completely alone. I knew one person in the city and saw them very little. I did not have access to a vehicle. I spent hours of each day walking, strolling beside the St John River and wandering through the downtown, marveling at the old architecture and all the history. I spent my mornings running along beautiful tree lined trails and my afternoons exploring, or sitting down with a book and a bite to eat. I sat along the river watching sun sets paint the sky in the evenings.

Having the time to myself, alone with my thoughts, was challenging and almost scary at first. I was so used to having to be “on” all the time. Having all this time to just “be” and do whatever I wanted, was a new experience. At first I was mostly scared. I wanted to stay in my hotel room, and just watch TV (nothing wrong with that), and then I realized that I really wanted to challenge myself. So I did.

I enjoyed my time walking and running, resting and eating (body). I enjoyed my time reading, being with my thoughts and trying new things (mind). I enjoyed my time in nature, the sounds, the sunsets, the water and feeling connected to something so much more than just myself (spirit). I enjoyed feeling rested, content, and fulfilled. Now, of course, I cannot pack up my stuff, leave everything behind and go walk along the banks of the St John River every day, but this trip showed me and reminded me that I can bring these pieces into my day to day life and that I can find small ways to honour my mind, body and spirit in everything that I do.



## Taking Refuge, Coming Home

### By: Bethany Deml

When I consider what it means to “honour your whole self:” body, mind, and spirit—I think of the practice of taking refuge. There are several ways of taking refuge. Many spiritual and religious traditions have rich, ancient teachings on the practice, and depending on your culture and tradition, it will look differently. Countless people have written about it, and I draw on their wisdom as I write this piece. However, for brevity’s sake, I’m mostly speaking about what the journey has looked like for me. I will start with a very brief synopsis of taking refuge, and then weave my story into this description.

For me, taking refuge denotes a sense of coming home, and this has both an inner and an outer form. On the outer level, taking refuge may assume the form of a spiritual community, a peer support group, a loved one, or a spiritual figure (like Jesus, Buddha, Shiva, or Tara). It could also be a physical place, such as a temple, church, house, a particular room, or a grove of trees. There are many external forms of taking refuge, but the most important element is that you feel comfortable and safe in this space, and yet encouraged to meet your fullest potential. It doesn’t always mean staying in your comfort zone.

There is also the internal form of taking refuge, and this means becoming intimate with the wisdom of your own body, mind, and spirit. In order to come home to these aspects of yourself, it often requires the support of external refuges, such as yoga, prayer, gardening, or painting. It isn’t always easy to reacquaint yourself with your Self and sometimes you need a seemingly indirect route. For me, this internal journey has been both beautiful and terrifying. During both times in my recovery, I’ve learned something about myself and the world I’m in.

Between the ages of 12 and 18 years old, my external refuges mostly consisted of secluding myself at home, and drinking to numb the pain. During this time I went through several difficult experiences (to say the least) and those external refuges worked because it was too frightening to connect with my mind, body, and spirit. At 18 years old, the isolation and drinking no longer served me. I began to have chronic panic attacks, and I think it was my mind, body, and spirit’s way of telling me that I was ready to begin the trek back home to my whole Self. At that time, I didn’t realize that this was the message; I just knew I that I needed help for the panic attacks. From this distance, though, I see the wisdom. I sought counselling and this helped me to understand anxiety disorders. I also joined a yoga class, and these choices put me on a path towards safer external and internal refuges.

Ten years later it’s been an interesting journey. I’ve discovered new external refuges and I’ve come to know my Self at a deeper level. I realize that this journey will never stop and it hasn’t always been easy. At times it has been scary and I’ve needed (yes needed) the external refuges of a caring therapist, a steadfast spiritual teacher, and the love of my family and friends. But I’ve learned that I cannot wholly depend on external refuges either. To have one without the other is like seeing the bark of a tree a calling it “the tree.”

There’s so much more to that tree waiting to be discovered, enjoyed, and respected. Ultimately, I’m learning to trust my Self as I walk my path— and no two paths are the same. Even in some of the most challenging bends in the road, there’s been a rich wisdom to be learned, though I might not have recognized it at the time. I will finish this article with a meditation by Thich Nhat Hanh. This simple practice has brought me much solace and stability, and I hope that it may bring you joy and peace as well:

Breathing in, I see myself as a flower,  
Breathing out, I feel fresh.

Breathing in, I see myself as a mountain,  
Breathing out, I feel solid.

Breathing in, I see myself as clear water,  
Breathing out, I reflect things as they are.

Breathing in, I see myself as space,  
Breathing out, I feel free.

Breathing in, I am aware of the present moment,  
Breathing out, wonderful moment.

Namaste.

## **A Sprig of Hope**

### **By: Linda Mayer**

In the early months of last year, my son brought home a planter with a sprig of hope in it. The hope was a green plant called parsley. His home daycare provider had given it to him and we were thrilled. We would watch this parsley grow and we would use it in soups and stews and salads. We determined that we would care for it. It would be kept indoors, away from prying cats known for terrorizing indoor plants. We would make sure to water it and provide it with sunlight. In short, we would nurture the hell out of it and take pride in a bushy green mass of aromatic leaves flourishing under our watchful stewardship.

Fast forward to October: my son watches warily as I reach up to a high and dusty shelf and bring down the potted parsley. The pot looks the same, but a pitiful specimen resides therein, a shriveled heap of brown detritus atop the parched earth of an alien moon, cratered and forlorn.

"Hey! Is that our parsley?? What happened to our parsley, mommy?"

As I explained the demise of our parsley, I got to thinking about the parallels between the plants we tend to and our own inner and outer lives, which also need careful nurturing. Our plant had been placed high on a shelf to keep it safe from hungry cats. Good. But in doing so, it had vanished from our line of sight, causing us to forget to water it. Not good. On a deeper level, putting it away for safety's sake had actually caused us to forget about its very existence. And put away in a corner out of sunlight, neglected and forlorn, it had withered away and died alone, losing out on its destiny of producing lush leaves full of aroma, beauty and the provision of a much sought after flavour in a variety of dishes. It was a life lived, but not fully expressed, and much, much too short (my bad).

So how can we take care of ourselves to ensure a happier fate, one where we do have a chance to yield the things that come naturally to us? The fruits we produce are unique to each individual. We won't even know what they are - much less bear them out - if we don't nurture our minds and bodies in order to allow our spirits to flow. I'll try to show you what I mean.

#### **Mind: Guard Your Thoughts**

How do we take care of our minds? Well, we can start by watching our thoughts. Start paying attention to when your mood shifts downward and then put pen to paper and try to capture what thought immediately preceded that emotional spiral. With practice, you will find it easier and easier to capture the automatic thoughts and you will become more aware of them. Then you can challenge them with realistic statements that will help you overcome the fear and anxiety that hold us back from engaging with life and others. I cannot overstate the power and effectiveness this tool has had on my life. Since using this technique for the past 6 weeks I feel more in charge of my life and less like a victim than I ever have before. The psychologist Albert Ellis famously said: "It's not what happens to you, but how you react to what happens to you, that matters". In the words of the Buddha: "Your worst enemy cannot harm you as much as your own unguarded thoughts."

#### **Body: Get It Moving to Elevate your Mood**

Since I have been working out with a trainer twice a week for the past few years, I have gradually become aware of the mood elevation I experience each time. It took me a long time to realize that moving my body stopped me from getting caught up in a thinking circle (also known as rumination, one of the key symptoms of depression and one of the key factors that keeps it going and makes us feel worse). I was reluctant to admit and acknowledge the very common advice we hear all the time: Exercise alleviates depression!!! But about six weeks ago I became ready to accept this and decided to do more of it. So I began trying to do something physical each day. I decided to go for walks. The mood elevation is substantial. I now understand why runners run, and what they mean when they say it clears their head, or they have to do it or they'd lose it, or use similar expressions. I was just so used to denying my body's need for movement, so used to suppressing it. With no outlet lots of nervous energy was forcibly stored back into my body where it transformed into periods of heavy fatigue. These days, when I feel that fatigue coming on, a brisk walk is a great pick me up physically and mentally. I can always guarantee I'll be in a different head space when I come back from a walk. It's very empowering to know that I can shift my mood in this way.

#### **Spirit: Let It Flow**

Nurturing the spirit can be a tricky concept for those of us who do not identify as spiritual or religious per se or for those who are still searching or seeking in this area. I myself identify as an atheist, that is, creation stories and myths do not resonate with me. But I feel a spiritual force, an essence that comes from deep inside me that wants to come out. I feel it in surges of love and

## A Sprig of Hope Continued From Page 6

gratitude for my family and friends, when I feel connected during a great conversation, when I feel inspired, or when I am creating something. I feel it during my recovery journey when I am down low and I need strength, telling me that I can do this, that I can keep going. I feel it all around me, aglow with happiness and pride when I make a new discovery about myself on my recovery journey. I find spirit is nurtured automatically when mind and body are cared for. I don't know about you, but when I take care of my mind, guarding my thoughts, making sure they are realistic and rational, and I get my body moving, and keep myself unblocked, so to speak, then spirit flows naturally. I feel good; I smile more, I am happy, I am more sociable, I try new things, make new acquaintances and friends and things progress. It's when I stop nurturing the first two components that spirit gets blocked.

I hope you enjoyed reading this and that you are left with some ideas and some inspiration on taking care of yourself and letting your own spirit flow.

### My Story By: Ron Francis

I live with bipolar disorder. For me, sometimes one hour feels like twenty four hours, like time stands still. I was diagnosed when I was sixteen years old, and I spent some time in a psychiatric ward in Owen Sound. When I got privileges there I would walk around the circular driveway. I was depressed. It took some time and different medications to help me get out of my downward swing.

I have some other health issues as well, and sometimes I feel very angry when people, my own family included, think that living with a disability is easy.

I have been doing a lot of painting lately – abstract and colourful. One day recently, I did seven paintings. Art and colour are key for me. Painting and writing are my calling. It helps me to get things out there and creatively express what is going on. Painting and writing both help to calm me down and to think outside of the box. I enjoy seeing what I can create. Medication, diet, exercise, environment and having a sense of humour have all helped me to feel better and maybe they will help you too.

### Word Search

#### Word List

1. Mind
2. Body
3. Spirit
4. Whole
5. Honour
6. Wellness
8. Self

A	C	P	H	F	N	O	U	R	R	D	I	S	C	T	C	W	R	I	B	C	X
P	D	L	L	X	P	L	W	C	W	H	O	P	S	J	K	T	X	W	E	B	T
W	E	E	S	P	I	R	W	H	E	S	T	I	E	B	O	D	M	I	N	O	H
C	S	N	F	M	I	N	D	B	O	I	R	R	X	C	A	D	T	Q	A	D	A
S	C	M	D	M	H	K	T	D	O	L	W	E	L	L	N	E	S	S	U	Y	N
W	L	C	Z	V	G	J	P	S	V	N	E	T	B	O	D	S	P	M	R	O	K

## About Us

### Self Help Services

#### Advocacy Support

Our Advocacy Coordinator offers assistance to individuals and families in many areas including housing, income support, employment, treatment and legal issues.

Training is provided for systems advocacy. People are supported to take an active role in evaluating and changing the mental health and addiction system.

#### Entrepreneurship

The Entrepreneurship Facilitator offers support to individuals who have experience with the mental health and/or addiction system and are interested in self employment or starting their own business.

#### Community Liaison

This position is responsible for connecting with those who experience mental health and/or addiction issues who may not be connected to the formal mental health system and/or peer support services.

#### Skills for Safer Living

##### A Suicide-Intervention Support Group

A twenty week skills based group and peer support for individuals with reoccurring thoughts and behaviours about suicide combine as our Skills for Safer Living program.

#### Spark of Brilliance

This program provides opportunities for people living with mental health and addiction issues and their supportive allies to experience the expressive arts, within a supportive, understanding, community based environment.

#### Centre for Excellence in Peer Support

Self Help envisions that peer roles will exist within every juncture of the mental health and addiction system. Self Help is a peer driven service that is best suited for providing the system with support in this area.

See page 1 for contact information and visit our website for more information about these and other services.

The views expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of Self Help

## Write to the Editor

### We Want to Hear From You!

Send along your articles, images, letters to the editor, comments or views about topics in this newsletter or other topics related to the mental health and addiction system. Please note that any items submitted may be edited for space and other needs of the "Changing Lives" Newsletter.

Please send your items to:  
**c/o Self Help Newsletter Editor**  
**67 King Street East, Kitchener ON N2G 2K4**

## For Your Inspiration

"The body heals with play, the mind heals with laughter and the spirit heals with joy" -Proverb

"Fall in love with yourself. Mind. Body. Spirit." - Unknown

"The rhythm of the body, the melody of the mind, and the harmony of the soul create the symphony of life." B.K.S. Iyengar

"Teach your mind to listen to what your body and spirit are saying" - Unknown

"When you connect to the silence within you, that is when you can make sense of the disturbance going on around you."  
 — Stephen Richards

"Every artist dips his brush in his own soul, and paints his own nature into his pictures." - Henry Ward Beecher

"Whether you're keeping a journal or writing as a meditation, it's the same thing. What's important is you're having a relationship with your mind." - Natalie Goldberg

"Put your heart, mind, and soul into even your smallest acts. This is the secret of success." - Swami Sivananda