



Spotlight On Recovery

Giving a Voice to the Therapeutic Community



INVISIBLE SCARS - PART 3



\$3.99 | March 2020 | www.spotlightonrecovery.com





INVISIBLE SCARS

BY VICTORIA RADER

The scars began when I was very young.
The pain kept coming as the years went by,
They stayed buried and I don't know why.
Dear Jesus in heaven, just let me die.

This was normal, I was told to keep my mouth shut,
Don't say a word.
As I grew older and I started to see,
I prayed Jesus, Jesus please help set me free.

When I was around ten, it started to show,
Bad actions were coming out I couldn't control.
I kept praying every day I didn't like me that way.
My prayers got stronger, take him or take me.

There was a counselor at school I stated to see,
God put her there to help set me free.
It can ruin your life, or it can make you whole.
It all depends if you leave it hidden or let it go.

My invisible scars are now gone,
My life is in order and the battle is won.





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LETTER FROM THE PUBLISHER

APRIL 2020

Dear Friends,

This is the third issue of *Spotlight on Recovery Magazine* that focuses on “Invisible Scars.” It is so important that we acknowledge that the pain that keeps us from thinking clearly and affects our mood is just as real as a wound that takes time heal.

The most important action you can take when you are not feeling like yourself or you begin to act upon impulses without thinking is to stop, breathe, and talk about what’s causing the inner pain.

Whom do you talk to? You can talk to your best friend, your spouse, the Lord, your neighbor, your teacher, a doctor, your Pastor or your child if they are old enough to help you work through your thoughts.

I understand that sometimes the pain that you are feeling has already overtaken you. It may be too late to go back. However, it’s never too late to forgive yourself. It’s never too late to apologize and take responsibility. It’s never too late to get help. All you have to do is ask.



No one is perfect. Everyone experiences life differently. There are things we can rise above and put behind us and there are things that will stay with us for as long as we live.

However, whatever it is, don’t let it consume you. Don’t let it break you down. Have faith that you can move forward. There’s plenty of help, all around you.

God is all around you. Sometimes all you have to do is ask.

Peace.

Robin Graham
Robin Graham
Founder/Publisher





BENEATH THE SURFACE

BY MARY WIEDE

Underneath the exterior of my body are many invisible scars. Hurts that do not leave a mark on my skin, but profoundly affect my life. Many things have occurred in my life that have left a mark on me. Some things are not thought to be severe and others very traumatic. I have been raped multiple times, and I have been blamed for my own problems. There are many things that have occurred that have made my life more difficult than it probably should have been. I am really trying to cope better than I have in the past, since I would often use drugs to try to forget my pain. It has been futile trying to forget my pain with drugs, because eventually I would sober up thus the problems were magnified, since not dealt with.

Artistic expression is one of my coping skills and I often write poetry to let out the feelings that are so difficult to express in a more obvious way, therefore I am going to write a poem here to express the truth in what I consider to be a more comfortable way. The way that poetry can be vague, but clear in some ways, is comforting to me. Since some of my pain is embarrassing, and I have held shame in my mind from some of the things that have happened to me. I am working on healing from the issues that have caused me to feel hatred for myself and shame. I am striving to improve my life day by day, and I choose to live in love instead of hate. God truly has done miracles in my life, and I am working on making the most of what He has given me. I am grateful for all I have.

Underneath the surface there is
terrible pain that is unseen.

From the years of torment of others
and people being mean.

Learning to cope with the results
of the pain I have faced.

Turning it over to God and asking
to have the feelings replaced.

Often I wonder if those who have
hurt me are even fazed at all.

Since the previous hurts have led to my downfall.

Many times I have tried to hide my
feeling under a fog in my mind.

Using several negative methods that I seem to find.

Comfort my pain in my heartache
with falling into temptation.

Lying to myself and others with a great deception.

My mind has secrets it keeps from me.

Memories, thoughts, beliefs I still don't see.

At times, I get a glimpse into something
that I had lost recognition of before.

Sometimes my mind just has to
put things back and store.

Those memories that hurt me too much
for me to deal with at this time.

Often blocking out some things that are a crime.

Pain is in the truth that has been hidden
underneath the veil of forgetfulness.

Looking past the chaos to clean up this mess.

So many times I have seen these invisible
scars that I don't always want to face.

However, with God in my heart I
am in such a better place.





Though there are scars that are unseen in my life I am trying to get past the pain that has hindered my progress. I have used drugs and other methods to try to block out the memories of the hurts. Some memories were suppressed due to PTSD, and others I tried to forget on my own. It has been very difficult coping when the memories come to the surface.

God has given me the ability to get through things and see my value more than I had in the past. For a long time I had such deep hatred for myself that I just wanted to die. Now I am doing my best to live, and get through any challenges faced. I am so grateful that I have the people who support me in my life. They have given me so many blessings that have gotten me through so many things. I am just in awe of all that I have been given.





INVISIBLE SCARS

BY DAVID COLEMAN

Some say pain can only be skin deep. What about the pain of loneliness? What about not really ever feeling accepted, or the worst of all three, self-hatred? As I've grown, I've learned that we have to accept most of our flaws, but once we accept even one of these three pains from above, life will continuously spiral until destruction. Here's my story on some of my experiences with these three pains and hopefully my story will be able to help you speak out and seek the much needed help that you deserve.

Most of us especially people of color think we are too independent or even sometimes scared to admit our loneliness. Humans as a whole are social creatures. Life is about being able to reach out to others and feel they are there for you to help with your joy. I've experienced loneliness ever since I was nine or ten years of age. Have you ever felt lonely in a room full of people? It is not a good feeling. We have to start reaching out to our fellow peers and try to make sure their mental is on point and teaching our children to not shun anyone because they will never know what one is experiencing in life.

The feeling of really never being accepted can most of the time be even worse than the pain of being lonely. See, all through school I was the tall fat kid. Yeah, I know it might be funny as I look back, but as a pre-teen and teen not feeling accepted by anyone outside the family can be tough. I've done a lot of drugs, violence and other crimes just for the simple fact of wanting to

be accepted by the local clique from the neighborhood. Not being accepted sometimes still bothers me, because I really don't fit in still. In prison one must keep up a front and most of the time I'm laid back and want to cut up not to think about what I'm going through.

But once we accept ourselves, that's really all the validation one needs, because we are the only ones who can ever feel what we are going through. Don't try to keep up with the newest fad or do anything because all the homeys are. Be yourself, and most of the time like-minded people will gravitate to you. Acceptance and love of self is a key factor in overcoming our Invisible Scars.

This is one I'm pretty sure the majority of us have been through, at least a little bit in our life. Self-hatred can be a hue demon in our lives and cause some to want to end their lives. That will never be the best outcome. We have to reach out to our high power, loved ones, and even licensed doctors to help us get over this hump, because one can really self-destruct not loving yourself.

If you are experiencing any of these scars, do whatever you have to do to leave them behind and once you do you will not only become a better individual, but it will feel like a weight has not only been lifted from your shoulders, but will never burden you again.





INVISIBLE SCARS

BY FRANKLIN JUNIOR

Hello world, from my heart I come to you. Speaking, aiming at your heart. So I need you to please pay attention to what I'm about to say.

On my face and body I have many scars that come with the life I chose to live. The severe, serious scars you can't see. My heart is scared. My soul is in rage. My spirit is the only thing that is keeping me together. Why? Pay Attention....

Finished, well done, they thought it was over, thought I would lay down, give up on life because I was caught again, locked up, sent to prison and killed someone else while in prison. Facing life or the death penalty these were thoughts and saying about me. On top of that, my wife divorced me. Thoughts of dying in prison invaded my thoughts, scaring my brain, my being!

Can you imagine this as if you were going through this, or your family, someone you love? My invisible scars, scared me so much to the point my mental strengths was suppressed to the point I couldn't relate or have a conversation with my family without feeling in rage or like a victim. It wasn't over, I was just scared.

This is another chapter in my life, a different reality. My life wasn't hard or is hard, it was in transition. My mistakes, not my failures come from my attitude and choices that made it this way.

Invisible scars because you did not have your biological father in your life. That's the case of many of us Black and Latinos. The father figure I had died while I was locked down in a cell for the choices I made. Three months later, my grandmother who co-raised me passed away also. These are my inner scars. I have many scars from gun-play and fighting three dudes at one time, but my invisible scars are ten times more painful, more memorable that I wear them on my sleeve.

So please pay attention to what I'm saying! Your attitude determines your choices in life. To those who read or hear this make sure your attitude is a positive emotion. It only takes one wrong choice to do something like I put myself through.

To those who never been to prison or lived a life of crime, let my invisible scars and your scars have a relation. I encourage you to do something you never have, life reaching out to someone in need. To go speak to the youth, everyone has invisible scars. It's no level to them. They are not rated, share them even if you think they are simple. One word can change a nation.

The answers to life are in your invisible scars! Yes, your pain, sorrow, is your greatest gift. The lowest point in my life became my highest. I took it as a personal experience and gave it to someone I knew in society that was headed in the wrong direction, it changed his attitude. Positive reinforcement changed the course of his life. That pain I endured saved a life, helped a family, love ones, more importantly his baby daughter will have a father. Not becoming a statistic of Blacks and Latinos growing up without a father, I'm overjoyed believe me!

Invisible scars make this so-called gangster cry. I always had love and passion for my people, my culture, Blacks and Latinos. I wish I could take everyone's pain away. Have the weight of the world on my shoulders. My invisible scars have scared me for life deeply, yet, they are my most valuable tools, weapons, to motivate and discipline myself. What I possess, I express the same to my peers. The connection to the youth, the children, the babies, they are our future!

I end this chronicle, personal testament of my life in desire to impact thousands, but one will do. I've done a righteous deed with my Invisible Scars. So this note I leave you with. "The Knife of the Mind." Tension in the air so thick it can't be cut, an intangible tool, the



mind is the sharpest tool. I can see the tension with my eyes that most can't see or feel. Why, because the knife is in their mind, stopping it from the most essential aspect thinking, even thinking for self. A knife in the mind is a divided mind, a mind not functional to its ability.

However, when you have the mind of a knife, you can

cut through the deception, the deceit, the propaganda before it gets to you. You can make the wind blow, the stars fall, you control you, no one else can. You have power over you, you hold the tools so you hold the power, the power of the mind is the greatest power to exist.

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INVISIBLE SCARS

BY WALLACE GARDNER, JR.

This particular topic is very personal and important to me because we all have invisible scars, whether we know it or not. An invisible scar could come from numerous situations, such as a duty, a relationship, an injury, a lost of a love one, and above all (pain) period! We all live in a very unpredictable society, that has caused violence to rise, and place everyone on high alert. Those invisible scars are the one's unseen the most.

I once met a beautiful young lady name Latasha. She was drop dead gorgeous. I mean, as soon as I saw her, I instantly fell in love with her. She already had two kids when I met her, both of her kids fell for me as well, and the feeling was mutual, but I didn't even notice the invisible scars she had underneath her beautiful flesh, pain that another man had previously placed upon her before she met me. Tasha rarely spoke about her past relationships, she just wanted to move forward with me in her life, and that's when she told me, "Wallace, I am happy for the first time in a long time." So I asked her about it, and she told me how she had been hurt so bad, that there was no way another man would come into her life. So I told her, look baby, "God made all people different just as each snow flake that falls from the sky is unique in it's own way, we as people are the same way. Not a one single person on this planet is the same period."

As time went by, we ended up moving in together, but we ended up separating because the invisible scar I was fighting with was the streets. I still love Tasha, this very day, and our bond is deep for one another.

Invisible scars are right in front of us but most of us barely notice them, consider a person that has been to the U.S. Military Service.

Welcome home was the first thing I told my niece when she came back home, and I've been there for moral

support. People don't realize the mental trauma that each service man and woman go through mentally on a 24-hour, around the clock basis. My niece decided to join the military after college or before that, either way I was going to help her cope through it all.

I started by writing her letters, sending cards, and calling her when I could because I figured she needed (moral) support, after she wrote me and told me about basic training and all the hardships she was going through. She and I built a special bond with one another that cannot be broken period. I salute all of you that have served for this country, and those of you that still are, especially my favorite niece – Ashley.

Another invisible scar – scars I would like to touch on. First of all, I've never hurt a woman intentionally, other than maybe a child-hood relationship. I recognize the pain and struggles women go through because I ask, observe, listen to their problems. I've been like that since I was young. I first noticed invisible scars dealing with women by observing my own mother's addiction with crack. I do not expose this other than recognizing her invisible scars that she dealt with. My siblings and I had it fair coming up, but other family members, such as older siblings, grandma, grandpa, uncles – cousins and aunties helped us to understand as well because those particular scars my mother had are the same ones a lot of women all around the U.S. are dealing with on a daily basis.

I love my mother to death, and I pray that she will always remember that. Being in the streets, I got the chance to deal with it head on, seeing young brothers and sisters throw their lives away over nothing at all, drugs!!! Most people blame others, but truthfully, the only ones we can blame is ourselves period. We live and we learn.

People please listen to me, no matter who you are as a person, all over the United States, and world-





wide don't be ashamed of your invisible scars. Please talk with someone and open your heart up because it might just take a one on one conversation to change that person's life. Think of it that way.

Some people use things to cope with their invisible scars; alcohol, drugs, sex, money, material things, etc. etc., but I guess whatever is best for that person to deal with it they go for it. But remember this, if it's something that's going to continue to hurt you, then cut it out, or try something different. Proper preparation always prevents poor performance... always, so prepare for things and you might not end up with an invisible scar.

In a reality world, we all come home, it is almost impossible not to have an invisible scar because at some point throughout our lives we encounter some sort of invisible scar that we don't share with no one but God.

I remember I had it bad, and still do, shedding tears when I lost someone in my family, or a friend. To some that was a sign of weakness, until I figured out crying is a part of the healing process that gets us back to that normal stage of being human. Grieving is normal, so to those of you that feel that you are too tough to cry because of your pride, let it out ladies and gentlemen, and I promise you that you will feel much better once you do. It took me years to open up and grieve over family members, and friends that we've lost and once I done so I felt so much better.

Another topic I felt the need to address is the things young children witness while they are young. Parents need to be very aware of the psychological affect

on a child who may witness physical abuse against their parent. I never had to witness my mother being beat by a man, but I did have other family members that did, and I was the same age as their kids and I saw how it affected them personally. Sometimes you would hear one of them blurt out and say, I hate such and such, and I'm going to kill them!! These words right there are serious, especially coming out of the mouth of a child.

We need to pay attention to the signs because if we don't, then all we will have is an invisible scar!

Imagine this behavior going on all of the child's life, and people wonder why their innocent little boy or girl is now a total psycho/murderer, shooting up schools, killing people for no reason, and doing things that are very outrageous. Then imagine if people paid attention to how the fighting amongst each parent places an invisible scar on the child, then we can reduce and hopefully eliminate the problem period.

To those of you that are suffering from invisible scars please talk to someone.

Before I end this topic, I want to talk to the females, rather single or married, or engaged to their special someone, please do not tolerate the trauma that any one attempts to place upon you all. As soon as you see that warning sign, run, run, run, and never look back at all, period. I may not know you all personally, but my conscious thoughts are aware that we all are related, and we all are only human, and above all, we all have and share something in common, and that is the invisible scars we all have.





“AFTER ALL”

BY AMY NICHOLSON

I don't want to write about my invisible scars. They are, after all, invisible. No one can see them, right? Why talk about them? Why bring up something that, as far as anyone else knows doesn't even exist? Why do I have to share them with the world? They are mine, after all. I can do what I want with them.

I mean, it's ok for other people to write about their scars. Ann Voskamp is a writer I hold in the highest esteem. I was introduced to her work at the library. I was browsing the new non-fiction bestsellers several years ago. I was immediately drawn to her precious little book. On the cover was a photo of a girl holding a bird's nest. In the nest were two small eggs. The title: *One Thousand Gifts: A Dare to Live Fully Right Where You Are*. How could I resist?

The book grew from a dare her friend made her. Ann's friend dared her to make a list of one thousand things she was thankful for. The book takes us on her journey with her. It is sheer poetry, beautiful, enlightening, and made me insanely jealous. It was the first book I put down afterwards and said Man! I wish I had written that book! After that first reading, I became a fan of Ann's. I followed her website, saw her at a live event, read more of her books, did one of her studies. All the while, I absorbed her gorgeous photography of her Canadian farmhouse and her beautiful family, and maybe I romanticized it a little too much.

I learned that as a teenager, Ann would cut herself. She went through a time of deep despair, perhaps as a result of the trauma her family experienced after a fatal accident took the life of her little sister, while Ann herself was still a young girl. The tragedy left scars, physical and emotional. Ann has had the courage to share them with the world.

Why? She didn't have to tell the world her secrets. She could have kept them buried deep within her. She could have kept up appearances as a bestselling author who posts gorgeous photos of her seemingly idyllic life in rural Canada. No one would have been the wiser.

I think being a poet, a bestselling author, and a beautiful woman were not enough for Ann. I think she knew her life would have a greater purpose than just putting forth a pretty face and selling books. She can serve her readers better, in a more meaningful way, by turning her wrist over, revealing visible and invisible scars, showing us where she was during that dark time in her life. She shows us that this thing happened to her and this is how she responded and this is how faith brought her through it.

Ann still struggles. But, because she has shared her story, she knows she has been a conduit of healing for so many people who perhaps share stories similar to hers. I believe anyone who has ever lost a sibling, felt pain deeply enough to want to take their own life would be touched and helped by Ann's story.

On the flip side, it is important for us to share our stories with each other. I imagine when Ann first opened up about her experience it was extremely difficult. I wonder what the final impetus was that led her to open up. I believe, at our very core every one of us wants to be heard. When we tell our stories, and they resonate with other people--even if it's just one person--that is how we offer a healing balm to each other. Our stories have purpose and they have power.

If our scars tell a story, what is my story? What are my scars? Deep sigh. I'm still not ready to tell you about me. I've let a couple people in on a couple things that have happened to me, but I'm not ready to broadcast it to the world. Maybe I'm not that courageous.

But what did I just say? Do not underestimate the power of our pain to help heal the pain in another person's life. It's all right for me to write those words, to preach it to anyone who is reading this. It's quite another thing to heed my own advice. And it's not that my life has been that bad. Not like Ann's. I've never cut myself. Never even wanted to, never had a sibling die or even a parent, for that matter. My life has been pretty good.





Deep breath. . .

My young adult child and I don't talk as much as I'd like.

That's all I can manage to say right now, but it's a beginning. Maybe I'll talk about it more someday. When I'm ready.





HIDING OUR SCARS: IT'S TIME FOR A CHANGE

BY GLENN SLABY

“Change does not roll in on the wheels of inevitability, but comes through continuous struggle. And so we must straighten our backs and work for our freedom. A man can't ride you unless your back is bent.” - Martin Luther King Jr.

How do we live in a society with a culture where so-called weaknesses, especially in mental health, is not only frowned upon, but actually discriminated against? Can we truly live where our frailties are encouraged to be hidden in social, family, and business settings? How are we supposed to live in a culture that directly affects our mental and physical health?

What we hide is detrimental to our whole. To display what we hide can open the stranger, the world, to something unexpected, something outside their experience. We can offer them a chance to love, to grow, if they are mature enough to accept the challenge. We can offer them a chance not to fear. How many societies and individuals have failed to accept, losing so much to ignorance? What relationships, connections are lost because of blindness of soul and heart?

Everyone we see is suffering from something. To ignore the wounds, physical or mental, of those individuals, possibly for a lifetime, they and the entire community suffers, from an unseen losses of the value of the individual. Those who discriminate must accept all of us.

Are we supposed to hide our wounds? Does hiding what makes us different, only create deeper pain, greater scars? Are we enabling others, society, and the future by refusing to fight for what we all need and deserve? Can we fight the stigma and discrimination?

These scars and disabilities may hold us back, especially when hidden however, they can help everyone be more humane, dignified individuals. We who suffer can deliver to others, something those who deem disabilities

as weakness. Scars, imperfections made visible may give courage, strength to others. Humanity is strongest when it accepts the weak, for then it is open to possibilities of change and growth. Our muscles grow when tested through trials and training of physical strength. Our minds may grow when tested with challenges, testing our will and nerves. Our souls may grow through sickness, pain, and loss, if we seek more than we see and comprehend. There are limits, important guideposts to be recognized. These maps/guides can direct us to a more useful life for all. But when hidden, many miss a part of life. When others succeed and reveal their constraints, limits, illnesses we take notice and might just be inspired by their success. We can receive hope. We can form a bond. Who has not been comforted, encouraged, in learning of successful people, celebrities, business professionals, teachers, friends and neighbors suffering and from mental illness?

By hiding our pain, we are forced to carry our cross alone. Even the Son of God had Simon of Cyrene.

And by accepting our cross and by carrying the cross for others, showing compassion to others, we grow and also escape from our pain. Those once hungry know the pain of an empty child's belly and through affirmation we can build something more than as individuals.. A healthy person telling you just to get over your depression, fears, anxiety means nothing but ignorance. A rich person telling you it is easy to make money, and have a career and be successful means nothing when experiencing the pain of struggling. By helping others we become more than we once were. Spiritually, emotionally, psychologically we grow to be more than expected. I can attest. Many will confirm.

To empathize is to understand and reach a relationship which runs contrary of cultural norms. We must not be ashamed of whom we are, of what is inside of us – hidden love and care because we know suffering, and





we can impart this special love on others. And this leads to healing of our pain and other's by using, accepting weaknesses not taken by choice.

The Stigma, through the ignorance of society, keeps us from moving forward in life. It keeps everyone from recognizing there are some things in life that cannot be overcome by will power, time or money. It keeps so many from being as complete as God would like us to be – complete in our individual perfection. It keeps us from being loved and loving. It can make us strangers to those we love, to our neighbors, our co-workers. Ourselves?

This needs to change.

Far too many have lost so much. Society has lost too much from its own ignorance. Jobs lost. Ideas thrown aside. Educations never completed. Knowledge lost. This needs to change.

Childhoods ruined. Futures incomplete, misdirected. Treatments postponed. Families torn. Addictions created. This must change.

Not enough hospitals. Not enough beds. Poor funding for research. Poor social programs. Out of reach treatment centers. This must change.

This is discrimination, pure and simple. Imagine if there was a lack of facilities for cancer patients, a lack of beds, having medicinal research twenty years behind what it is now. Imagine being rejected, being out casted, being homeless, alone, shunned because of cancer.

Things must change for all us, for the betterment of society for future's children.

Ignorance keeps those whom suffer, those who love, those we know are suffering, and the stranger from being a complete person as possible, in a faulted world. It's like preventing a faulted world from becoming a little better.

It is time to end the stigma, the reality of the discrimination. Stigma another softer term for discrimination, by a society that does not want to take direct responsibility for its own short-sightedness. A culture trying to soften its own guilt of failure of faith.

Not providing funding, beds, therapy, job training, to a class of people of all races, ages, orientation is not caused by stigma but fear, Fear in not believing the complexity the brain, fear that others different maybe smarter, better. They lower those who are different for their denials of equality, masks their insecurity. They raise themselves by keeping us low. Sound familiar?

This discrimination is along the same lines of discrimination based on sex, race, and sexual orientation and more.

We must always thank and remember those who stepped out of the darkness, accepted ridicule, bigotry, disownment due to any situation of bias and prejudice and spoke loudly for all to hear. They have made the world stronger and brought the world closer to each other, to God.

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INVISIBLE SCARS

BY JOSEPH L. MYERS

Back in 2014, I caught a case for receiving stolen property and criminal trespass. I got 1 to 7 years in a P.A. State Prison, which I'm serving right now. I was out on parole for another case when I caught this new case and I was only home for 37 days. I was working a 3rd shift job, had my own place to live and was working on getting a car. But none of that mattered when I got a phone call at 7:00 a.m. on December 17, 2014 from my grandmother. I answered my grandmother's call and she told me something I was not ready to hear, she told me she wasn't going to make it for Christmas and if I wanted to see her then I would have to get to Ohio and see her now.

Me being me, the first thing I thought about was going out and find a house I could rob and get some quick money so I could go see her. I saw this guy getting into his car and that's the house I went in as soon as he pulled away. I took about \$26,000 worth of stuff and headed back to my house, as soon as I walked in my front door, parole showed up right behind me. I was taken back to jail for changing my address without telling parole first and they took all the stuff I just walked in my house with because it looked stolen, and they wanted to run the numbers and see if in fact it was.

I got booked into SCI Albion on December 17, 2014 for changing my address without letting Parole know. I knew it was just a matter of time until I would get new charges for all the stolen stuff Parole took, and turned over to Erie City Police. On December 19th, I got a phone call telling me my grandmother passed away last night on December 18th. It crushed me and I still have a hard time with her being gone. I told myself right then that I would never be in prison again when someone close to me is sick and passes away.

I got out of prison May 1, 2016 on parole and my wife Taylor who was my girlfriend at that time came to pick me up and the first place I went was to see my dad. I wanted to let him know I was sorry in person for

not coming to see my grandma and for making the poor decision to rob a house to get money when there were so many other ways and options I could have taken.

I got a good job right away my first week home, then a second job days later. I was on the right track to a bright promising future. I was doing really good for myself. On June 10, 2016, I took a friend's car to work not thinking about anything. It was pay day and the Cleveland Cavaliers were playing that night in the Championship and I was going to Cleveland to watch the game after work. I took my lunch break and went to see my parole office. She wanted to see my pay stubs and give her a urine sample. I got about 10 blocks away and hit the backend of an unmarked cop car. The cops came and gave me a D.U.I. test. I was charged with D.U.I. for taking my own prescription medication. Medication I was forced to take by State Parole for my A.D.H.D.

I came back to prison on June 10, 2016, I made it home for 40 days. I got a 9 month parole hit for the D.U.I., I went to see my parole officer in May 2017 and got another 9 month parole hit. I went back to my block after getting my green sheet and got on the phone called my dad to tell him the bad news. I told my dad what happened with parole and he had his own bad news. He told me he has cancer in his mouth, but not to worry the doctor's said they can take it out and he would be good to go.

My dad went to the doctors November 2017, got the cancer cut out and they ended up taking his whole tongue out. He was sent to a nursing home to recover. He was there for 3 weeks or so then sent home. When my dad got home, he was still in a lot of pain and he wasn't getting any better so he went back to the Cleveland Hospital on December 31st and they ran all kinds of tests and came back and told him he had less than a month to live.

My dad came home from the hospital on





January 7, 2018 and was put on Hospice. He was losing weight fast, not eating at all. He was in bad shape. I was in bad shape but I had to hold it together. I had to stay strong for my dad. I wanted to see my dad before he passed away so I had to find a way to get him to where I was, five hours away. I called Taylor, my now wife. We were split up at the time, and I asked her if she could bring him up to see me, she said yes, this weekend coming up.

I wrote my dad a letter just in case he couldn't make it to see me and let me tell you writing a letter to your dad telling him it's okay to go is the hardest thing I've ever had to do. My dad was a good man and I was not ready to tell him good-bye. He was only 59 years young. I never got to visit with my dad before he passed away. His girlfriend Karen, both of my brothers, my mom and the family pastor was by his bedside with the letter I wrote to him telling him it was okay to go be with his mother, my grandma that passed away just five years before. I told him I was sorry for being in prison once again when my family needed me to be home. I told him I loved him and I wasn't mad at him for the way he raised me. I let him know I would miss him a lot and I would never forget him. The one thing my dad wanted me to do was to keep writing for Spotlight on Recovery. When he found out I was writing for this magazine he was so happy. He told me it's one step closer to writing my book and I was telling my story and helping people that might be going through what I went through.

I went to see my parole office for the third time a month after my dad passed away and I'm thinking

they are going to let me go home this time. I've been back 18 months for a D.U.I. , I just lost my dad and I was going through a lot. I was wrong, they gave me a year parole hit, this time and it took everything inside of me to hold myself together and not lose it. On and off I have something like 12 years in the PA D.O.C. and out of them 12 years, I have 77 days on the streets and that's with me being paroled two different times. I made it 37 days one time and 40 days the last time. Out of the 77 days home, a total of two weeks was spent with my family enjoying their company. If you were to ask me if I'm okay and I said yes, I would be lying. The truth is I'm so hurt for what I've allowed myself to do and the person I've become.

The invisible scars I wear are from the poor choices I've made over the years that got me to this point in my life. Losing family or loved ones and not being able to be there for them is a hard pill to swallow and so hard to overcome. I don't think I will ever forgive myself for not being there with my dad in his last few days on this earth. I will never put myself or family through this again, this will be the last time I see the inside of these prison walls.

The last 2 ½ years has been hard and I really don't know how I got through some of the days, all I know is I'm a fighter and I don't give up easy. No matter what life throws at you., you have to fight through it. Take it one day at a time, I promise you'll get through that day. Don't let your invisible scars get the best of you – you get the best of them, give them time to heal over.





MY INVISIBLE SCARS

BY DENNIS MINTUN

Between the beatings I received as a child, and the many fights I've been in over the years, I have a few scars that can be seen. But, the worst scars are those that nobody can see, most that few ever know I have.

There are those scars caused by the trauma of sexual abuse when I was a child. I'm not talking about affection that went "a little too far," and I'm not speaking of childhood experimentation. I'm referring to adults I trusted lying and manipulating me into doing things that I thought (at the time) there was nothing wrong with. True – I was never physically harmed by these events, but I used them to justify my own inappropriate actions (of all kinds), which eventually landed me in prison.

Looking at everything, I think the deepest scars involve trust. To this day, it takes a lot of effort to put my trust in anyone. I'm always watching for ulterior motives or just plain attempts to manipulate me to do things.

Children have long memories, as many parents learn. One year, I complained about having to babysit my two little sisters all the time. Mom told me to keep a record of my hours, and I would be paid 50 cents an hour before Christmas, so I could buy Christmas presents. For the next few months, I eagerly kept a journal – amassing over \$400.00. Shortly after my birthday in November, I asked mom about the money. She told me I baby sat as my "duty to the family," and shouldn't expect payment. This may seem like a relatively minor thing, but to a child it was devastating.

All through my childhood, promises were made which would set my hopes up... only to have these hopes dashed. To this day, if someone promises me something, I greet that promise with skepticism. On the other hand, I will seldom promise anyone anything – just in case something happens to prevent me from following through.

Now, I don't want to come across sounding like a "victim." Yes, I went through a lot. Yes, I have a lot of hidden scars (some, I don't even like to talk about). The question is - what now?

Do I spend all my time dwelling on those scars or even "digging" at them, to make them worse? Absolutely not. Over the years, I've tried to find ways to use those scars. I call them "war wounds." The idea is to use my experiences to empathize with others who have gone through similar experiences.

I also use them in my own life. For example, the fact that I will seldom make a promise helps my social life, since people know they can take me at my word. I've also taken oaths of "non-harm" as part of my religious path. I've vowed not to perpetuate the abuse that I had to endure growing up.

Finally, because of the experiences behind those hidden scars, people know they can come to me for help and advice. They will often visit my chapel class just to get a chance to talk with me during a break.

I've even had people e-mail me through JPay.com from as far away as Florence, Italy because they've read something I've written online or in magazines like *Spotlight on Recovery*.

Yes, I've been through a lot. Yes, I have a lot of hidden scars.

But, if we learn to use those scars, we can help others. By helping others, we truly do help ourselves!





INVISIBLE SCARS

BY DAMONT EWELLS

How can I hide a pain so deep, it goes generations back.
When the sin we were living in was poverty and we were hated for being born black.
A pain so deep, that it hurt for centuries. You can't even see my scars.
Cut to the bone with ignorance and my spirit was placed behind bars.

Invisible scars that were given to me over life times of mental anguish.
I was tricked into submission and stripped of my heritage and language.
These scars were handed down from mother to child, then mother to child over time.
They took the shackles off our ankles, but they placed them on our minds.

Instilled with fear of authority and a hatred for my reflection,
I'm deaf and dumb and blind to spirituality and truth is only a deception.
Invisible scars inherited from a world that believes bad is good
And good is Hot! And Hot is climate change, (smh) but who cares in the hood?

We don't even know what's real anymore, judging success by our possessions.
Rewarding the savage beast, showing love by spreading oppression.
Our blessing was a spirit and savior so great that God himself had to see.
But we won't recognize our true self 'til we realize that we 'be.'

Nah, you can't see my scars, to the carnal eye their invisible.
Wake up my people! It's a trick! You're comfortable being miserable.
Spiritual reform is the key that will liberate us from the grave.
Open your third eye to see my scars or the scars that time has paved.

Stop settling for less. Sacrifice! We want heaven but are too scared to die.
We'll step right over the ugly truth to chase that beautiful lie.
Invisible scars from a rage born in me, when I see my reflection succeed
Or my powerful tongue, who's power I use to diss those who look like me.

We traded the treasure of a King for the poverty of a peasant with sorrow.
For pleasure and material things, we gave up liberty and pleasant tomorrows.
But the truth will resurrect you, truth and history show the proof.
These scars will fade with spiritual food, just teach it to the youth.



INVISIBLE SCARS

BY EFRAIN MORALES, JR.

Sometimes we see people walk by us on our neighborhood street, in the market places, and basically, all other venues, and wonder over odd behaviors and talk. It's naturally assumed that such individual(s) might be suffering from mental illnesses--considering 44 mil Americans suffer from it, according to Mental Health America statistics: MHA. And although this might be the case for some, others are actually suffering from a quite common manifestation. It is called "Invisible Scars."

Drawing from past experiences I recall traumas that lingered on into adulthood: being molested as a child, bullied in school, lied to and betrayed by childhood sweethearts, being expeditiously misdiagnosed by school faculty and psychiatry professionals—as was a common thing in the 70's regarding autistic children, and the list goes on and on. Unfortunately, this led to reclusiveness, isolation, trust issues, and pent-up resentments. My cries for help were moot despite all the many nuances typical of a traumatized youth.

Consequently, PTSD isn't just a thing we overcome overnight, and this I see a prime example of in my dear best friend, Emil Z, whom struggles with a convolution of cognitive distortions that clearly stems from his traumatized youth and bad experiences in adulthood that compound on the precursors.

Moreover, societal perception tends to add a layer onto this, when such individuals feel labeled, and judged. They—like I—assume that "No one understands me!" And the more time goes by the greater it festers unresolved, since there doesn't seem to be a friendly ear to confide in that would spare us the tormenting regurgitation of a linear judgment and misdiagnosis.

Stigma can run rampant when the naked eye can only see the outside of a person, while the inside is clearly in a state of perpetual torment and pain. It goes without saying that it is of little consequence to the spectator(s)—Or is it?

I recently had a nightmarish experience with my best friend. In his mind he felt used and betrayed, as he views it--based on how he perceives being treated by others he comes into contact with. Unfortunately, it overlaps to those in his inner circle that actually care about him. I told him, "How could you actually think I would steal your debit card, that only you know the pin number to." He ruminated over this logical, especially when I reminded him that "I am your best friend, you know." Lo and behold, his card was in the back pocket of a different pants he had worn the day before. Of course, he apologized and I gracefully accepted. But this got me to wondering over his erratic thinking and oft emotional outbursts; especially since they were misdirected.

Reflecting back to my youth I totally understand his reactions and inaccurate conclusions. I totally understand the pain, loneliness, and bitterness from situations seemingly out of his control. I understand why he would highlight others' faults and not his own—as means of feeling as stable as everyone else, I understand how such a person would expect understanding and forgiveness while sometimes withholding it from someone else. I get it: Invisible Scars.

According to PTSD UNITED, "70% of adults in the U.S. have experienced some type of traumatic event at least once in their lives. This equates to approximately 223.4 million people...An estimated 8% of Americans—24.4 mil people—have PTSD at any given time. That is equal to the total population of Texas..."

Apart from this, mid-to older adults (and an undetermined % of teens) deal with daily frustrations over their love or sex life. Since human beings have an innate need for love and affection, and since we all have a built-in sex drive, emotional or sexual deficits can... eventually...translate into erratic behaviors, etc. Sadly, though, invisible scars can sometimes inhibit a healthy release and/or social interactions.





One reason for this can be such a person being ultra-defensive, based on past bad experiences-- like "sexual assault" (SEE: www.soc.ucsb.edu). Another reason can be such a person being overly-cautious/distrust, that causes possible happiness to slip through their fingers by not wanting to take the associated risk that comes with dating. Or, in the case of older gentlemen, a common manifestation is a lowered virility, that makes such a one reluctant or unable to foster a relationship. Ironically, the opposite can be true as well, when an individual's past INVISIBLE SCARS result in UN-inhibited lifestyles, and oft sexual preoccupations: promiscuity and overindulgences, inclusive of substance abuse.

A more common recurrence of INVISIBLE SCARS is that victims of life-altering experiences tend to be less than forgiving and ultra-critical in sometimes even the trivial things in life.

My best friend, bless his heart, expressed his outrage to me over a cashier glancing at his EBT card receipt. Naturally, I couldn't at the time understand why this should be such a big deal, but it was for him. According to SamuelThomasDavies.com, there is a checklist that delineates 14 of the most common "Cognitive Distortions" associated with PTSD: #5) EMOTIONAL REASONING, is taking our emotions for evidence of truth—what my best friend did while angry over the cashier glancing at his receipt; #8) JUMPING TO CONCLUSIONS, is reaching a conclusion with little or no evidence—he assumed that the glance was prompted by malign motives; #14) SHOULD STATEMENTS "is when you have ironclad rules for how you, or others, should or shouldn't behave. When our expectations fall short, we feel disappointed, frustrated, resentful, even angry..."—what he felt resulting from all-inclusive thinking.

There was a time I myself dealt with severe cognitive distortions due to a pre-existing disorder (Autism), and additional traumas that adversely affected every facet of my tender youth. I felt angry, sad, and alone in a cold and cruel world—as I saw it and the people on it. I felt suicidal.

Unfortunately, back in the old school era of the 70's-80's medical and psychiatry professionals weren't

too keen on certain maladies and disorders. Moreover, growing up in a drug and gang-infested neighborhood certainly didn't help it; especially when one gets bullied day in and day out.

Fortunately, for me at least, I had my very nurturing Mom Isabel and Granny Aurora—inclusive of faith in God to carry me through those most trying years and after.

But don't despair if you suffer from PTSD and the common denominator of Cognitive Distortions, because in this day and age there are many viable solutions and alternatives that aid in healthier living:

- Google: to find out symptoms and treatments for almost anything.
- Psychology and psychiatry have vast methods of treatments: www.justanswer.com/psychiatrists/ptsd.
- Hotline numbers and websites assist in unraveling cognitive distortions and pointing one in the right direction for help: www.mentalhealthline.org, (877) 945-1187; wwwsurvivingcptsd.com; MentalHelp.net.
- Prescription meds, and Inpatient treatment facilities.

Apart from this, many have found faith-based systems to be not only rehabilitative but also a means of coping with this encumbering disorder that alters brain functions. My best friend has in fact found Christianity and Christianity has become an anchoring agent that restores in him a ray of hope. He's more social now. He exudes a sort of confidence. He smiles.

I myself have a faith system, if it can be called that: Karmic continuum. It asserts that everything in life continues either for the better or worse, depending on the energy you put out, the bad or good thoughts and actions, depending on what I contribute to Earth and its inhabitants. My way is through my writings and the materials I transcribe into Braille for blind school youths.

In this way, I feel better and my life has meaning and substance. In this way, my PTSD is lessened, since my thoughts are focused on only the good things; in this way cognitive distortions are a rare occurrence.





Emil Z has a tranquil look on his face now that I explained to him that I at least understand. That I at least care and appreciate him. That I at least won't judge, condemn, or reprove him for things oftentimes out of his control.

Yet, there are still times though, when his patience is tried by neighbors, store clerks, strangers, but worse is when other friends are less than understanding or critical over his cognitive distortions.

I get a very pronounced sense of despair from my best friend, whom is oblivious to the more than

obvious fact that there are cognitive distortions that cause additional frustrations in him, and sever or diminish from friendships and friendships-to-be. His compulsion is to isolate, but his good Samaritan heart begs to differ. I take notice of his watery eyes every time embarrassment and disappointments occur, at a loss over why it should be this way. My heart is overwhelmed and at a loss myself on how to truly help one so entrenched beyond a seemingly visible solution. And I suppose that's why it's called INVISIBLE SCARS.





INVISIBLE SCARS

BY ALPHONSO TANNER

As a young man who chose to do the street life, I remember abusing alcohol and weed. This combination made me feel like racing my car. I remember my girl, Tonya would always warn me about drinking and driving, but I didn't listen.

It was my friend Cal's birthday and we planned to do something big for him, so we walked over to Eight Street to holler at him. He came outside and I got out of the car and said "brother, don't go get into anything because we are going to take you out to the strip club and hang out," he said "Okay." I told him that first Tonya and I are going over to the chicken joint to get something to eat and that I will pick him up in a few.

By the time I was done, I had drunk five beers and smoked six joints. I was flying down the road to pick up Cal when Tonya demanded that I take her home because I was drunk and driving too fast. I dropped her off and went up to Eight Street where everybody was hanging out. I pulled up to Cal and told him to get in. But one of my other friends told Cal to ride with him, so I told him to go ahead and I'll see you when we get there.

He jumped in the truck with Natalie, Mel and Big Boy. As we went around Deadman's Curve, which led to the strip club, I pulled up to the Pathfinder that they were in. There was also another car with another couple of friends inside that was tailing us and I slowed down to let them catch up.

Big Boy's car went around us and almost hit an on-coming car. He swerved and got back in traffic. Here I was drunk and wanting to play chicken with my friends. I tried to swerve to make my friends in the car behind us freak out and I faked towards them and they went around me. That's when the car that was coming the other way towards us swerved to the left, and I went to the left at the same time and the car tapped the rear end of my car and we spun out of control.

I saw the world spinning several times over, and we flipped more times than I could count. We hit a couple of trees and I heard a few car tires skid up ahead not knowing that Big Boy and Cal had a wreck themselves. I climbed out of my car and saw I was full of blood and my head was busted. I got to the truck and saw it was flipped over. Once I approached the truck, I could still hear the music playing and the fake blue strobe lights flashing.

I peeked inside and saw that Big Boy was without one of his arms and Cal was jammed under the front dashboard. He was practically cut in half, he looked at me and said, "brother, I'm cold." I told him to hold tight as a few cars stopped to view the scene.

I ran to one of them and told them to call the police. One lady told me, "baby you need to go to the hospital yourself." As the ambulance came they wrapped me in a sheet. I watched and saw them carry the pieces of my friend to the ambulance. I yelled out "Cal" and tried to go to him but I was held back by people I did not know.

Once Tonya arrived on the scene, I tried to explain to her what happened, but all I could do is cry. I lost a few of my childhood friends to drunk driving and this will never leave me. An invisible scar remains with me today.





INVISIBLE SCARS

BY GREGORY WOMACK

When we hear the word SCAR, some of us believe we know what it means, which is comparable to asking if people know what a \$1,000,000.00 is. Sure you may know that \$1,000,000.00 is a million dollars, but how many of us know what \$1,000,000.00 is to have as our own and spend as you please? When you add ownership to the equation it changes the question and eliminates the knowledge of untold millions of people. The same is true of our knowledge of SCARS. Everyone knows what the word scar means until you ask about SCARS that have affected their lives.

The initial response to that question is to point out wounds and marks on the body who's arrivals and placement can be explained. Those are not the SCARS I want to talk about, ones that can be seen. I want to talk about those INVISIBLE SCARS. Scars that come from traumatic events such as mental and verbal abuse, neglect, abandonment, failure, and many physical abuses that may not have marked the body, but did mark the heart and mind. The biggest illusion about these scars is when we get away from their creators and the pain subsides, we make the mistake in thinking it is over and we are healed. Then in our ignorance, we try to move on. We begin in our mind to live as if nothing ever happened to us. In severe cases, our mind even blocks out the event for a time only to have it surface in our future unexpectedly.

The harsh truth about INVISIBLE SCARS are that they never leave us! No matter how long ago they happened, there will always be some kind of residual effect. The pain festers inside us and our hearts grow callus, cold, and ultra sensitive in the area the pain stems from. We try to go on but we only grow older with a piece of our soul missing. We are wounded, broken, and damaged, trying to live a regular life when everything inside us is irregular and we do not even know it.

Our pain causes us to lash out, we are quick tempered, bitter, angry, argumentative, and untrusting.

We lack self-esteem, are insecure, and battle depression constantly. All things we have learned to live with and accepted as the natural reaction to life. WRONG!!! Nothing about physical altercations, verbal assaults, distrust, and the lack of respect and concern we show towards others is natural. Healthy people do not act nor react in this manner. There is something going on inside you that causes one to do these things, and until we deal with it, we are bound to keep repeating these actions.

Just as our physical scars do not heal until the scab is removed, the same holds true with our INVISIBLE SCARS. They cannot be healed until you deal with them. You must address your pain, the causes of it, and the effects it has had upon our lives. These is a reason you yell so much, a reason you do not trust men/women, a reason your relationships (friendships included) do not last. I am not saying that every time things like this happen it is caused by INVISIBLE SCARS. We all know that bad things do happen to good people, but the stuff I am talking about are things that you cause and initiate. The stimulus for these actions does come from the INVISIBLE SCARS that have never been dealt with.

It is time to start the journey to wellness! It is not going to be easy, won't happened over night, you are going to feel vulnerable, scared, and even want to give up. You will grow disappointed in yourself for allowing it to happened and affect you in so many ways for so long a time. Then you will begin to be angry and resentful towards the cause of the SCAR. It will be an emotional roller-coaster ride, but at the end of it, you will be a better person for having gone through it. You will love harder, become more compassionate, tolerable, and patient. Life will become more enjoyable, less stressful. Your confidence will increase along with your self worth. Basically, your life will change as you become a new and better you, if you want to.





The changes I am speaking of comes from growth and maturity. For some it is growing closer to God. Others gain it through counseling, talking to a mentor, or even addressing the person/people who caused the pain. Yet the one undeniable truth of someone being healed is you have to forgive! The person/people, the event, and most importantly, you have to forgive yourself. Our INVISIBLE SCARS can take another form if we are willing to put in the work. They can disappear! We will not forget them, but instead of causing us pain, they will become a source of

strength and victory! People always say, “What does not kill you, will only make you stronger.” If you are reading this it is obvious you did not get killed. Now let’s make that statement true. It is time to get stronger!

When suffering finds a meaning, it ceases to be suffering.” - Viktor Frankl

Man’s Search for Meaning





LIVING WITH THE INVISIBLE SCARS

BY SUSAN PERNA

There is no greater agony than bearing an untold story inside you. I was sexually and emotionally assaulted for many years by multiple, adoptive family members. As a result, I went down a very painful self-destructive road for a long time.

Adult survivors of sexual childhood abuse like myself carry a lot of pain and shame that lasts well into adulthood. In many cases the hidden scars are associated with psychological abuse. There are certain kinds of wounds that never go away or heal completely, wounds that I describe as invisible scars.

Those emotional scars can last a lifetime. Even though I have had undergone extensive therapy over the years I still have trouble forgiving my perpetrators. I just can't seem to let go of that anger that burns deep within me.

Making peace with your past is no easy task especially if you had a traumatic childhood. I have undergone over three decades of therapy and I still see a therapist on occasion. I am conflicted mentally because I was taught to "forgive and forget,"

Lord knows how hard I have tried to forgive, but yet I just can't. We have been told that we have to "forgive and forget," but how can we do something that we don't feel like doing or know how to do?

Forgiveness shaming and blaming is destructive, and the truth is that you don't actually "need" or "have to" forgive anyone or anything if you truly don't want or feel ready to. You can't force forgiveness, it must come naturally.

I don't know how many times I heard people say "You'll feel so much better if ONLY you can find forgiveness in your heart." Don't let anyone try to force you into doing something you are not ready for.

Pressuring a person to forgive is usually the very last thing victims of abuse need. It is equally important for others to refrain from pushing someone into forgiving a perpetrator.

Even if the intention is coming from a good place, trying to get someone who has been violated to forgive can feel like being victimized all over again. Instead, it is more helpful to validate that the person is entitled to his or her feelings and listen without judgment. You can forgive when you are ready and if you're not that's okay too. Forgiveness is a process not something you rush into, and there is no time frame for forgiveness. It takes as long as it takes.

Some people may never get to the point where they feel like they can or want to forgive someone who has hurt them, and that's okay.

I don't believe that God will hold victims accountable if they can't forgive their perpetrators. I am sure that God understands. After all, He knows our hearts better than we do. All we can do is make the effort by trying to forgive.

The absence of forgiveness implies neither desire for revenge nor lack of wisdom. It is not true that you must forgive your abuser to heal. Despite conventional wisdom, I have not failed to move on. I have continued to grow as a writer, mother, and wife. Accepting that you can't forgive your perpetrator doesn't mean that you are somehow weak or bad either.

I hope that one day I am able to forgive my perpetrators but for now, I won't let that stop me from living life to the fullest. I have found peace knowing that I am doing the very best that I can and that is all anyone can do, and that is all God expects.





INVISIBLE SCARS

BY RENANDE ELLISON

Your childhood memories are a record of your lived experience, all your thoughts, all you have experienced in cycles of events during different phases. Regardless of how old we are, your childhood memories never go away. Your childhood memories are with you every step of the way and influence how you think and act throughout the entirety of your life.

Living a healthy and productive life for those with unresolved childhood trauma can be overwhelming. Consider unresolved childhood trauma as suppressed emotions and negative thought patterns from earlier childhood. Your life is blocked by outworn feelings and negative thought patterns that keep replaying in your mind. The beliefs of being inadequate, worthless, and powerless are all wounds related to your identity, to your sense of self. Feeling ashamed, undeserving and broken are invisible scars that you need to heal. Psychological wounds are invisible scars and can take a long time to heal. “Self-undoing” requires you to expose those wounds by peeling all the accumulated layers of protective defense built up early on. To withstand self-defeating thoughts and emotions, you develop coping mechanisms that later become the behavior patterns that keep you in a holding cell. You will know when it is time to break down those cell walls when whatever coping mechanism that has worked in the past no longer works in the present; this signals that it is time to come up with new approaches to old problems. There comes a point when we need a new perspective on life.

Healing takes time and awareness. Traumatic memories buried deep beneath the surface generate your most intense feelings and intrusive thoughts; this is where the true healing begins. Buried deep beneath the surface is where you will find your deepest wound, the part of you that you are not only hiding from others, but also from yourself. No matter how you try to mask and run away from your childhood trauma, what is hidden will surface, and often manifests itself in signs of depression, anxiety, and stress. The goal of healing is to empower yourself. Be honest and

transparent with yourself by taking the time to pause and focus on finding higher meaning in your suffering. Life can feel more manageable for those who struggle with depression, anxiety, and stress if you allow yourself to feel rather than avoid your most intense emotions. You can channel intense feelings; they are a source of energy that propels you to face rather than run away from pessimistic thoughts and self-sabotaging behavior. By putting your thoughts onto paper, you can track and pinpoint the onset of your depression, anxiety, and stress. Journaling is a healthy and productive way to direct your internal fuel and gain a deeper understanding of your triggers and behavior patterns. Journaling is a form of self-expression that allows you to develop a powerful sense of compassion for yourself.

Journaling allows you to finally do something about your wounds by taking personal ownership for your healing and personal growth. You had no choice about your personal history, and there is no way you can change the past. It is your future that is important. You can release deep-seated thoughts and emotions to free up mental space and gain clarity to focus on the here and now. Living in the “now” allows you to think straight when dealing with challenges in the present reality.

Unresolved childhood trauma prevents you from living in the moment and being present. Self-undoing is all about dismantling psychological barriers and liberating yourself to move on to new adventures. Know you’ve faced the worst, and now there’s nothing more to fear.





INVISIBLE SCARS!

BY VINCENT KITTRELL

As I lay here tossing and turning in this bed, while visions of my life turn through my head, trying to understand where it all went wrong, while trying not to relate to the same old sad song.

I have no tears to blur my vision, of some joy of my life, that my friend I'm unable to mention. My life was no bed of roses or any greeting cards of 'Just Because.' It was filled with nightmares and terrors, that's what my life was.

When I come to the recognition of my fate, I realized how vengeance molded my life into this shape. How I lost everything in just a blink of an eye, because of the lust of retaliation, my future had to die.

In an attempt to smile, I know that it's crooked, I embrace the darkness and wonder where it took it. Can you picture these words and take a mental journey with me, to feel the expression of my heart that no one else can see?

How is it possible to express my heart with only paper and pen, to write about the emotions and feelings that are hidden within? How can I explain that the past is the ghost when I was only a slave? And how walking in circles does only one thing and that's dig your own grave.

My mind races a mile a minute, while my heart reminisces on the past that's buried deep within it. Why is silence an enemy while the voices are my friend? Is it my cracked ego attempting to mend?

What is it I'm looking for in life that's worth it all? And if this is my only chance, who is it that I can actually call? Do I listen to the voices while I focus on my thoughts, or do I turn away from it all before my soul gets caught?

Everybody is lost and used while dazed and confused, and everything is just an illusion to those who

choose.

The past is just a phantom of what my paradise use to be. Now only chaos of the present has come to surround me. When I glance into a mirror, I observed a positive future, now all I observe is a bent, jaded painted picture of what I came to be.

To express that which is in my heart, is to produce a bio hazard flame, and the indignation of my mind is like a wild tiger that no one can tame. When I walk I feel the weight of a million burdens that I carry and when I cry I feel all those demons that refuse to stay buried

The hate, hurt and pain draw close to me when I take the time to reminisce, while the frustrations, aggravation and anguish fuels my soul when I realize my life resulted to this. What is there to hope for when all you harbor is hate. How do you end in love when your spirit is tired and irate?

My mind wonders as my soul is set, while my body honors nothing but revenge without an ounce of regret. You can't put someone in a cage and not expect them to be warped at some cost. Just as a person can't hide their true feelings and not expect to feel lost.

Now I sit here and stare at what has come of my fate, with hopes that I can eradicate what's there without being too late. Face to face, just the mirror and me. As the devil smiles at his reflection, all the angels and demons flee.

Thoughts cross all through my mind, for a moment in time. I'm reminded of all the abuse I gave and received. These invisible scars, how it fueled all the hate that I harbored and conceived. All that I had intended and the things that I had wish to see, were like empty promises and broken dreams, "they never came to be."





INVISIBLE SCARS

BY TABLEDINE MARRABLE

I believe that it was Frederick Douglass that said “I would rather be a slave, still ignorant than to be educated and free knowing what I know.”

I’m simply saying that if you don’t know that you are being treated unfair then you don’t have any ill feelings about the way that you are being treated, but once you become aware of the conditions that you are living in intelligence compels you to better your living conditions. What do you do when you feel powerless to overcome the conditions of your environment? These invisible scars go undetected.

I am a 41 year old African American male that has been incarcerated for 21 years for 2 counts of capital murder and 1 count of attempted murder, in which I received life without the possibility of parole.

Apart from the crime that I participated in by far the worst decision I’ve ever made was to become civilized. I was a street warrior who was in tune with surviving the streets, living a dog eat dog life which I completely disregarded the future possibilities of going to prison. Consequently, years later I found myself in that very place where other similar young men as myself labeled as predators, cut-throats, murderers, rapists, drug dealers, thieves, etc... I could relate to the underworld because I knew my place in the underworld hierarchy. At the top of the food chain meant that I had to be a man amongst men or find myself on someone else dinner plate. I went through the drugging and drinking unconsciously aware of my own invisible scars while in prison as I continued to play cops and robbers, known to be the game of cause and the effect. All of my actions or reactions came with negative consequences.

In prison, solitary confinement is the effect or consequence for inappropriate behavior that are volatile prison rules and regulations. My actions deepened the wounds of my invisible scars that I never detected. If you have ever been locked in a room or a place where

it’s just you, your thoughts, your feelings, and your past; then you understand my pain.

Incarceration at times became boring which led me to exercise, sleep, or read. They were my options of choice while in solitary confinement. It became my coping mechanism to deal with boredom, but in reality I was ignoring the pain and hurt of my own invisible scars. Reading became something that I could console in.

I read every book I could. I remember reading Shakespeare “The Folly of Follies” was the best story I’ve ever read which lead me to reading the whole book of Shakespeare plays. At the time, I started sharing with others who were willing to listen to my opinion about the books I read. Shortly afterwards I was introduced into a secret book club that consisted of criminals and aspiring book readers. Other inmates and myself would exchange books so that when we met up on the yard we could critique the book. If you’re reading this article, all that has been said was necessary to reach my point.

I never knew or believed that I had a freedom of choice in life. Being black, uneducated, gang related, addicted to drugs and alcohol meant that I was predisposed to come to prison or die an early death. Living in pain shaped and molded me to develop that type of belief system about life. My mental blindness prevented me from seeing the invisible scars that existed within. Those same invisible scars lead me into signing up for a Substance Abuse Treatment Program. In the program those invisible scars began to surface. The remembrance of my painful past brings about tears as I write this article. I reflect back to the time while I was sitting in class listening to stories shared by other participants. I was somebody who understood and could relate to them. It made me realize that something was wrong with me.

Throughout life, it reminded me how I





embraced the pain, rejection, abandonment, loneliness, etc... From it all, I learned to accept the fact that I was addicted to drugs, alcohol, and crime through the belief of a Higher Power greater than myself.

As a benefit, I learned how to be sober. A sense of sanity had been restored I started attending church services on a regular basis after. I made the decision to submit my will and life to God. That was 19 years ago when I walked into an institutional drug and alcohol program where I became a Cognitive Behavior Counselor. I had to get it right with God first, then myself to start the process of forgiveness and the healing from those invisible scars.

Healing of invisible scars allowed me to reconcile broken relationships with my family. I was man enough to make a list of all the people I caused pain or hurt including myself to make amends through forgiveness. The people that I couldn't reach I prayed that they found it in their hearts the power to forgive me.

I realized that it took me 30 seconds (a split second decision) for me to cause countless scars on the

souls of others, but will they ever be healed? I say that to say this, I took the lives of others and for that it will take time for their families to heal or maybe they feel like me. My heart will never heal. I took the life of a man that had kids. A young girl died behind my actions. That young girl will never get a chance to graduate school, go to college, and be a wife. Then the other young woman I wounded witnessed the death of her friends. Her invisible scars will forever make her insecure of being around strange men.

As a consequence, I am powerless to convey my sincere sympathy to the world because of the crime that I committed and the place of residence that I am broadcasting my apologies.

My son is a grown man now. I robbed him of a father. I became a financial burden on my family. They take care of me like I'm a senior citizen in a nursing home. Sadly, I am a stranger to my own nieces and nephews. Sometimes I wonder will I ever know how many lives of countless scars that I have caused that have been undetected. But I pray and hope that one day they will be healed.





INVISIBLE SCARS

BY KENNETH CANNON

“Your face is not what you shape it. Your image is the influence of others.”

100% of us all are made with similarity to each other. Today she may find a little piece of him in her life. Tomorrow, he will design images of her mold. For this reason, it doesn't puzzle me to find people of different diversity yearning to exist among the principle inversion. The cup is never empty but always half full or where there is hope there is life, and where there is life there is hope.

The influence of another's life into yours is from our invisible scars, and unexpected coerced invasion shaping of our canopy. Pretty much everyone would consent that a scar is negative. Blass 1991, in the study of psychology explained the equation of environment and addition of personality creates an equal of behavior. Two hidden or invisible factors produced by a third.

When I was a little boy of just 11 or 12 years of age. I committed a crime by having an illegal firearm on public school property. Eventually criminal charges followed and I was sent to a juvenile Boot & Hat Camp for six month. To the individual overseeing the justice system and some close relatives alike, going away for behavioral rehabilitation early on in life was all positive. However, questions concerning the reason why I carried the weapon and my intentions thereof were never inquired about. For a young boy preparing to be offset by the harsh reality and treatment of an industry rated as fiction on care, a little boy was alone.

Forthcoming would be handcuffs and Sheriff Transportation rides to a mountain in northwest Pennsylvania. There, I was immediately treated as a soldier and suddenly confused as to why I was there. Was it to be a soldier or was it for me to form positive societal thinking? Wee morning hours of physical training and written essays on hopeful behavior changes did assist my vision of futuristic goals, as all of this could be seen in hindsight. Still, I was a child separated physically and emotionally from his parents. For the next eight

years I would stumble and stand until claimed by the Department of Corrections Prison Industry where I would serve a sentence of no more than a minimum duration of 15 years and a maximum of 30. From the very commencement of attempting teen life I was hampered and warehoused.

Granted, my family upbringing wasn't written for the best of television shows, screenwriters, and Oscar winners. The not yet mature upshot of my mind coupled with an institutionally governed environment dug beneath the skin and scarred my heart. My hatred met more hatred and my misery didn't like any company. It only liked the company similar to it. Inside the institutions my eyes seen much violence, my ears heard violence, and my vessel sometimes became victim of violence as I was treated according to circumstance. All of this continued to take place until my heat expected nothing more and turned numb to pain, and aching became invisible.

Nobody could see my scars or pain. They were silenced, until I met similarity in others. The dialogue of our being matured through years of incarceration had grown tired. We then began to write about what the world could not see or emotionally connect with, but I could hear. Writing and educational endeavors embarked upon became our outreach ministry. The past of invisibility grew a visible outcome. It is true. If you hold the steam in a covered pot it will inevitably burst and touch those near and far, scaring them in the process of release.

If invisible scars are like bacteria heaped beneath the skin it will rise to a boil of being seen. Some scars are ugly. Some have puss inside of them. Some are scabbed. But in the rubble of it all some may leave behind a reminder as a mark of beauty from the past, a beast no more, but a beautiful creature.

Healing invisible scars may begin with recognizing no man is an island. If you're looking to heal, the following may be helpful to use;





I Proactive Coping – which consists of upfront efforts to ward off or modify the onset of a stressful event,

li Social Support - the helpful coping resources provided by friends and other people and most of all, avoid

lii Rumination – in the context of aggression, rumination involves repeatedly thinking about and reliving an anger-inducing event, focusing on angry thoughts and feelings, and perhaps even planning or imaging revenge. But don't forget to avoid.

Iv Remaining Stress free – as there has been studies, 'Pathways from Stress to Illness' showing a correlation between Negative Emotional States and illness. Negative Emotional States translates into Unhealthy Behavior and Stress Hormones, then a Weakened Immune System, and then to illness.

What Stress Does to the Heart

Coronary heart disease (CHD) is a narrowing of the blood vessels that carry oxygen and nutrients to the heart muscle. It is by far the leading cause of death in the United States among both men and women. According to the American Heart Association, an estimated 80 million American adults (1 in 3) suffer from CHD. For many, the result is a heart attack, which occurs when the precious blood supply to the heart is blocked. This causes an uncomfortable feeling of pressure, fullness, squeezing or pain in the center of the chest –and sometimes sweating, dizziness, nausea, fainting and shortness of breath. Every year, 1. 5 million Americans have heart- attacks. One-third do not survive. (For more information, you can visit www.americanheart.org.)

Several factors are known to increase the risk of CHD. The three most important are hypertension, or high blood pressure; cigarette smoking, and high cholesterol. (Others include a family history of CHD, a high-fat diet, obesity, and a lack of exercise.) People with one of the three major risk factors are twice as likely to develop CHD, those with two risk factors are

three and a half times as likely, and those with all three are six times as likely. These statistics are compelling and should not be taken lightly. Combined, however, these variables account for fewer than half the known cases of CHD. What's missing from the equation is the fourth major risk factor: psychological stress-from work, from martial troubles, and from the negative life events that plague people who lack resources because of low socio-economic status (Gallo & Matthews 2003, Matthews, 2005).

The process of healing is by no means an easy task. It consist of the coupled healing of mind and body. But should any man, woman or child find bravery, then the 'Multiple S Syndrome' should assist. There are approximately 41 but not limited to, here are a few that may assist.

- | | |
|-----------------------|----------------------|
| Self Awareness | Self Affirmation |
| Positive Self Concept | Self Verification |
| Self Control | Self Consciousness |
| Self Enhancement | Self Esteem |
| Self Evaluation | Self Focus |
| Self Promotion | Self Regulation |
| Self Recognition | Self Serving Beliefs |
| Self Presentation | |

Using the Multiple S Syndrome can serve useful should it be approached with sincerity.

Not everyone is brave enough to find a place of healing from Invisible Scars by focusing on the self. If any person should find it difficult, seeking professional help is encouraged. If one chooses to use the S then he or she will appropriately be placed in the Self Healing Theory of Pollyanna's Health (Roy 2004), which states that we must walk a fine line between blaming patients on the one hand and absolving them of any role in their health on the other hand.





Equally important in the process of healing is the approach of acceptance.

“The most important thing in illness is to never lose heart.” – Nikolai Lenin

When I began the transition of healing my invisible scars, I noticed more positive traits of self-esteem. Inside the phrase ‘self-esteem’ the word ‘esteem’ comes from the Latin Word Aestimare, which means to estimate or approach oneself. It thus refers to both positive and negative evaluations of ourselves. But the feeling of self-worth is not a single trait etched in stone. Rather, it is a state of mind. To be healed is to move toward a solution of freedom from what hinders and helps directly the cause.

For example, alcoholics attend A.A. Meetings. Domestic abusers attend Batters’ groups. Individuals who are depressed visit Clinical Psychologists, etc. Every individual scarred must visit places most suitable for healing, even if the place is within the self.

“No man is an island, entire of itself, every man is a piece of the continent, a part of main. If a clod be washed away by the sea, Europe is the less, as well as if a promontory were, as well as if a manor of thy friend or of thine own were. Any man’s death diminishes me, because I’m involved in mankind, and therefore never send to know for who the bell tolls; it tolls for thee.” - John Donne





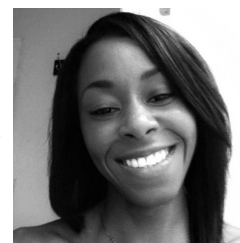
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RENANDE ELLISON About the Author: R.J Ellison is a blogger and co-founder of UrbanElect.com. She has a passion for educating her community on ways to improve and support the nuclear family structure.



In these times, society underestimates family values. The desire to devote oneself to starting a family and to take an interest in the welfare of those in your community has become a lost art. The lack of domesticity and disinclination to take on the responsibilities of a home and family, long-term consequences will be felt by Generation Z. The most important legacy Millennials can leave behind is knowledge. UrbanElect.com shares various content mediums such as written blog, Video blog, and podcast introducing new concepts to spark discussion and controversy in order to promote change and progress with a broad audience. Urban Elect's mission is to be the most diverse media platform. Urban Elect's goal is to push the family agenda by way of collective approach towards creating policies, standards, procedures to protect the integrity of the community.

DAMONT EWELS

WALLACE GARDNER, JR. About the author: Hello, my name is Wallace Gardner, Jr, I was named after my dad. He grew up in California. I was raised in North Little Rock, Arkansas. I am 40 years young. My first love was music. I wrote what I felt, and began to record it at the studio, and then I started to put it out in the streets. Some of it changed people's lives, some of it glorified wrong doings. But, I always kept my heart intact, through it all, and that's why I've become the man I am today, compassionate, determined and a firm believer of being a realest! Respectful, honest and now I've become a political prisoner.

As soon as I am released, I am going to participate in programs and organizations that's going to open up the hearts, and minds of those around the world. I've grown up, I've seen a lot, been through a lot, and I've learned from my mistakes. I am all for change, and I will continue to educate the youth. I love the kids, so I try to look through the eyes of the youth. It's very important to me that I can identify with their struggles, that's why all the music I write is more of a reality wake-up call for those lost and headed for destruction.

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FRANKLIN JUNIOR About the author: Franklin Junior has been a contributing writer for Spotlight on Recovery Magazine since 2016. This writer never disappoints, like many writers he speaks from the heart and soul

VINCENT KITTRELL About the author: My name is Vincent Kittrell, but I prefer to be called Vince. I'm 6'1 @ 185lbs. I was born in Rockledge, Florida, but raised in Mississippi (Biloxi). I'm Mulatto who is an active father of 3 children. I love reading, my favorite authors are: Stephen King, Dean Koontz, Daniel Steel and Nicholas Spark. My favorite colors are purple and blue. I love all music (yes that includes classical music and country). In my pass time I enjoy writing, swimming and almost all outdoor events.

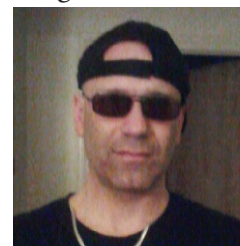


My goal in life is to start up a non-profit organization called "Love Your Neighbor," which will focus on victims of all abuse (from sexual, physical and emotional).

TABLEDINE MARRABLE About the author: This is Tabledine's first article for Spotlight on Recovery Magazine.

DENNIS MINTUN About the Author: Dennis Mintun has been a regular contributor to Spotlight on Recovery Magazine since 2013, under the pen name of "Cougar Newquist." Because he uses the mistakes of his own past to help others overcome theirs – everyone knows who "Cougar" is. Dennis runs a thriving chapel group that focuses on personal empowerment. He has written articles, stories, and poems for various magazines, and has fiction and non-fiction books at PrisonsFoundation.org

EFRAIN MORALES, JR. About the author: Efrain Morales, Jr., whom has published abroad in newspapers, newsletters and magazines, including Spotlight, is also a Certified Braille Transcriber. He is currently finalizing a Fantasy Fic. book, titled Leena & the Keeper of Magics.

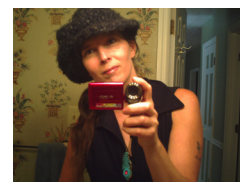


JOSEPH L. MYERS About the author: Glenn Slaby, originally from Brooklyn, is married and has one son. A former accountant with an MBA, Glenn suffers from mental illness. He writes and works part-time at St. Vincent's Hospital in Harrison where he also receives therapy. He is the author of 90 plus published articles and letters. He is currently working on an MFA and is a Eucharistic Minister

AMY NICHOLSON About the author: Amy Nicholson hopes to encourage and inspire others through her writing. She has been published in Country Woman, The Old Schoolhouse, The Lookout, and other publications. When she's not writing, gardening, or hanging out with her family. Amy substitute teaches. Read a sampling of her musings at www.amynicholson14.wordpress.com



SUSAN PERNA About the Author: Susan Perna has been a contributing writer for Spotlight on Recovery Magazine since 2014. She has been featured in "The Bonus Round," "While You Were Sleeping," "Video Game Addiction," "Hope" and "Youth and Crime."



VICTORIA RADER

GLENN SLABY Glenn Slaby is married with one son, a former accountant with an MBA, has always





lived with mental illness, but was originally misdiagnosed in his thirties. Currently working part-time at St. Vincent's Hospital, Harrison, NY where treatment is received, he obtained an MFA in Creative Writing at the College of New Rochelle and is a Eucharistic Minister. The author of 90 plus, published articles and letters, please visit his website at www.glennslaby.com



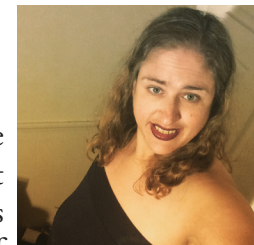
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MARY WIEDE Mary Wiede is a freelance writer who struggles with addiction. She does art, poetry, and photography as well. Recovery is important to Mary, because she has lost a lot due to her addiction. Mental illness has been a factor in her life creating some obstacles that have hindered her progress at times. She is in the process of writing a book of poetry. If all goes well it will be available on Kindle before the end of 2019



GREGORY WOMACK About the author: Gregory Womack is a man of faith, integrity, morals and respect, who enjoys life, loves his family, and counts each day as a blessing. He does not consider himself an author but someone who has learned how to express his heart through his pen.

Gregory says, "My bad decisions have hurt many people, my family especially. Because of that I chose to start making good decisions and the best decision of my life was when I accepted Christ as my Lord and Savior. I now live my days in a manner that honors God and brings healing through love, to every person I meet."

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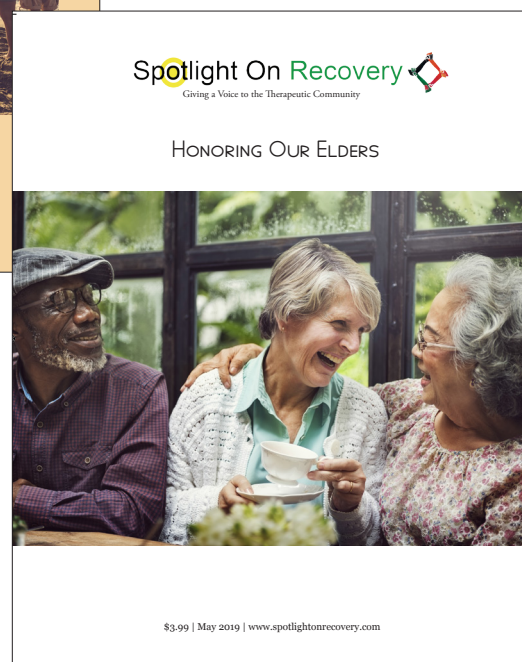
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BACK ISSUES

BACK ISSUES ARE AVAILABLE.
CONTACT ROBIN GRAHAM FOR DETAILS.





COMING SOON:
IF I KNEW THEN, WHAT I KNOW NOW, PART 2

