Meghan Caughey - *"Hugging Form"*

What you need to know about TRAUMA

This booklet was written for trauma survivors. According to many studies, we are all trauma survivors of one sort or another. We want you to know that many women and men have suffered at the hands of another and don't know where to turn or who to talk to.

There are soldiers returning from battle that are having flashbacks and difficulty resuming their normal lives. They need to talk to someone.

There are also people experiencing homelessness, poverty, and the loss of their homes due to floods or fire. They need to talk to someone.

There are people who were abandoned or were orphaned by parents who died. Some of these people choose not to remember or talk about it.

Sexual trauma might be the most devastating and most secretive. We talk about sexual abuse trauma in this booklet. We hope you are not a trauma survivor but if you are, you are not alone. That is the purpose for our writing this booklet.

You can talk about it!

This booklet was written by peer support staff
at Delaware Psychiatric Center, New Castle, Delaware

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About the Artists

(by order of presentation)

Meghan Caughey, Portland, OR **Cover Art**
Meghan's transformative art evokes strong emotions when viewing it from the very deep and painful to the light and joyful. In addition to being an artist she works as a Senior Director of Peer and Wellness Services for Cascadia Behavioral Healthcare in Portland, Oregon. To see more of her artwork go to, **www.meghancaughey.com.**

Sybil Noble, Kansas City, MO **Page 3, 10**
Sybil's work has been shown in many local and national exhibits. Her artwork often speaks to traumatic experiences while in the mental health system but the painting shown expresses joy and happiness, with hand holding flowers, giving us hope.

Ken Segal, Wilmington, DE **page 4**
Ken graduated from Temple University's Tyler School of Arts majoring in Graphic Design and a double minor in English and Psychology. After years as a developer of 3D CADD programs and Virtual Reality tools, he returned to his first love, painting. See more of his work at **www.segalstudios.com.**

Jean Campbell, St. Louis, MO **page 5**
Jean is known for being a top consumer researcher in the country. Few people know that she is a talented artist and has shown her works in galleries and art showings. Her work in the oil painting shown depicts a man with mental illness waiting to be released from the prejudice and discrimination that surround him.

Sharon D. Wise, Washington, DC **page 6**
Sharon is an artist, advocate, activist and a consultant on trauma issues. She has been drawing and painting for as long as she can remember. Her artwork speaks of her cultural background and is always in splashy vibrant colors. Many of her drawings are self- portraits with faces that reveal her many emotions.

HEALING

Recovering from emotional and psychological trauma takes time.

Give yourself time to heal. Do not try to force the healing process. Be patient with yourself.

Remember, it is very important to stay grounded.

Below, are some things you can do to nurture yourself in your healing process:

- Painting/sketching
- Enjoying music
- Writing poetry
- Photography
- Journaling
- Creating your own comfort room
- Wrapping up in a blanket
- Engaging in pet therapy
- Reading books written by trauma survivors
- Listening to music
- Creating a WRAP (Wellness Recovery Action Plan)
- Getting involved in a support group

What is trauma?

Artist: Sybil Noble, Kansas City, MO

Trauma is the experience of physical or emotional abuse, sexual abuse, abandonment or neglect, war experiences, or having been in a tornado, flood or other disaster.

Traumatic experiences or situations are emotionally painful and distressing. An experience of trauma may have happened in early childhood or in adulthood and can have long-lasting effects on people.

Common Reactions
to Traumatic Experiences

Artist: Ken Segal, DE - ***"Sorrow 2"***

When trauma becomes disabling it impacts your feelings, your thoughts, and your ability to manage your life. It can especially affect how you deal with stressful events.

When you are emotionally overwhelmed, you might find it harder to manage your feelings, take care of yourself as you are usually able to do, connect with others, and thoughtfully plan your day. You may use drugs or alcohol or other harmful things to make you feel better.

Many persons with trauma histories are diagnosed with mental illnesses. Many trauma survivors also become substance abusers or have addictive problems such as gambling, overeating, promiscuity, or self injury.

When you experience a trauma
it may take years to recover.

Peer Support

Peer Support Specialists, when available, can give you support for your journey because they have shared similar experiences.

A peer support specialist can offer you information and resources on the subject of trauma, direct you to local agencies for additional assistance and offer a *"listening ear*" when you need it.

They may conduct support groups in your agency, and will tell you how you, too, can become a helper to others as a peer specialist once you have been on the road to recovery.

Where can I find information about trauma?

- On the internet…. Google the keywords *"trauma"*, *"sexual abuse"*, *"emotional abuse"*, *"physical abuse"*, etc.
- The Psychology and Self-help section, at your local library or bookstore.
- The **Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration** (SAMHSA's) National Center for Trauma-Informed Care (NCTIC) - **http://www.samhsa.gov/nctic/**
- Websites depicting the artwork and writings of trauma survivors, i.e. **www.altertedstatesofthearts.com**

Trained Therapists can Help

Seeing a trained counselor or therapist will be most helpful to assist you in your healing. Counselors will listen carefully and guide you through a process of understanding what happened to you. He/she will see how your experiences with trauma have impacted your life.

For true emotional healing to occur it is critical to work through the process of understanding how painful experiences have shaped your life. A trained counselor will be guided by the question: *"What happened to you",* instead of *"What is wrong with you?"*

To live the life you want to live,
take the next step to talk to a professional counselor.

Artist: Mehgan Caughey, OR - *"Winter Lotus"*

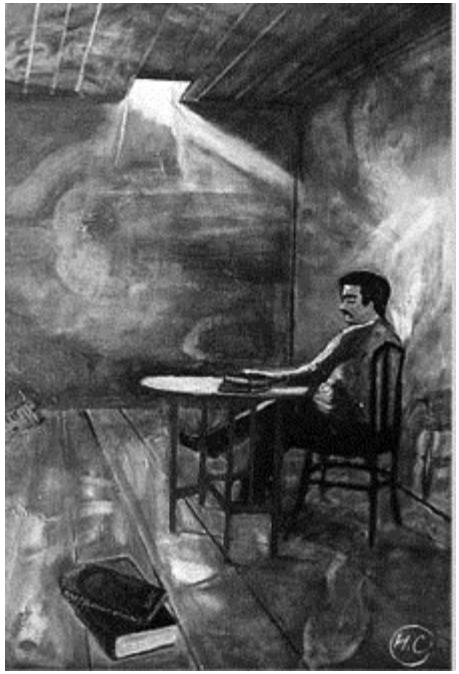
Mehgan says, "As a lotus grows out of the mud and blossoms, we rise above our sufferings."

Studies on Trauma

There have been many studies done that show the prevalence of trauma. Multiple studies reveal the origin of many mental health disorders may be found in childhood trauma.

One very famous study called the ACE Study (Adverse Childhood Experiences Study) looked at early childhood trauma and its effect later in life. It is determined that 90%-98% of public mental health clients have been exposed to repeated trauma.

Another study shows that one in four women experience Domestic Violence/ Intimate Partner violence in their lifetime and the impact of that is trauma.



Artist: Jean Campbell, MO - *"Alone and Waiting "*

Childhood experiences powerfully influence who we become as adults.

Sexual Abuse Trauma

Artist: Sharon Wise, DC - *"Awakening of the Three Parts of Me"*

Sexual abuse trauma is a tragic experience, most commonly experienced by women, but men also have been abused.

Sexual abuse may have occurred in childhood or in adulthood. It may include incest, rape, domestic or intimate partner violence, pornography, and other forms of victimization.

The subject of sexual abuse is often hidden or denied.

SECRETS

There are many reasons to keep issues of sexual abuse quiet. Abusers may threaten to harm their victim or their family if they talk about it. It is not a subject people like to talk about, particularly if it is close to them.

Even mental health providers, up until now, have not been helpful as they had not been trained to ask questions and have been uncomfortable about the subject.

This is also a subject that until recently was "quietly" acceptable. In some cultures it is still acceptable to use women for sexual purposes and not call it abuse. It is not uncommon to listen to abusers say that they did not mean any harm. They were just trying to be loving and caring.

What about you? Are *you* keeping a SECRET?

Famous people who have disclosed traumatic experiences in their lives:

- Oprah Winfrey
- Tyler Perry
- Patty Duke
- Rosie O'Donnell
- Anne Heche

Anne Heche described her experience saying, *"I told my mother at about the seventh year of therapy that I had been abused sexually by my father, and she hung up the phone on me."*

Risking disclosure is difficult and takes courage!