

Fall 2018

# Mental Health. California



FIVE STEPS  
TOWARD

*Midlife  
Renewal*

VETERANS  
WORKFORCE AND  
COMPANY

CULTURE

*A Low-  
Stress High-  
Purpose Life  
in Three  
Steps*

PROP. 63 UPDATE  
"NO PLACE  
LIKE HOME"

PROPER SLEEP  
FOR MENTAL  
AND EMOTIONAL  
RESILIENCE

*Spirituality  
and Mental Health*

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF  
VETERANS AFFAIRS

*Cultural and Community*

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# Five Steps Toward *Midlife Renewal*

by Ingrid Hart

FOR ADULTS BETWEEN THE AGES OF 45-60, THE PASSAGEWAY BETWEEN THE FIRST HALF OF LIFE AND THE SECOND HALF OF LIFE IS CALLED "MIDLIFE RENEWAL." THE THINGS THAT MATTERED IN THE FIRST HALF OF LIFE NO LONGER HOLD THE SAME MEANING. YOU BECOME RESTLESS. A TRIGGER AT MIDLIFE ALMOST ALWAYS SETS IT OFF: CAREERS STAGNATE, MARRIAGES GO UNFULFILLED, CHILDREN LEAVE HOME, PARENTS NEED A CAREGIVER, OR A HEALTH CHALLENGE ARISES. IT'S DURING MIDLIFE WHEN YOU RECOGNIZE THE TIME YOU HAVE LEFT TO LIVE IS SHORTER THAN THE TIME YOU'VE ALREADY LIVED. AND THE TIME YOU HAVE LEFT TO LIVE IN VIBRANT HEALTH IS EVEN SHORTER. POET MARY OLIVER ASKS, "WHAT WILL YOU DO WITH YOUR ONE WILD AND PRECIOUS LIFE?" HERE ARE FIVE TIPS TO HELP EASE A MIDLIFE TRANSITION.

## 1. Make a New Choice

If you want to experience another way of living your life, make a new choice and follow that path on your journey. The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over again and expecting a new result. Make a new choice.

## 2. Passion Requires Risk

When was the last time you had butterflies in your stomach and felt your heart pound wildly? Resting safe and secure in your comfortable life will not inspire passion. Put your head in the lion's mouth and feel what it means to be alive. Make a new choice and change the trajectory of your life.

## 3. Say Yes to Every Opportunity

Your life contracts or expands. When you say no, it contracts. When you say yes, it expands. "Yes" sends the message that you're in expansion mode. "Yes" is a muscle you strengthen every time you use it. Your reward is confidence.

## 4. Release Attachment to Outcome

There may be something much bigger and bolder waiting for you. Surrender your will. Trust that a larger story of your life is unfolding.

## 5. Steps of the Journey

Your journey has no start or end. Life mirrors the universe. It continues to expand and evolve. You create meaning in your life with each choice you make. Wake up to yourself. There is only one time, and it is now.



Ingrid Hart, a member of the Board of Directors of Mental Health California™, is a subject matter expert on midlife renewal and documented her own experience in a multiple award-winning book - *My Year In California: A Journey Toward Midlife Renewal*. Her upper-level education includes a master's degree in culture and spirituality with a deep focus on transition to the second half of life. Ingrid is certified through the Institute of Noetic Sciences as a conscious aging facilitator. Visit Ingrid at [midliferenew.com](http://midliferenew.com).



**You change lives  
for the better,  
we can help.**

A photograph of a young woman with long brown hair and black-rimmed glasses, smiling warmly. She is wearing a black patterned top and is holding a white pill bottle with an orange cap. The background shows a pharmacy with shelves of various medications and other staff members.

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*Savor*



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# Founder's *Note*



**For me, a time-blocked, singular work style helps me get through some very busy days. Essentially, this means slowing down, doing one thing at a time, knowing I will get to the next thing as soon as I'm finished with the first thing. It's also helpful if the cell phone is placed in another room.**

**D**ue to the extremely hectic lifestyles we live and the many demands placed upon us daily, more than ever, we must pace ourselves. Mindfulness can have a huge, positive affect on how we perceive our levels of stress, and once mindfulness becomes integrated into our way of being, things should smooth out. For me, a time-blocked, singular work style helps me get through some very busy days. Essentially, this means slowing down, doing one thing at a time, and knowing I will get to the next thing as soon as I'm finished with the first thing. It's also helpful if the cell phone is placed in another room. It sounds simple, but within our tech-laden, multi-tasked society, it can prove to be extremely difficult, unless we are incredibly diligent. Sometimes we learn the hard way through temporary overloads, and then we get back on track. In order to plow through efficiently, it's important for our minds and bodies to have proper rest for renewal and rejuvenation. We know you will enjoy an important article on this subject in this issue. In addition, focusing our efforts after a good night's rest gets a boost with one of our features on living a low-stress, high-purpose life. We also discuss midlife renewal and what that means when we come to the point where we are unsure of our next steps in life. The author of this article, Ms. Ingrid Hart, is a

midlife renewal expert who teaches workshops on this subject. If you ever have an opportunity to visit with her, we guarantee you will learn many wonderful things.

On Monday, November 12, 2018, we will observe Veterans Day with much appreciation for those who have served our country through military service. We feature an article that provides updates from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and another called "Veterans, Workforce, and Company Culture" by Meagan McPhillips. With heartfelt respect and appreciation for our veterans, from the entire team at Mental Health California, we salute you! We also send continued thanks to our many partners and supporters, many of whom will join us on Thursday, November 15, 2018, in Sacramento for the "2018 California Champions of Mental Health Charity Awards Dinner". Please consider joining us to celebrate California's mental health leadership with great food, complimentary wine, and outstanding entertainment all evening long. Sending best wishes for a relaxing fall season!

**Kristene (K.N.) Smith**  
Founder & CEO

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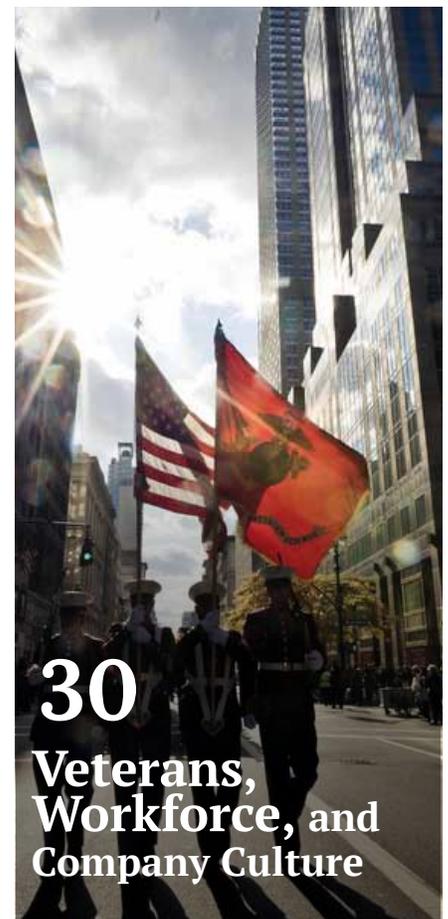
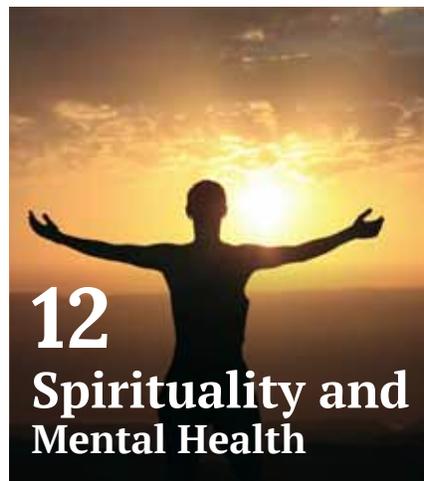
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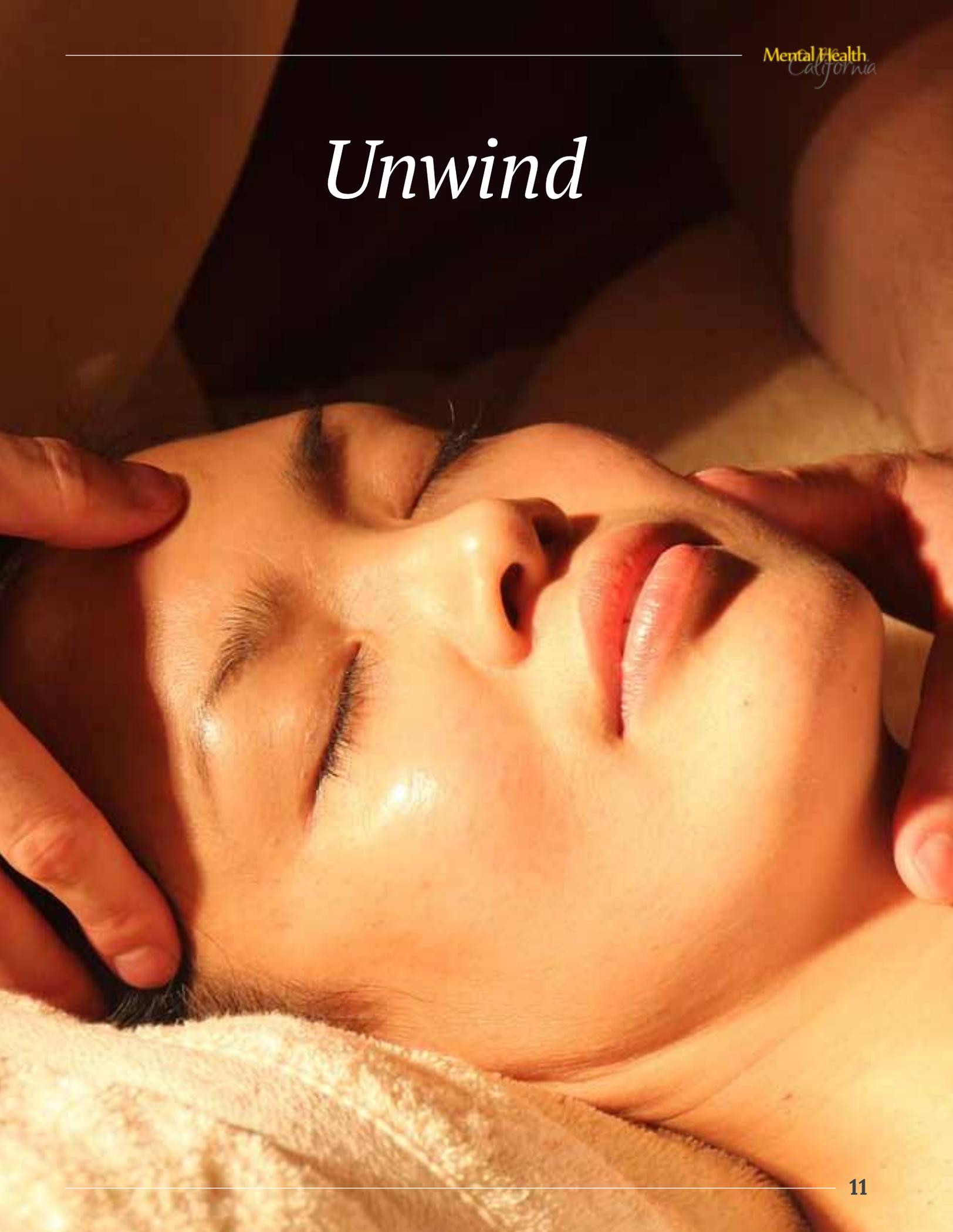
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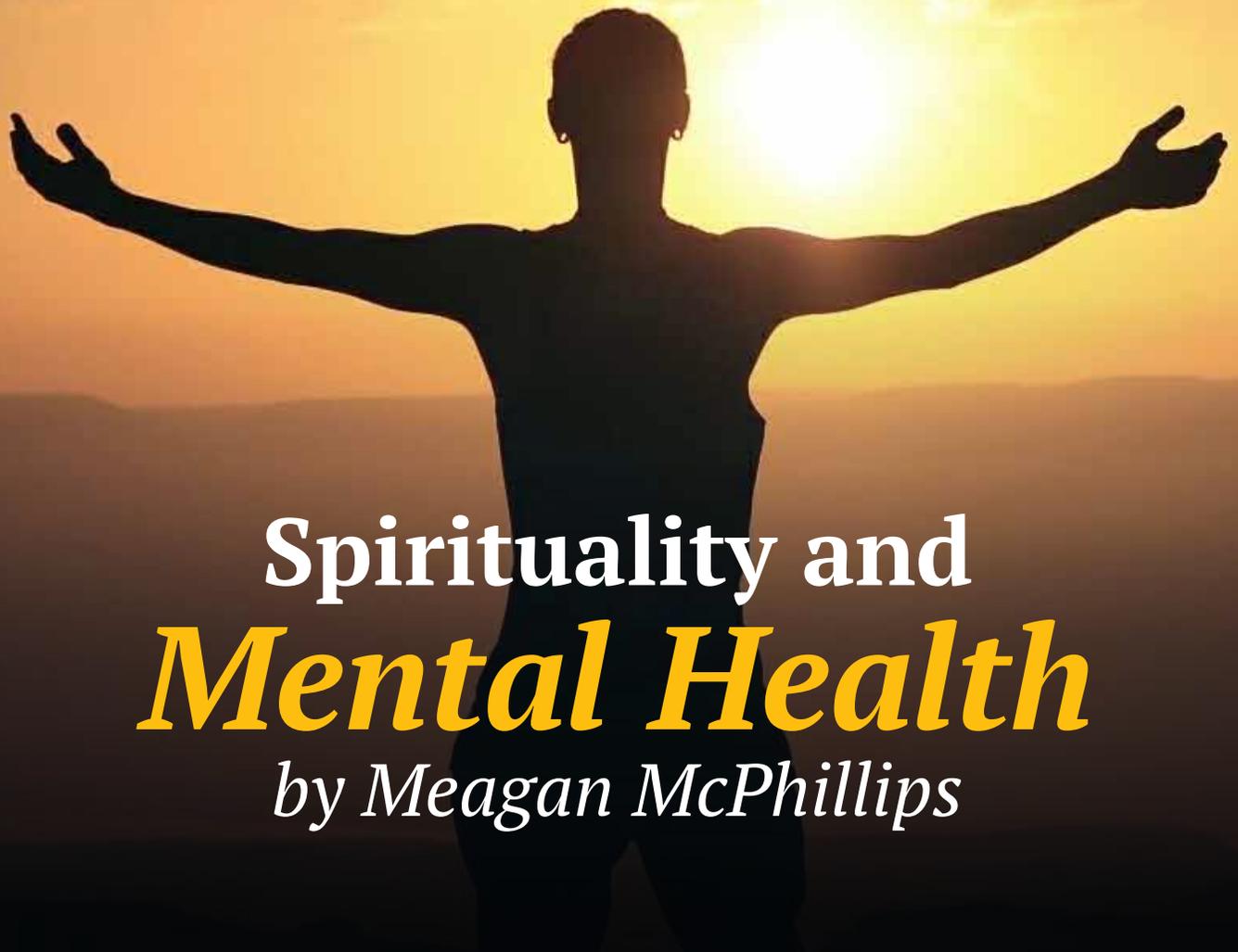




*Relax*

# *Unwind*





Spirituality and  
***Mental Health***

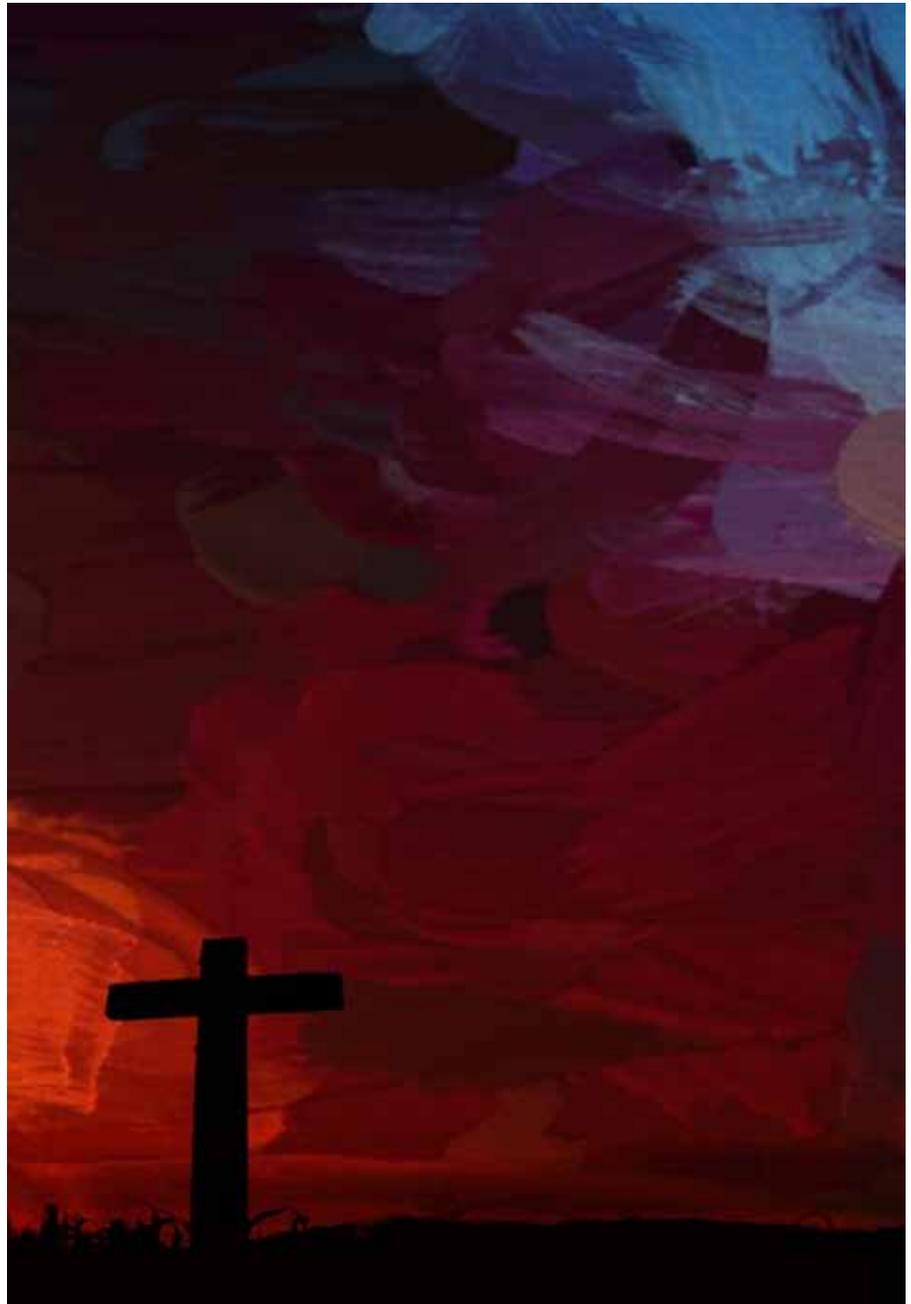
*by Meagan McPhillips*

**THE TERM “SPIRITUALITY” MEANS SOMETHING DIFFERENT TO EVERYONE. FOR SOME, IT MEANS THERE’S A DIVINE GOD WATCHING AND PROTECTING THEM FROM HARM. FOR OTHERS, IT’S THE UNIVERSE SENDING OUT POSITIVE ENERGY THAT EBBS AND FLOWS LIKE THE OCEAN. IT’S ONE OF THOSE TERMS WHEREBY THE MEANING BECOMES UNDERSTOOD UPON THE EXPERIENCE.**

**D**r. John Swinton, professor of divinity and religious studies at the University of Aberdeen, argues that spirituality is an intra-, inter-, and trans-personal experience that is shaped and directed by the experiences of individuals and in the communities in which they live. Thus, its interactions with a person’s mental health is complex, interactive, and dynamic.

The way a person practices spirituality for their mental health is completely unique to their situation. Not one person has gone through the same experiences, trauma, and life lessons as another person. The experience is unique to the individual and so is their spirituality and mental health.

The Mental Health Foundation conducted a survey and found that over half of service users had some form of spiritual belief and that those beliefs were positive and important to them in terms of their mental health. From the study, it was noted that individuals who are not religious may opt to meditate before bed, which may be considered a spiritual act. Studies



have also found that Post Traumatic Stress Disorder victims use mantras to reduce anxiety, war survivors use meditation, and cancer survivors use spiritual coping mechanisms. These rituals and others are great ways to assist with mental health.

There are plenty of ways to find the perfect spiritual fit in your community. For example, many clinical practices are now

developing and evaluating a variety of spirituality-integrated approaches to treatment. Ask your doctor about different programs or at-home practices that you can do to help boost your mental health to a positive state of mind. Also, continue to research through online articles, social media channels, and printed behavioral health resources to find new spiritual practices that fit your lifestyle.

# *An Examination of Eye Movement*

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**Desensitization and Reprocessing for  
Treatment of PTSD**

by Dirk Ellena, RN



As of today, there are approximately 44.7 million people in the United States struggling with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Two percent of all children experienced sexual assault or sexual abuse during the past year, with approximately eleven percent being fourteen- to seventeen-year-old girls. As the number of childhood traumatic events increases, so does the risk for depression, alcoholism, drug abuse, suicide, heart and liver disease, problems with pregnancy, high stress, uncontrollable anger, financial difficulties, and family problems. As we look at our society, it is evident that millions of people are suffering from trauma.

In 1990, Francine Shapiro, Ph.D., developed a treatment system for a multitude of stressors like these called Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR). EMDR has since been endorsed by the American Psychiatric Association, World Health Organization, and the Department of Veterans Affairs. Its worldwide reputation is well deserved as studies have shown that three 90-minute EMDR sessions were able to reverse the PTSD

diagnosis in 84–90% of single-trauma victims. Similar results were found with multiple-trauma victims. The sessions were also found to relieve panic attacks, grief, phobias, body dysmorphia, personality disorders, and many ailments that are not exclusive to trauma.

The premise behind this science is that our bodies form neurobiological responses to trauma. This trauma is sometimes left unprocessed psychologically, or incorrectly processed. This leaves lasting physical and psychological effects.

”

At the culmination of therapy, most patients feel empowered by the tragic experiences that used to traumatize them. By addressing these underlying, unconscious influences, patients are freed from negative patterns and are able to have more authentic autonomy in their personality and decisions.

An EMDR-certified therapist will direct the patient's attention to the emotionally disturbing stimulus in short, sequential moments while engaging them in physical, bilateral stimulation. Therapists use alternating lateral eye movements, electronic vibrating tappers, or audio stimulus. The therapist assists the patient to form new physical and emotional associations with the traumatic thoughts. This helps the patient gain new cognitive insights into those memories, emotions, or sensations while eliminating associated emotional distress. At the culmination of therapy, most patients feel empowered by the tragic experiences that used to traumatize them. By addressing these underlying, unconscious influences, patients are freed from negative patterns and are able to have more authentic autonomy in their personality and decisions. The patterns are rewired to create these new feelings and relieve the patient of past trauma. Thanks to Dr. Shapiro and EMDR clinicians, millions of Americans have a new tool to provide them with peace and hope for a better future.

# Community *Resources*

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**MHSA-Funded County Behavioral  
Health Programs**

*Provided by NAMI California*

## Mendocino County

### Suicide Prevention Program

The goal of the project is to actively engage the community to promote mental health, prevent suicide, and reduce stigma across the lifespan. Suicide prevention is addressed in MHSA forums to determine the community's unique needs and to help develop action plans tailored to fit the needs of the community with an emphasis on reaching out to the bilingual, culturally diverse, and remote populations. This project includes collaboration with the North Bay Suicide Prevention Hotline. During FY 2014/15, the Mendocino County MHSA Coordinator obtained the certification to facilitate Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST) and safeTALK trainings. These are evidence-based suicide intervention and prevention techniques for the community and workforce. Mendocino County is committed to providing a minimum of three of each of these trainings per year during the three-year cycle and to making special efforts to invite and provide these trainings to linguistically and culturally diverse groups.

 <https://www.mendocinocounty.org/>



## Kings County

### Mental Health Services for Domestic Violence Survivors

Provides mental health services to women with serious mental illness or who would meet criteria for having a serious mental illness, and to children with serious emotional disturbance or who would meet criteria for having a serious emotional disturbance. Mental health treatment at the shelter ensures that clients can access co-located mental health services, including assessment, intensive case management, wraparound services, crisis counseling and therapeutic treatment to address, among other things, PTSD and major depression.

 <http://www.kcbh.org/mental-health-services-act.html>

**PUBLIC MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES FUNDED BY THE CALIFORNIA MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES ACT (PROPOSITION 63). RESOURCES GENEROUSLY PROVIDED BY NAMI CA.**



## Kern County

### Youth Wraparound

Serves youth ages 0–21 years with severe emotional disorders deemed eligible for mental health services and needing intensive services to transition effectively to community living; youth at risk for inpatient psychiatric hospitalization or who have recently been discharged from an inpatient hospital. Stabilizes and maintains children in the least restrictive safe environment. Assists families who are experiencing the transition of a child back into the home, or foster families receiving a child, who may need more interventions than can be provided by clinic-based services. Also provides mental health services to children who reside in group homes.

 <https://www.kernbhhs.org/>

# A Low-Stress High Purpose Life *in Three Steps*

EVEN THE MOST BALANCED AND FULFILLED PEOPLE I KNOW GO THROUGH PHASES WHEN THEY SEEK TO CULTIVATE AND INTEGRATE GREATER MEANING INTO THEIR LIVES AND REDUCE THEIR STRESS LEVELS. WHETHER YOU LIVE IN A CHRONIC STATE OF OVERWHELM, ON AUTOPILOT MODE, OR WHETHER YOU SIMPLY ARE IN NEED OF A RESET, HERE ARE THREE STEPS TO BRING YOU CLOSER TO A STATE OF PURPOSEFULNESS AND BALANCE.

by Pratibha Anand

**E**ven the most balanced and fulfilled people I know go through phases when they seek to cultivate and integrate greater meaning into their lives and reduce their stress levels. Whether you live in a chronic state of overwhelm, on autopilot mode, or whether you simply are in need of a reset, here are three steps to bring you closer to a state of purposefulness and balance.

## Step 1 Evaluate your present condition in each of life's seven key domains.

It is hard to figure out where you're going when you don't know what you're working with and where your starting point is. Thus, it is critical to take stock of where you are right now. Assessing your present situation in terms of the seven key areas, or domains, of life can help create structure and focus as you move forward, and can also emphasize areas of strength and areas in need of growth. These seven key domains are: **Family,**

**Friends, Finance, Fitness, Field (career), Faith, Fun.** Remember to be brutally honest with yourself in your assessment so that you are best able to address your current imbalances so you can get an accurate idea of what needs to shift in order for you to move toward a life with less stress and more fulfillment.

## Step 2 Make goals.

As tempting as it might be (especially for perfectionists and overachievers), goal setting isn't a kitchen-sink, free-for-all type

of thing. Indeed, studies have repeatedly shown that too many goals often spread our attention and energy too thin, resulting in half-baked results rather than solid progress in any one area. Thus, after you've completed your life-domains assessment, the next step is to set seven goals. There doesn't have to be one goal for each category, and for most people, there is usually a lack of balance in some areas of life more than others. When choosing your goals, remember that the intention is to bring more balance into your life and to make yourself more aligned with your dreams and highest self.

Finally, make sure that your goals are articulated in a SMART format (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound). As easy as it is to skip this step, I strongly encourage you to read (preferably out loud) your handwritten goals every morning when you wake up and every night before you go to bed.

### **Step 3** **Map your journey, step by step.**

It has been said that the journey of a thousand miles begins with the first step. And how true this is. Thus, when thinking about the path between where you are and where you want to be, take time to outline each step along the way, no matter how small. Crossing off steps, even if they aren't monumental, creates a feeling of accomplishment, direction, positive reinforcement, and hope—all of which are critical when the going gets tough and you feel discouraged. In order to make incremental progress each day and stay focused and on track, each evening before you go to bed, take



an index card and write down just three concrete and specific action steps you will take the following day in service of one (or more) of the goals you set in step 2. Keep-up this practice for one year, and you will have taken more than 1,000 action steps toward the achievement of your goals and your best life.

In addition to the goal-related steps, this note card can include daily chores and tasks as well (i.e., getting groceries, paying bills, calling a friend or family member, etc.). On this note card, take time each evening to acknowledge the accomplishments you have each day. Even if a note card list is not completed, it is important to intentionally recognize your achievements and the things for which you are grateful. I also recommend keeping a daily gratitude journal and writing at least three gratitudes in it each evening.

So, is balance realistic? Well, to some extent. We are not static beings. We change and evolve and grow, and different seasons in our life meet us with different challenges and opportunities. Balance is a practice rather than a state. It is a pursuit and not a destination. A life in balance involves being out of

balance at times, recognizing that you are out of balance, and taking steps to re-calibrate.

By knowing where you are and where you're headed in the seven key domains of life, and by taking action in-line with your vision each day, you can experience a more passionate and meaningful life. Even in the busiest of times, the key is to stay connected to your goals, values, and dreams. These things are unique to you and will give your life a sense of purpose and connectedness.



Pratibha Anand, BS, MBA, RYT, is a 2022 MD candidate at the University of Colorado School of Medicine and a 2019 MHA candidate at Colorado State University. Outside of her academic work and writing, Pratibha is a passionate travel enthusiast and mental health advocate who holds a deep commitment to service. She is trained in transcendental meditation, mindfulness-based stress reduction, the art of living, and QPR suicide prevention. You may contact Pratibha directly at [pratibha.anand@ucdenver.edu](mailto:pratibha.anand@ucdenver.edu).





## Legislative Update: Prop. 63 Update by Meagan McPhillips

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# “No Place Like Home”

It's been two years since Californians were introduced to the No Place Like Home program, which authorized the distribution of \$2 billion in bond proceeds among counties to pay for permanent supportive housing for eligible persons under the original Proposition 63 (2004), the California Mental Health Services Act. This legislation is designed to support those who are homeless, chronically homeless, or at risk of chronic homelessness including families, youth, and veterans. The bond would be repaid with proceeds from the Mental Health Services Act, which requires a one percent tax on personal incomes of \$1 million or more. The original No Place Like Home program was signed into law in July 2016, but has been stalled due to legal issues. This November, California voters will have to make a decision as the legal issues exit the courtroom to appear on the ballot under Proposition 2. The question voters will face: Should money from the Mental Health Services Act be utilized for the construction or acquisition of 10,000 housing units and mental health services for the homeless?

Proposition 2 will provide supportive housing and much-needed mental health services to the underprivileged and can help reduce the homeless population, especially those that are veterans, in California. The Golden State is home to 29 percent of the nation's homeless veterans, and two-thirds of them are unsheltered. This proposition will not only help house these veterans but will also provide mental health treatment to improve their quality of life.

It is important to note that the “treatment” feature of the legislation is key to the success of the program—to provide needed interventions and treatment to those in need, right where they live. Many important health-related and life-oriented details are missed, often for years, when a person's mental health has not been attended to. This unprecedented opportunity for supportive housing seeks to change the mental health landscape in California for the better. The final decision will come down to California voters on the November 2018 ballot.



*Nourishing*



*Organic*



by Meagan McPhillips & Sahara Powell

# U.S. Department of *Veterans Affairs:*

*Cultural and Community  
Health Advancements*

Originally inspired from the promise of President Abraham Lincoln, the mission of the United States Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is to provide support to the individuals and the families of those who have fought in battles “by serving and honoring the men and women who are America’s veterans.” Through this mission, the VA offers a variety of programs including health care and various levels of benefits for veterans. Some of their current programs include disability compensation, health care, pension, life insurance, and employment services.

Through the years, the VA has made efforts to transition and transform their benefits to be in accordance with the needs of the current and ever-changing demographics of veterans. With the number of Spanish-speaking veterans consistently on the rise, the Department has finally taken action to accommodate these diverse veterans. As of early August 2018, the VA has released a Spanish version of the application for veteran health care. This effort seeks to simplify the process for veterans applying for health care. According to the Department of Veterans Affairs’ official statement, “the new language implements an advisory committee on minority veterans recommendation to provide Spanish versions of the application and instructions.” The addition of this version paves the way for the VA to provide more inclusive materials and benefits, which support all veterans in our melting pot society.

In addition to becoming more inclusive in terms of simplifying the health care application process, the VA has also made it easier for veterans to receive



health care and medical supplies through community care providers. The well-known convenience store Walgreens is partnering with the VA through the Veterans Health Information Exchange to help veterans receive medical care with less hassle. This is an extension to the presently successful health care partnership with Walgreens, which provides free flu shots to enrolled veterans across the nation. This program enables information from the VA to be electronically shared with Walgreens pharmacies, and vice versa. The program eliminates

the need for veterans to carry sensitive medical information each time they need a prescription. The quick access to medical care and prescription history also permits for an easier processing time for medications and a quicker pick-up time. The actions of adding Spanish language versions of health benefit applications and partnerships with large, neighborhood-based companies are vital steps to improving our nation's health care system for those who fought for our freedom.

**Spanish version of the application:** [https://www.va.gov/vaforms/medical/pdf/10-10EZ\\_Spanish.pdf](https://www.va.gov/vaforms/medical/pdf/10-10EZ_Spanish.pdf)

**To receive VA updates, subscribe to email alerts at:** [https://www.va.gov/opa/pressrel/opa\\_listserv.asp](https://www.va.gov/opa/pressrel/opa_listserv.asp)





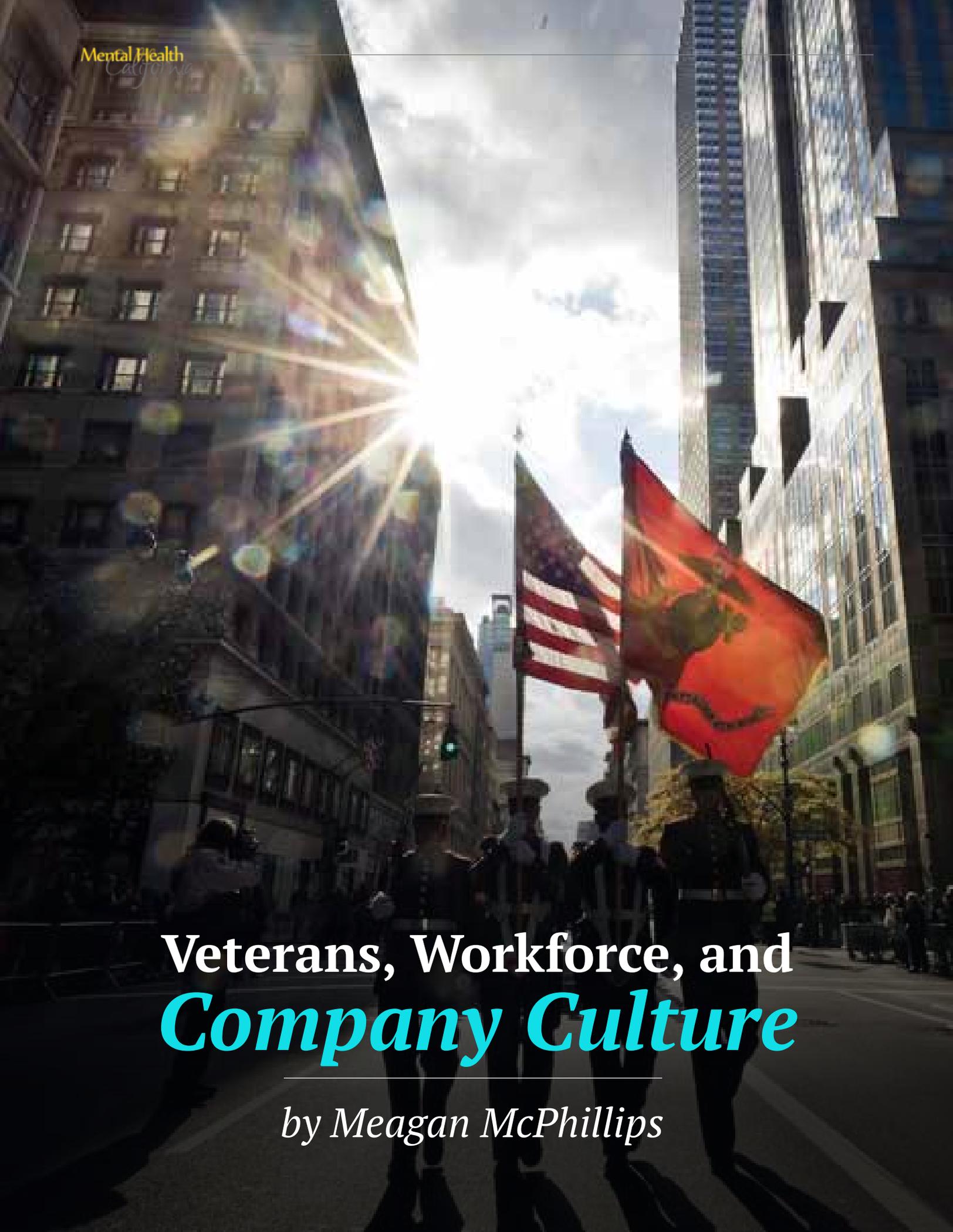


*Happiness*

# Nature



VIDEO CLIPS FROM 1 HOUR IRELAND NATURE  
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# Veterans, Workforce, and *Company Culture*

*by Meagan McPhillips*



Our nation is filled with thousands of veterans transitioning into the civilian workforce.

The adjustment from military to civilian life can be a difficult one. Veterans must learn how to market themselves to future employers and translate their military experience and skills into civilian terms. This difficult transition has created a low retention rate of veteran employees. Approximately only 2 in 10 veterans will hold their first non-military job for more than two years. This is due in part to not only the difficulty of translating skills and experience, but also because of what companies offer to veterans.

Company culture is extremely important in retaining veterans and helping with their transition back to civilian life. Some companies offer discounts and programs specific to veterans. For example, Home Depot has a program that assists veterans in home repair, and 24-Hour Fitness offers a discount for active-duty military and veterans. These steps toward improving a company's culture to include more veteran-friendly programs has a big impact on veterans.

Other options to improve company culture are to educate managers, recruiters, and leaders about military culture and language or to design a specific onboarding program for veterans. Because one of the toughest parts of entering the workforce is translating military experience into civilian terms, this education will help bridge the gap between the two parties and create a more welcoming environment.

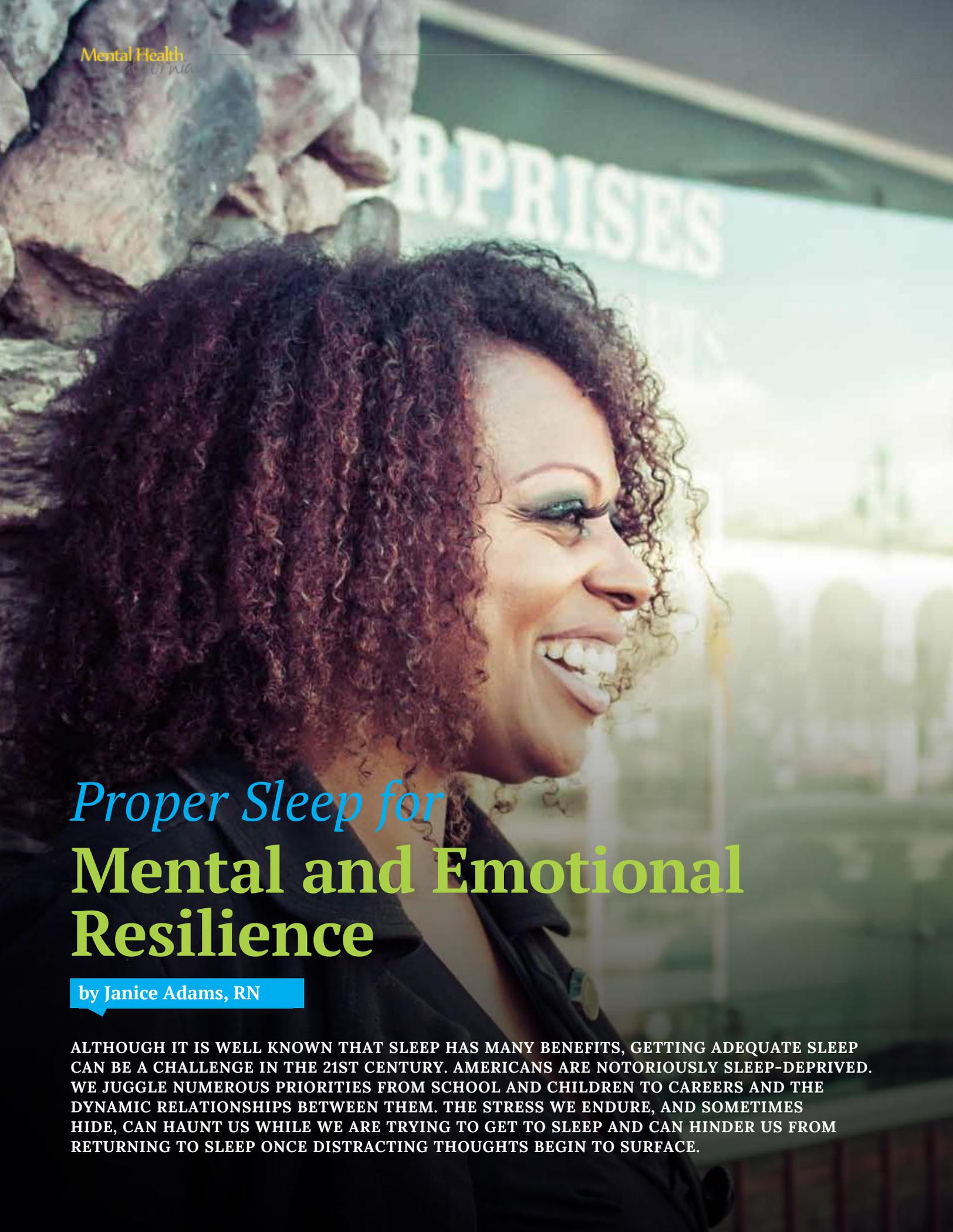
There are also benefits for employers who improve their company culture for veterans. The Special Employer Incentives program provides assistance to employers who hire

veterans. Employers are reimbursed for up to half the veteran's salary to cover certain supplies and equipment, additional instruction expenses, and any loss of production. Additionally, a Work Opportunity Tax Credit ranging from \$1,200 to \$9,600 may be earned by employers who hire veterans.

For more information on employer benefits for hiring veterans, please contact the Veterans Opportunity to Work program at the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs at <https://www.benefits.va.gov/VOW/for-employers.asp>.

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**There are also benefits for employers who improve their company culture for veterans. The Special Employer Incentives program provides assistance to employers who hire veterans.**



# *Proper Sleep for* **Mental and Emotional Resilience**

by Janice Adams, RN

ALTHOUGH IT IS WELL KNOWN THAT SLEEP HAS MANY BENEFITS, GETTING ADEQUATE SLEEP CAN BE A CHALLENGE IN THE 21ST CENTURY. AMERICANS ARE NOTORIOUSLY SLEEP-DEPRIVED. WE JUGGLE NUMEROUS PRIORITIES FROM SCHOOL AND CHILDREN TO CAREERS AND THE DYNAMIC RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN THEM. THE STRESS WE ENDURE, AND SOMETIMES HIDE, CAN HAUNT US WHILE WE ARE TRYING TO GET TO SLEEP AND CAN HINDER US FROM RETURNING TO SLEEP ONCE DISTRACTING THOUGHTS BEGIN TO SURFACE.

**N**euroimaging and neurochemistry studies suggest that a good night's sleep fosters mental and emotional resilience, while constant sleep disruptions can cause negative thinking and emotional vulnerability. During sleep, our bodies are given time to recuperate from the ongoing daily stressors of life. Adequate sleep allows us to feel refreshed, maintain energy throughout the day, and have increased mental awareness. Below are a few strategies that can help increase the quality and ease of sleep.

## 1

### Go outside:

Many of us are inside for several hours a day, often without a break. Whether we are working in an office, at school listening to a lecture, or in the kitchen preparing a meal, it's important to take time to

expose ourselves to some good old-fashioned sunlight. Take a walk, ride a bike, or sit outside on a chair or blanket and feel the immediate benefits.

## 2

### Have a bedtime routine:

Humans are creatures of habit, which has advantages when it comes to bedtime. Adhering to a bedtime routine can help prepare our minds for sleep. Our bodies have internal time clocks, which will enhance the quality of our sleep when in sync.

## 3

### Unplug frequently:

Turn off the electronics. Every day we are bombarded with phone calls, emails, text messages, social media, etc., and although it is a wonderful

tool and asset in our daily life, it is important to control technology and unplug when it is time to sleep.

## 4

### Keep a journal at your bedside:

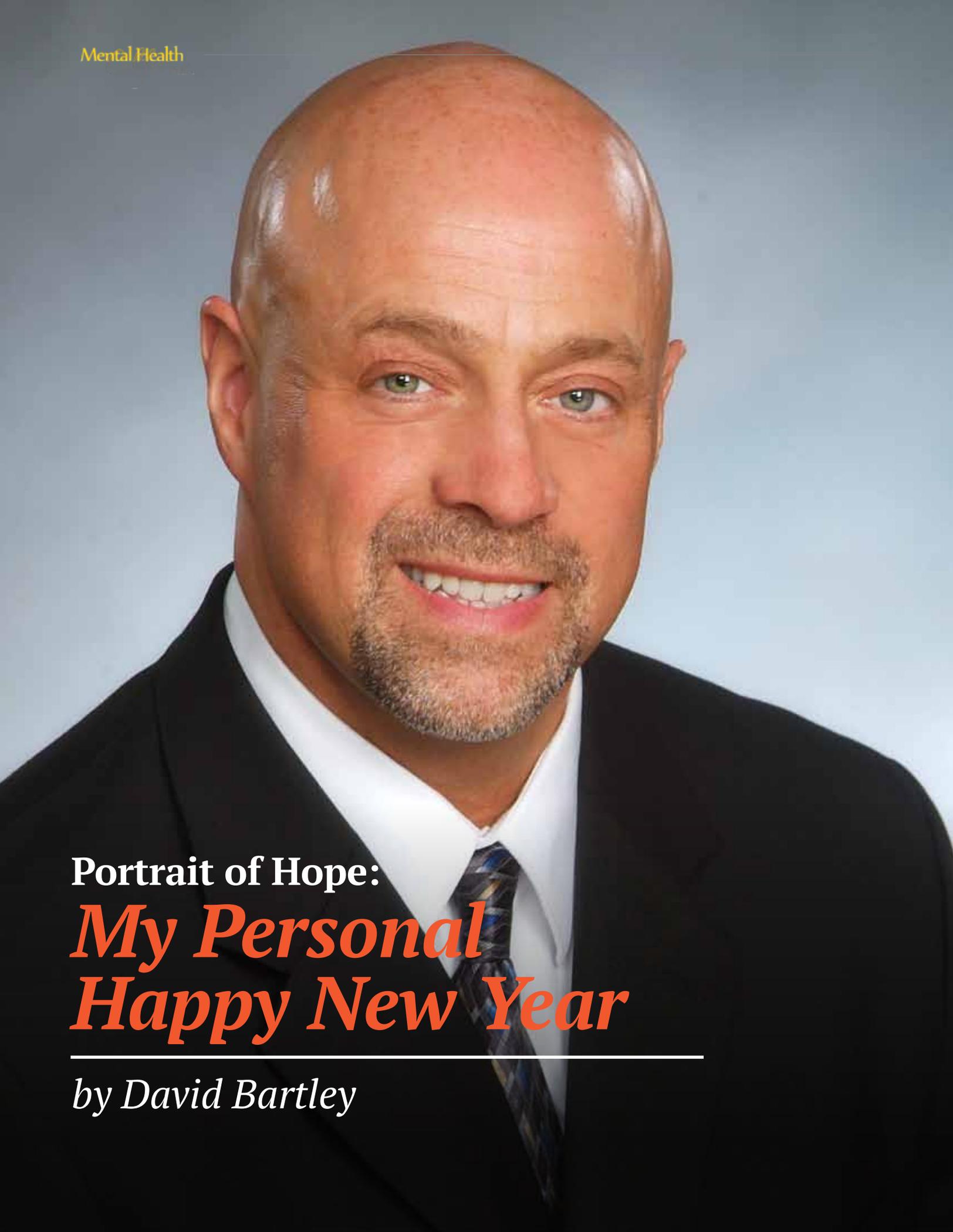
Sometimes we toss, turn, and struggle to fall asleep; our mental chatter gets the best of us. Whether it's a running to-do list or a brilliant idea that you don't want to forget, jot it down to put your mind at ease.

## 5

### Cozy-up with a book:

One of the easiest ways to fall into a blissful slumber is by reading. Reading relaxes both your body and mind and is great medicine for a solid night's sleep.





Portrait of Hope:  
***My Personal  
Happy New Year***

---

*by David Bartley*

## August 31, 2018 “Happy New Year!”

For most everyone else on the planet, today is not the beginning of a new year. According to a recent estimate, there are 40 different calendars used in the world today, with most modern countries using the Gregorian calendar. In other words, there are a lot of ways to track the days, weeks, and months in a given year. That said, no matter what type of calendar you use, be it solar, lunar, or seasonally based, there is no amount of sun, moon, or periodic activity that’s going to make August 31st the start of the new year on any calendar anywhere. Except for me.

Seven years ago, on August 31, 2011, I was going to end my life by jumping off the 730-foot-high Foresthill Bridge. Seven years ago, I believed with all my heart, mind, and soul that in leaping, not only would the soul-wrenching agony of clinical depression finally end but, more importantly, the lives of those closest to me would become far better in the wake of my death and the relief of my burdensome existence. At least that’s what the monster of depression had me believe. I had planned on August 31, 2011 being my last day on earth. But, Life had other plans for me, and as it turns out, there was more for me to do.

There were people I was supposed to serve and support and help. There were new friends to be made and old relationships to deepen. There was a new mission to embrace and a new purpose to act on, and all of it required me being alive, not dead. And so, Life, or God with skin on, took me off that tall bridge and then to an emergency room and next to a psych hospital. As a result, instead of August 31st being my last day,

it became day one of me stepping away from mental “hellness” and walking towards mental wellness. It also turns out that depression lies. The truth is I am more loved than I could have possibly imagined. I’ve also discovered that I’m not broken or defective—far from it. I am instead, in the words of my beloved brother Tom, a quality human being. And it seems that had I died I would have been missed, a lot, by a great many people.

Standing on that bridge seven years ago, I didn’t know any of this. But in the 2,555 days since, I’ve come to know the truth of who I am, what I mean to others, and the fallibility of depression. I’ve also come to know that my condition is not my identity nor is it a death sentence and that the monster is very finite and in no way invincible. In the last 84 months, I’ve also learned it is connection that creates hope, and hope, in turn, enables me to manage and even silence the dreaded bastard.

I went back to the bridge this very morning, as I now do every August 31st. This return to the roots of my revival is the centerpiece of my New Year’s celebration. Standing at the midpoint of the bridge deck this morning, the view facing east that looks up the north fork of the American River was spectacular. Unlike my downward focus of seven years ago, today my eyes were looking ahead of me, peering forward at the many days of the many years I have left, all of which are in front of me, not below me.

Today begins another year of living, learning, and loving. Today is the first of 365 days of waking up and being connected to the people, places, and things that are sacred to me. Today is the first of 365 days of feeling the sun on my skin, of great food, deep conversations, connections on steroids, adventure, discovery, growth, happiness,

curiosity, understanding, tears, and laughter. Lots and lots and lots of laughter.

Today is the first day of 365 for being continually grateful for the souls who saved my life then and continue to move my life forward now. These are the people who will love me on the days I feel unlovable and cheer me on the days I feel mighty. These are the people who stand by, with, alongside, for, and behind me. And, knowing them as I do, this will be their tendency for the rest of my days in all the years to come.

They are annoying in their consistency—fabulously and spectacularly steadfast. Today is the first of 365 days of being the best person I can be, of being inclusive, kind, and of service to those in need. It’s all about aligning with Thomas Paine’s passionate belief that “the world is my country, mankind is my brethren, and to do good is my religion.” Today is the first day of the rest of my life. Today is my New Year’s Day.



David Bartley is known as a dynamic speaker, storyteller, and trainer. With real-life anecdotes that evoke laughter and tears, David informs and captivates audiences. Along the way, David provides insights that enable listeners to see mental illness from a different point of view: a fresh perspective that creates an opening for mental wellness for those who suffer, their family, friends, and members of the community where they live, work, and fellowship. He is a featured speaker at the 2018 California Champions of Mental Health Charity Awards Dinner on November 15th in Sacramento, CA. Visit David online at [davidwoodsbartley.com](http://davidwoodsbartley.com) to subscribe to his blog and to receive alerts for his forthcoming book, *The Blue Elephant*.



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Yvonna Brown, Director, Behavioral Health and Recovery Services, Merced County

5:00 p.m. Registration / 5:30 p.m. Dinner Social / 6:30 p.m. Awards Dinner Program  
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