

### Facilitating Social Change by Being an Active Contributor

How can I facilitate change if I am not an active contributor? I strongly believe that the foundations of our personalities are laid out in childhood. These empathic, sensitive, and vulnerable humans have significant, crucial signs of chemical imbalances that often go unnoticed by those that have direct contact with them: school mates, friends, teachers, co-workers, and family members.

The Holistic approaches that I believe in are stepping stones; ways to empower, so that there is increased hope and always new options and choices.

My interests lie in Holistic Health using complimentary medicine for healing from trauma and chronic pain. With the tragic increase in numbers of suicides, especially among young adults, and suicide being the number one cause of death among college students, I am drawn to help prevent more survivors.

My career thus far has centered on specialization in crisis counseling, forensic mental health, traumatic brain injury, chronic pain, and rehabilitation/disability advocacy, with an emphasis on suicide prevention and survivor counseling. My passion for education and making people laugh, combined with having experienced immigrating to Denmark at age 22, and working there for 8 years, has motivated me to publish my writings and research. Currently, I am a scholar practitioner finishing my PhD in Health Psychology. My research focuses on the treatment of misdiagnosed and mismedicated young adults using complimentary medicine to reduce symptoms of depression, anxiety, PTSD, and suicidal ideation.

I believe that by continuing my research and work as a Licensed Professional Counselor, and Suicide Prevention Advocate, I will be able to continue to have an impact with those who cannot advocate for themselves. The Holistic approaches that I believe in are stepping stones; ways to empower, so that there is increased hope and always new options and choices.

How can I facilitate change if I am not an active contributor?

I have had experience working in hospitals, nursing homes, day treatment centers, residential adolescent treatment centers, outpatient clinics, school settings, in-home outreach services, as well as private practice.

Following my first two years of undergraduate work/and as a college tennis player, I spent 6 months as an exchange student in Denmark. Then in 1989 I immigrated to Denmark, married a Dane, and became a Nurse in Denmark. Following a work neck injury at the hospital, I had a cervical fusion, and decided to become an Occupational Therapist due to my love of rehabilitation and neurology. I had learned so much during my own rehabilitation.

The three most influential mentors were: Susan Sundell, PhD, who coached me through my difficult acclimation back to Minneapolis following 8 years of living in Denmark. My second mentor was my professor at St. Mary's University. He was a Psychiatrist at the VA Hospital in Minneapolis and taught Psychopharmacology. He empowered me to learn how to diagnose, learn vital terminology and how to deal with trauma victims that I had been working with previously. I became passionate about the effects of PTSD. He challenged me to write, advocate and build my

skills to diagnose. The third mentor was Norma Jean Sims, a 72 year old Psychologist who was a spiritual leader and hospice specialist that supervised me during my graduate school Master's program internship at the Courage Center for patients with TBI and spinal cord injuries. She strengthened my healing skills through meditation, yoga, visualization and empathetic listening.

As a Suicide Prevention Specialist and advocate, I have worked at the State and National level to help get bills passed for ongoing funding for youth suicide prevention and education as well as Mental Health Parity. I am a public speaker and trained intervention specialist for survivors of suicide. My research and training has been used in school mental health programs and non-profit agencies. My thesis project for graduate school was "Socialization for Persons with Traumatic Brain Injury", which focused on social skill building and grief/loss of friends and family following permanent disabilities; the most difficult transition for patients and their families.

I interned in graduate school at a residential and outpatient treatment center, the Courage Center, in Minnesota. I was a rehabilitation counselor in the Psychological Disability department. In my first year of graduate school, I volunteered as a Preschool and Family Focus Therapist, once a week for their day treatment center, Washburn Child Guidance Center. I have been a speaker, trainer and advocate for SPAN (suicide Prevention Action Center) and A.F.S.P. (American Foundation for Suicide Prevention) since 1996.

My post graduate supervised hours as a clinician were as a Counselor at WICC (Walk-In Counseling Center). My passion is sailing. I grew up near the lakes in Minneapolis Minnesota, and have been sailing, and now racing on teams since I was 15 years old. I am a Certified Captain, as well as a Certified Small and Keel boat instructor. I was a Crew Instruction and Team trainer for the University of Minnesota Sailing Club and Wayzata Yacht Club, both for youth and adults.

Currently I have a Private Practice working with clients that have trauma symptoms/PTSD. I also work part-time as a Licensed Clinician for Northeast Behavior Associates doing in-home services with children and their families.

Working on a team project helps revitalize my work as well as support me emotionally. My studies in Denmark were group based. Most exams were done orally as a group or as a group written project. People open up to me because I am honest and like to help others realize that life is supposed to be fun most of the time. I am not afraid to be vulnerable if it helps my clients heal. I am an outgoing, vivacious, funny, silly, quick witted, playful, intelligent, as well as a curious learner.

I thrive working with curious teens, young adults, and those struggling with addiction or discrimination at work and school. Nutrition and exercise are extremely important factors to my holistic approach, and I advocate for my patients to ask questions from their other providers, especially medication management. My academic work has been exciting as well as culturally diverse. I love the group projects and collaborations, especially at the National level, being a Representative for AFSP in Washington, and when I go to conferences.

I lived outside of the USA for more than 9 years of my adult life (Australia and Denmark). I worked with people from many different countries while experiencing being an immigrant as well as the minority myself overseas. I am very curious and intuitive. I love to read, write, sail, bike and play. I am most at peace and happiest when I am sailing or swimming in a lake or the

ocean. Water is so healing.

My mission is to contribute to the world in any way I can to make positive social change both professionally and personally. I have the opportunity to develop research skills, attain doctoral-level scholar skills to continue learning, and conduct research with students from all over the world through being a mobile researcher.

Working from home fits well with my Private Practice, as well as my in-home therapy job because I can make my own flexible schedule.

Webster is my best friend and confidant. He is a 12 year old Australian Shepard mix rescue dog that is my therapist and loves to go for walks with my patients. Webster was found as a 8 week old puppy, scared and running along the freeway in Texas with a mangled cut off tail, and was rescued by a woman who took him in her car off the side of the road to a pet rescue group. He is now 12 and has been my therapist, who loves to go for walks with my patients.