



QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER | FALL 2020



Virtual WEEK

November 8th - 14th

See page 8 for more details



Good News Column

WRITE TO EMPOWER YOURSELF
by Dr. Kim Kerley

Do you take time to process the events of each day or even just the difficult days? The good news is that writing about your experiences for only 15-20 minutes can have a powerful effect on how you feel emotionally and physically and the choices that you make to move forward or stay stuck in the stress or negativity of a situation. Studies have shown that expressive writing can improve mood, well-being, stress levels and depression for those who do it regularly. Writing has been shown to impact specific symptoms like blood pressure, liver function, asthma attacks, and T-cell count in AIDS patients. Research concluded that it reduced doctor visits and time spent in the hospital. Cancer patients who wrote reported more optimistic perspectives and improved quality of life. Imagine the impact writing could have on your life! I have a number of strategies to get you started. While you don't always have a choice in the things that happen to you, you can choose how to interpret them.

Write about your experience and how it made you feel. It is okay to vent, but set a time limit of 5 minutes for complaining. (Remember the article on healthy venting). Next, offer yourself perspective or advice. What guidance, encouragement, or reassurance would you give a friend or your kids? Frame your future in a positive way. Taking a negative, victim, or self-blaming approach can lead to more pain and suffering.

Taking a more positive, accepting, or affirming approach can lead to optimism, contentment, and even happiness. If you believe that everything happens for a reason, then look for how this might be a hidden gift or a blessing in disguise (a gift wrapped in shit, pardon my language). Expressive writing can help you make sense of the challenge you are facing, achieve a new perspective, and find new meaning and then approach the situation in an empowered way.

Let's be honest, we all have "good days" and "bad days." On the bad days, it is very difficult to have hope, be optimistic, and use strategies to feel better. Thoughts are often comprised of worst case scenarios, powerlessness, and a glass half empty mindset. So, when you are having a good day and are feeling more positive or hopeful, take this opportunity to talk to your future self. Write yourself a letter or pep talk to read on a bad day. Include your current empowered, optimistic perspective.

WRITE TO EMPOWER YOURSELF

CONTINUED...

Give yourself advice on which strategies or activities typically make you feel better. (Go for a walk even if you don't feel like it.) Also remind yourself of what to avoid. (Don't answer the phone when your mother calls.) Remind yourself of anything that you know you cannot connect to when you are down. This strategy can intervene in getting sucked into the darkness.

I encourage my clients to keep a success journal. Whenever they accomplish something difficult, like conquer a fear, address a situation confidently or assertively, or use strategies to help them move away from depression, I ask them to write it down. When a challenge is looming, I ask them to reread all of the things they have achieved in the past. This improves confidence and reduces their anxiety about their ability to get through it.

Another helpful writing assignment for a good day is to make a list of your positive attributes, strengths, talents, interests and things that are unique about you. Then try to sum it all up in an image or brief statement. For example, one person used the image of a glass bouquet of flowers that she was given as a gift. It reminded her of being appreciated and each flower was intricate and unique. One flower had a small chip in it, but it was beautiful anyway. Put this image where you will see it often, like the screen saver on your phone. This can remind you of all of the wonderful things that make up who you are and why you are special and deserving.

The stress of managing a chronic illness or caring for someone with a chronic illness can be intense. Take time to write regularly to process your experiences and feelings. Write about your situation in a way that empowers you and lifts you up. These writing exercises can help you see challenges more accurately and alter your perception of yourself and your abilities for the positive. I hope you feel empowered by the good news.

"...EACH FLOWER WAS
INTRICATE AND UNIQUE..."



MEET DR. KIM KERLEY

Dr. Kimberly Kerley, Psy.D., author of our "Good News" section is a Licensed Clinical Psychologist in the State of Illinois. She has been practicing in a group practice setting for over 16 years. Dr. Kerley is currently seeing clients at Perakis, Resis, Woods, and Associates (PRA Behavioral), a multidisciplinary group practice in Schaumburg, IL. Dr. Kerley's theoretic approach incorporates cognitive behavioral, insight oriented and solution focused techniques while tailoring to the individual needs of each client.

She focuses on assisting clients to build upon their strengths, develop unused resources and learn new skills to decrease symptoms, increase their effectiveness in managing their everyday lives and/or improve their quality of life. Dr. Kerley's treatment approach is interactive, supportive and respectful to the individual and is presented in the spirit of collaboration. Dr. Kerley works with adults and adolescents. Her treatment areas of focus include Depression, Bipolar and other Mood Disorders, Anxiety Disorders, Stress Management, Relaxation Skills Training, Self-Esteem Issues, Assertiveness Training, Relationship Issues, Personal Exploration and Development, and Chronic Illness. Dr. Kerley is very invested in supporting those who are chronic illness warriors and their loved ones.

She strives to change lives effectively and positively through her direct and invaluable advice through her "Good News" column in The EPIC Foundation newsletter. The EPIC Foundation is beyond proud to have Dr. Kim Kerley as a part of our team! Together, we are EPIC!



The EPIC Foundation
EMPOWERING PEOPLE WITH INVISIBLE CHRONIC ILLNESS

Together, we are EPIC!

"I am thankful for my struggle, because without it, I wouldn't have stumbled upon my strength" - Alexandra Elle

FALL QUARTER 2020

page 2

ASK



October
2020

THE QUESTION:

Dear Dr. Karen,

I am a Cushing's disease survivor. I saw your email on one of your YouTube videos and decided to reach out to you for clarity on something. This sounds like a silly question. I have loved Zebras my entire life and even collect items that have Zebra stripes or miniature or toy Zebras. I am now seeing that your foundation talks about Zebras, on social media, and how we are like them. This is exciting but I don't understand why we are like them. Can you please explain? Please don't say who I am because I feel so stupid for asking this question!

- Anonymous

WHAT DOC KAREN HAS TO SAY...

Dr. Karen's Answer: First of all, please do NOT feel silly or stupid for asking this question. I, proudly, call myself a zebra and it is important to me to also share the message of this powerfully profound and impactful symbol! I am so glad that you reached out and do not take it for granted at all. No question is stupid. In fact, asking a question demonstrates wisdom!

We have an article on our website about this very thing. I will share a little here with you:

"Zebra" is a term that is used to describe a surprising diagnosis. It derives from the saying "When you hear hoof beats behind you, don't expect to see a Zebra". Dr. Theodore Woodward, a former professor at the University of Maryland School of Medicine in Baltimore, coined this term in the late 1940s. He explained that since horses are the most commonly encountered hooved animal for most people and zebras are hooved animals that are less likely encountered; one would naturally guess that the hoof beats belong to a horse and not a Zebra. By 1960, this metaphor was widely known amongst medical circles. (From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, 2013)

This phrase continues to be drilled into the minds of Physicians in training:

"When you hear hoof beats, think horses, not zebras."

So, in the medical community the term "Zebra" is universally understood as a reference to a rare condition/disease. Physicians are taught to assume the most likely explanation of the condition and therefore miss more unlikely explanations of the disease.

In addition, Physicians are known to be uncomfortable with diagnosing patients with "exotic" diseases that are unlikely.

Ironically, this term ZEBRA has been adopted by communities of patients with rare disorders such as Cushing's syndrome, Adult Human Growth Hormone Deficiency, Panhypopit, and other rare diseases. Why? Because those of us who DO have a rare disorder know from personal experience what it feels like to be dismissed by a physician or in many cases, multiple physicians.

Metaphorically, many physicians have completely lost the ability to even imagine that zebras may exist!

To read more of this article, please visit:
<https://epictogether.org/unique-and-rare/>



ASK



My Story

WHAT DOC KAREN HAS TO SAY CONTINUED...

I am sure you would benefit from connecting with other fellow Zebras. We have quite a few support groups, online. These groups on FB can be found by others who are looking for groups like these. However, people who are not members of these groups cannot see who is in the groups or what is being shared within the groups, so confidentiality is of utmost importance to us! Some of our groups are as follows:

1. EPICtogether- A group for all chronic illness warriors:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/EpicTogether/>

2. EPIC Wellness: Patients support each other in their journeys to living an optimal life:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/EPICtogetherFitness>

3. Real EPIC Talk: Women to Women: A platform for women to empower each other and provide mutual support

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/RealEPICTalk>

We are here for you! Consider becoming a member. Membership is absolutely free! Together, we are EPIC!

Dr. Karen

"Metaphorically, many physicians have completely lost the ability to even imagine that zebras may exist!"



CUTV news Interview with Doug Llewelyn

Dr. Karen proudly represented the chronic illness community by sharing her story and the birth of The EPIC Foundation with CUTV news and interviewer Doug Llewelyn (From the People's Court and Creator of Judge Judy).

Interview #1

<https://www.blogtalkradio.com/closeupradio/2019/10/23/cutv-news-radio-spotlights-dr-n-karen-thames-psyd-of-the-epic-foundation>



Interview #2

<https://www.blogtalkradio.com/closeupradio/2019/12/11/cutv-news-radio-welcomes-back-dr-n-karen-thames-psyd-of-the-epic-foundation>

Dr. N. Karen Thames is the Founder and Executive Director of Empowering People with Invisible Chronic Illness (EPIC) Foundation AKA The EPIC Foundation. She has a Doctorate in Clinical Psychology (PsyD) and is a Licensed Clinical Psychologist.

Dr. Karen earned her Doctorate in Clinical Psychology in 2005. She specializes in trauma, marital therapy, personality disorders and chronic illness. She left private practice, temporarily, for medical reasons. However, Dr. Karen continued her professional growth by maintaining her Clinical Psychologist License, taking continuing education classes as required, and providing mentorship/supervision to growing professionals as well as consultation to other clinicians. Dr. Karen resumed private practice in 2020 providing virtual teletherapy services. She gives back, during the Coronavirus pandemic, by providing pro bono virtual therapy services to frontline/essential workers as a part of her caseload.

After having survived a rare life threatening illness called Cushing's disease, and now living with Addison's Disease/Adrenal Insufficiency, another life threatening illness; Dr. Karen has devoted her life to providing support and empowerment tools to other patients with chronic illness as well as caregivers.

Together, we are EPIC!



Can you see the lotus flower in our logo? A lotus grows in muddy ponds. Even in the dirtiest of waters, the lotus produces the most beautiful flower! It is a symbol of enlightenment, self-regeneration, and rebirth, which is what we strive to empower our members with!

FALL QUARTER 2020

page 4



Meet Henry Guy Ternier!

The EPIC Foundation proudly honors Henry Ternier, a Licensed Professional Counselor who has dedicated his career and life to serving marginalized populations who live with mental illness. Please enjoy our interview with Henry, as he answers the questions pertaining to what makes him a phenomenal and EPIC human being! This is his interview:



How did you know that you wanted to pursue a career in counseling? List your specializations and how did you decide to target those populations? What issues in psychology do you work with? Was there a moment when you realized it or was it gradual?

I originally went to college with a major in biology, hoping to go into the medical field. Over time I realized that I wanted to do something else with my life. I took an intro to Psychology class, and basically fell in love with the subject.

I also tended to be the person in my friend groups to whom peers would talk to about heavy subjects and ask for opinions on relationships and otherwise. It even led to a brief stint on my alma mater's radio station, speaking on relationships and other social issues.

When did you actually begin specializing in your areas of expertise?

From my experience, my expertise has been in working with children and adults, especially those struggling with anxiety. I would honestly say that I've been working with children since I was a child!

Joking aside, I really began when I was in graduate school. I worked part-time as a Therapeutic Support Staff member with children who had Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). I later started working in family-based mental health, further allowing me to work with children and adolescents, as well as adults utilizing Family Systems Therapy.

Did you have a role model or a person who motivated you? A mentor?

I have several role models, including my aunt who is a mental health professional herself, and is currently advocating for a vulnerable population.

I'm also inspired by both my parents, who have taught me from a young age about the value of serving others and the importance of being a source of healing. A mentor who stands out to me is Brian Williams, a youth development professional and community organizer who was an impactful guide at the Youth and Opportunity United (Y.O.U.) program when I was in high school and an inspirational supervisor when I worked under him in the same program years later.

Above all, I am inspired by Jesus Christ, who was all about service.

At The EPIC Foundation, our slogan is "Together we are EPIC!" Tell us who are the people in your life who you consider to be a part of your "team" both professionally and personally.

My team would consist of my wife, Alise first and foremost. She pushes me to pursue my goals, and encourages and challenges me.

My friends Hannah and Connor Mey-Brown have been trusted friends and colleagues since graduate school, and we have challenged and inspired each other ever since entering the professional world.

I would also give a nod to Stephanie Wijkstrom and Nicole Monteleone, the co-founders of Counseling and Wellness Center of Pittsburgh. They have helped me with opportunities to grow my practice, write on subjects that I am passionate about in psychology, and to speak on those subjects at public events.

Henry Guy Ternier is The EPIC Foundation's Person of the Quarter for Fall 2020!



We are so proud to honor Henry Ternier at The EPIC Foundation! Together, we are EPIC!

What are your top 3 specializations? When did you start becoming passionate about treating these populations? How about your other specializations?

My focus in my practice has expanded over time, and I've found myself working mainly with individuals struggling with anxiety, individuals figuring out their spirituality, and married couples.

I have always been passionate about treating anxiety because everyone deals with it, and it is important for individuals to have the tools necessary to live and cope with anxiety.

Religion and spirituality have always been a part of my life, and I have often found myself grappling with questions. I believe it is through exploring these questions with an unbiased and supportive person, that an individual can find some clarity.

I started working with married couples later in my career, and it feels like events in my life came full circle. As stated earlier, I used to do a segment on relationships in radio, and now I get to use my knowledge and training to help couples thrive.

I have also begun working with more people within the Black/African-American community. I hope to continue to work to reduce the stigma toward seeking mental health services with this population.

The EPIC Foundation supports all persons living with invisible chronic illness, including all mental illness. Oftentimes, these patients feel misunderstood by others, even the medical and therapist communities, because they LOOK healthy but they have issues specific to them that are difficult to address such as PTSD. Yet, you seem to continue to provide immense support to all of your clients. What is the motivation behind such a compassionate approach to your patients who are marginalized?

As a Black individual in America, I empathize with those who are seen as less-than and those who are not seen. It is through empathy that we can really come to support people with invisible chronic illness.

As therapists, we're tasked to go beneath the surface. This requires really taking the time to see and hear people. I know that I have been in a position where I have wanted to be heard, and I hope to provide that opportunity to the people I work with.

What drives your passion for your work?

I have always wanted to help people in some way shape or form. I also enjoy talking to people and hearing their life's story. I also believe that in life, we all deserve to win in our personal struggles, and seeing people achieve their goals and overcome their personal obstacles is extremely rewarding.

Can you tell us some background information about you? Your back story? Your own journey that led you to now and to your profession?

I was born and raised in Evanston, and was brought up in a Haitian household. My parents were firm, but fair, and they raised me and my brother in a supportive Seventh-Day Adventist Haitian-American community, which I became deeply involved in. I completed k-12 in Evanston, and went to college at the University of Illinois at Chicago where I earned a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology (class of 2012). It was at UIC where I began to recognize my interest in psychology and human development and relationships.

Following my graduation, I worked with Y.O.U. for about two years. I was then accepted at Chatham University in the Master of Science in Counseling Psychology program. I moved to Pittsburgh, PA to attend graduate school while working with children with autism, and graduated in 2016. I worked for two years in Family Based Mental Health at Unity Family Services, and then switched lanes to work with Pittsburgh Mercy Behavioral Health in their School Based program. During this time I had earned my license as a professional counselor. After working in community based programs for some time, I transitioned into private practice work as an independent contractor with the Counseling and Wellness Center of Pittsburgh. It is where I currently work.

Do you feel that the populations of patients who seek your help are underdiagnosed or misdiagnosed? How do you see your role in terms of finally helping these patients?

I believe many Black and African Americans are underdiagnosed and/or misdiagnosed, and this has been due to the unfortunate lack of Black clinicians and therapists of color within this field.

I see my role as being one of many Black pioneers in mental health, an advocate for marginalized groups in the healthcare system overall, and a resource for psycho education and de-stigmatization in the Black/African-American community.

Finally, is there anything that I have not asked that you want the world to know?

I tend to operate from the Cognitive Behavioral and Solution Focused schools of thought, though I do tend to sometimes use Dialectical Behavioral interventions. When I work with couples, I tend to refer to Gottman's methods.

"Companies have finally realized the REAL EXPERTS are the Patients and Caregivers! Better products, services, and treatments start with Better Research. They need **YOUR** input and are willing to pay \$100 an hour for it! Your information is never shared or sold. You'll receive a \$5 gift card for just signing up and The EPIC Foundation will also benefit. Signup Today and **let YOUR Voice be heard!**"



Rare Patient Voice is a market research company that helps patients and caregivers voice their opinions, through confidential interviews and surveys, to improve medical products and services.

Patients and caregivers receive cash rewards for participating. To show our appreciation, we will send you a gift card just for signing up!

Click on This Link Join the Panel. Make Your voice Heard!

covid19@epictogether.org

How are you doing?

Are you having a hard time coping amidst the COVID-19 crisis? If you need to reach out, we are here! Send us an email and allow us to help with support, tools of empowerment, or just some much needed positivity! We are all in this together, and together we are EPIC!

The EPIC Foundation
EMPOWERING PEOPLE WITH INVISIBLE CHRONIC ILLNESS
Together, we are EPIC!



How are you doing?? Email us and let us know!

covid19@epictogether.org

The EPIC Foundation will proudly celebrate our
4 year anniversary of incorporation this November 8th!

We want to give you a treat by including you during this special time. On November 8th-November 14th, we will have special events every day.



Virtual Events Include:

<https://runsignup.com/Race/IL/DesPlaines/VirtualZebraWalk>



Panel discussion facilitated by Dr. Serena Wadhwa
Sunday 11/8/20 @ 6 PM CST/4 PM PST/7 PM EST
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81681017041>



"SILENT BUT NOT INVISIBLE" SILENT AUCTION



Preview on Thurs 11/5/20

Auction goes live from 11/6/20 to 11/14/20

All proceeds will help support people living with Invisible Illness

<https://www.32auctions.com/EPICFoundation>

Also, look out for information about our end of the week
virtual party with DJ Real Star!

[https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86224139761?
pwd=ZFI5ZUc3ZjZrWHI2Y05NU1RPQWRHdz09](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86224139761?pwd=ZFI5ZUc3ZjZrWHI2Y05NU1RPQWRHdz09)

Meeting ID: 862 2413 9761 Passcode: 918986

Please look out for special announcements on all of our social media platforms.

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/epictogether>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/epictogether>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/epictogether/>