

# Guest commentary Mental-health treatment creates brighter futures

**By Caryn Hacker-Buechel**

Naples

Board member, David Lawrence Center

We all love a great story. Whether it's books, e-books, audio books or movies, we delight in lost moments when we lose ourselves in someone else's life story — to feel their pain, their sadness, their fear and even their joy, instead of our own.



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According to the Book Industry Study Group, 3.1 billion books were sold last year as part of global book sales totaling more than \$35.7 billion.

Yet, we all have our own stories, complete with adventure, fantasy, drama, love and pain. These vignettes create the foundation upon which our lives are built. We stitch together fragmented pieces of our lives like an old, tattered and worn blanket, and hope that our past can keep us comforted and happy.

For the lucky few, who grew up without trauma, this is not an insurmountable task. For many or most, however, early childhood pain lingers and creates sadness and anger in adulthood, resulting in distress and discomfort, as histories recur in the present and play out in three-dimensional "real life" and not on the pages of a crafted book or projected onto a celluloid movie screen.

It is not, however, necessary or predetermined that the pains of one's early life continue as the present story. Although early childhood experiences shape the future, it is molded in clay and not cement. Kind examination of leftover feelings and unresolved trauma can lead to psychological health and wellness.

Focusing on the strengths of early childhood and accepting past struggles as only a distant chapter in your story will begin the process in which you may change what you see and believe today. Allowing the pain to dissipate as you craft a new story, complete with gentle forgiveness and gratitude will create a new road map to your future.

The path to letting go is not an easy journey and may require the guidance and assistance of a trained mental-health professional.

In honor of May's distinction as Mental Health Month, David Lawrence Center, Collier County's premier not-for-profit, behavioral health agency which provides innovative mental health and substance abuse solutions for children, adults and families in Southwest Florida, is hoping to change the fact that fewer than 25 percent of people

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with a diagnosable mental disorder seek treatment.

David Lawrence is partnering with agencies across the nation to raise awareness regarding mental-health conditions and the importance of psychological wellness.

Psychological distress occurs in many forms, including mental illness, and is a very real and treatable condition that impacts one in four families in Collier County.

When mental health concerns go unchecked, they can significantly impact a person's daily life functioning, whether at school, work or in their relationships with others.

Studies show that residual energy from unresolved trauma impacts many aspects of the self, including intellectualism, spirituality, physical well-being and social connectedness as seen in relationships with self, others, community and the environment, often resulting in recurring feelings of shame, guilt, rage, isolation and disconnection.

The creation of a new personal story and a brighter future can be made easier with the innovative and expressive treatment options available at the David Lawrence Center.

If you or someone you care about has a mental health concern, ask for help. Take the first step and call 239-455-8500 or visit [DavidLawrenceCenter.org](http://DavidLawrenceCenter.org).

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Hacker-Buechel has written books and articles during a 30-year career as a psychotherapist and motivational speaker. She is the author of the children's book "A Bully Grows Up: Erik Meets the Wizard" and a monthly contributor to e Bella magazine. She also is a past trustee of the David Lawrence Foundation.

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