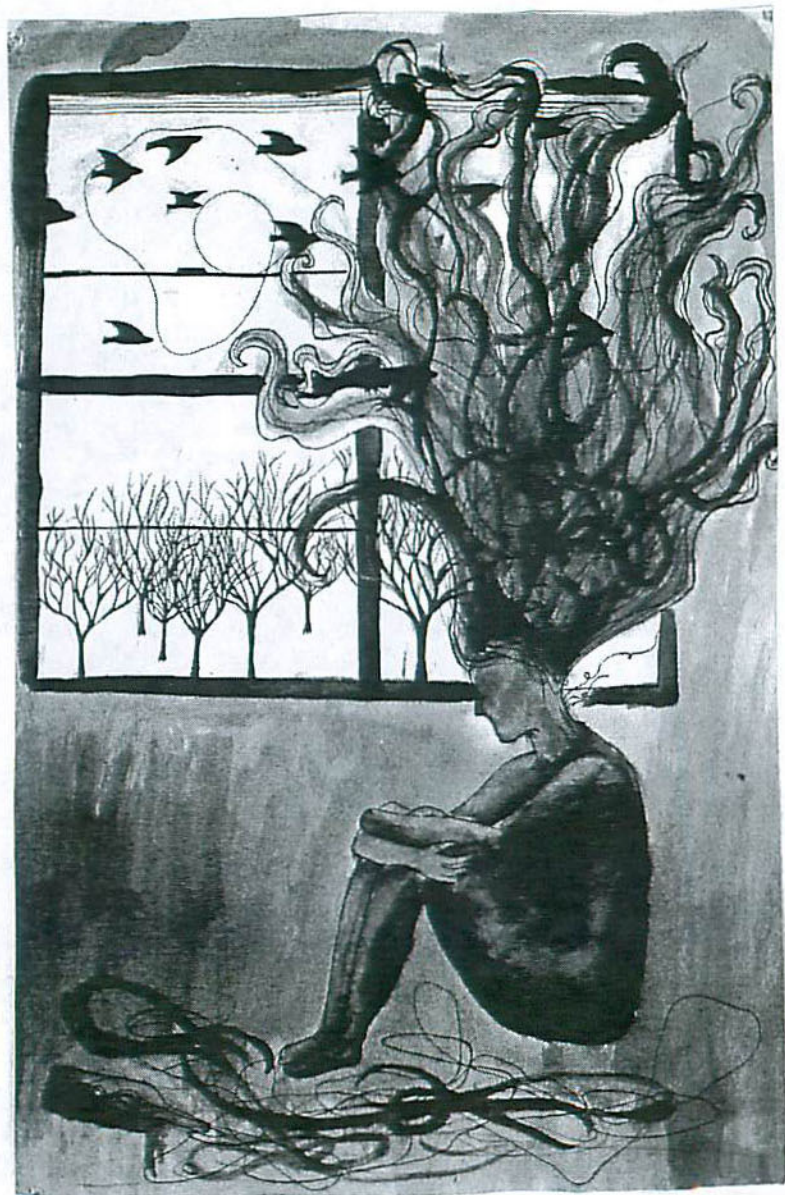


# A Student's Guide to Mental Health

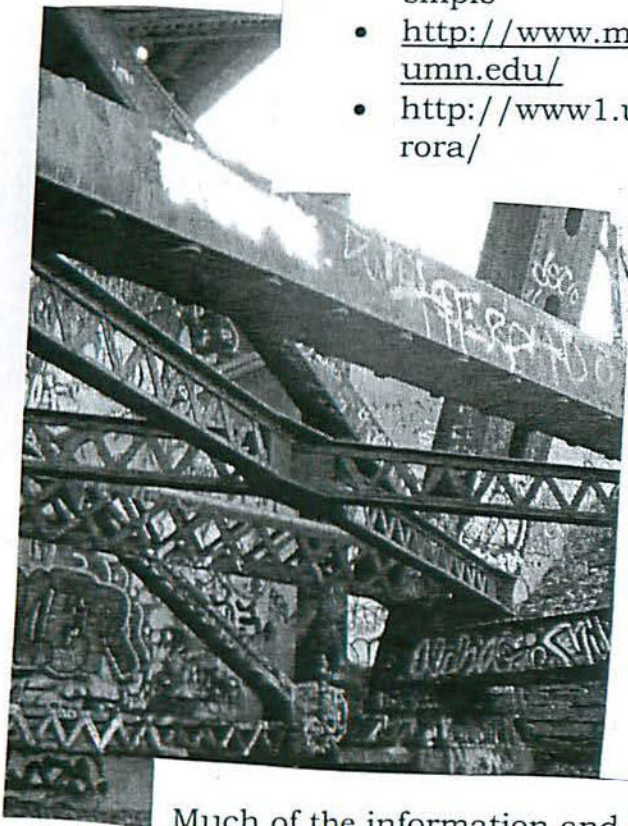
Interested in joining/starting a peer group on campus? E-mail [wmnicarus@gmail.com](mailto:wmnicarus@gmail.com). The Minneapolis Icarus project currently meets on Wednesdays at 7PM at Arise Bookstore at 2441 Lyndale Ave S.



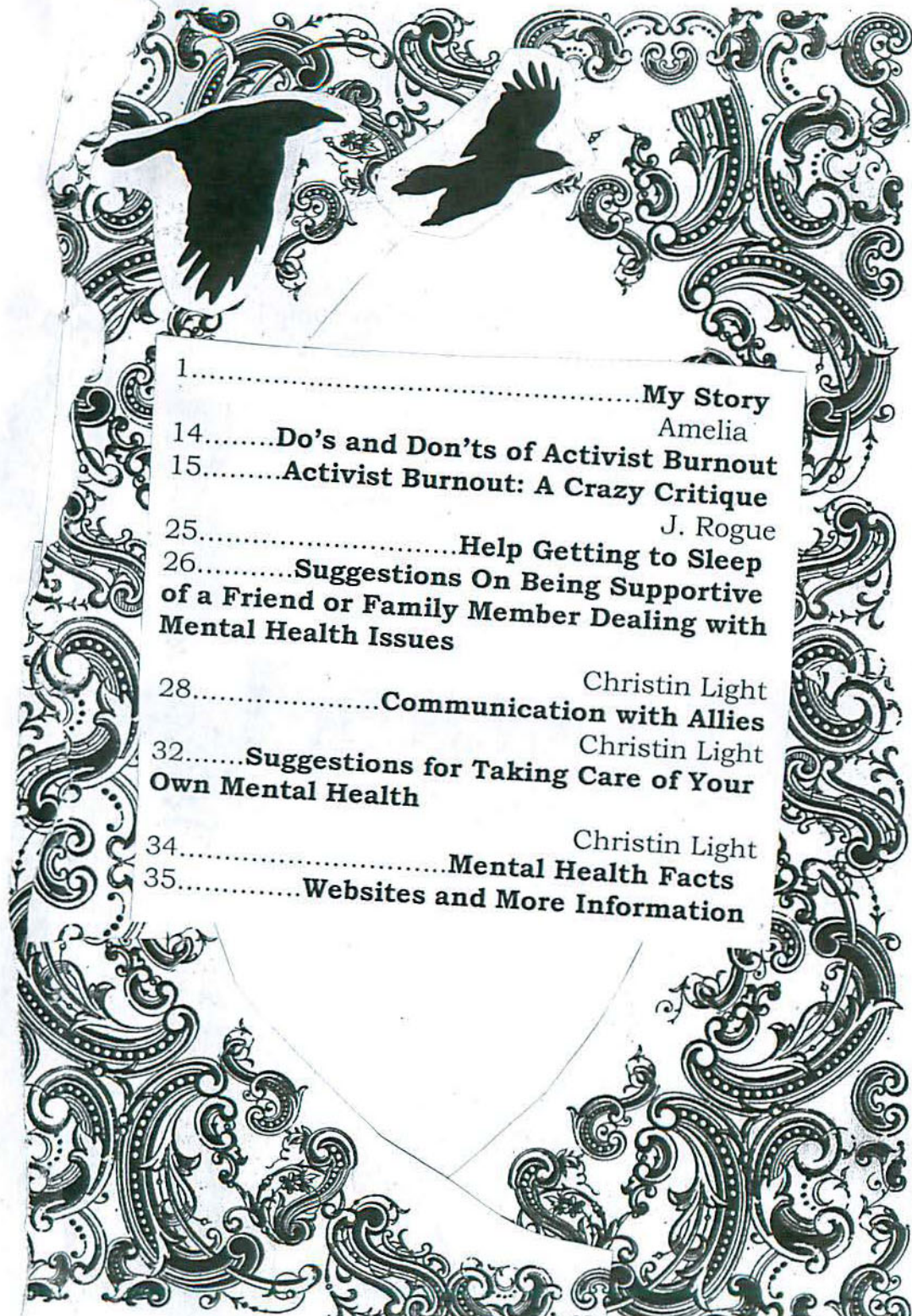
This zine would not be possible if it wasn't for the help, support, and inspiration of many other people. Thanks to the Icarus project in Minneapolis, Sascha Scatter, Nathan, my parents and all of my friends who encouraged me to continue work on this project.

Websites and Information:

- [www.theicarusproject.net](http://www.theicarusproject.net)
- [www.stir-crazy.org](http://www.stir-crazy.org)
- <http://myspace.com/icarusmpls>
- <http://www.mentalhealth.umn.edu/>
- <http://www1.umn.edu/aurora/>



Much of the information and tips included in this zine were compiled from various forums on the Icarus Project website.



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# My Story


Amelia-smit3609@umn.edu

I grew up with a long family history of depression. All of my family and my extended family were clearly depressed at some level. During my freshman year of high school, my orchestra director told my parents that I was depressed during parent-teacher conferences. I waived her off and called her a bitch behind her back. No one knew how correct she was. We had a family therapist that would help us communicate with one another. My parents didn't know how to ask me how I was doing, so they would send me to the therapist for a check up. I always lied, and later on I found out that she knew I was just hiding everything.

I didn't stop pretending until years later, when I finally realized that my soul could not subside on political campaigns alone. In high school I always kept myself ridiculously busy with eight hours of dance classes and working as a waitress part time, plus school. Once I got to college, I started off by taking eighteen credits, getting a job that I loved but required 24 hours a week at least, and spending a substantial amount of time and energy at meetings organizing anti-war activities and demonstrations. That morphed into me devoting all of my time and energy on a campaign to end

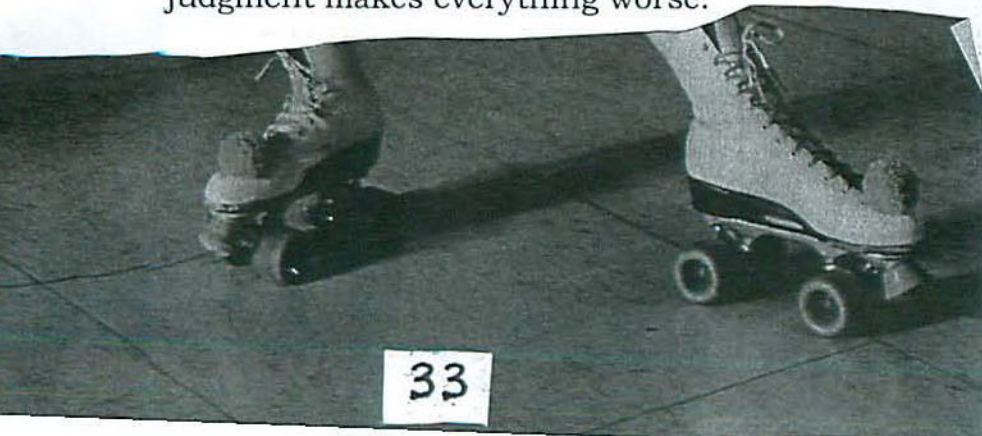
## Mental Health Facts

- Antidepressants are the second most common prescription at the University of Minnesota, second only to birth control.-  
[http://wcco.com/local/local\\_story\\_342100019.html](http://wcco.com/local/local_story_342100019.html)
- Nationwide, 15.7 percent of college women have been diagnosed with depression and 8.5 percent of men have been diagnosed. \*
- The percent of adults taking antidepressants almost tripled between 1988 and 1994 and between 1999 and 2000.  
\*<http://www.mndaily.com/articles/2005/09/15/65143>
- Studies have found that nearly half of all college students reported feeling, at some point, so depressed that they were unable to function normally.\*\*
- One out of four young adults will experience clinical depression by age 24.  
\*\*[http://wcco.com/health/local\\_story\\_077149139.html](http://wcco.com/health/local_story_077149139.html)



scale. A person's desire and ability to fall asleep is influenced by both the length of time since the person woke from an adequate sleep, and by internal circadian rhythms. The body is ready for sleep and for wakefulness at different times of the day. Try to find out the optimum length of sleep and the best times to go to bed and wake up. Adjust it around your schedule the best you can. And stick to it.

- Exercise however you can. Even if it's just taking the stairs or walking a bit more. You already know this though.
- Find an outlet. You need at least one activity that you can "lose yourself" in. It could be dancing, knitting, or painting.
- Long bubble baths seem to make everything a little better. Or is it just me?
- Avoid over-stimulation. This can include florescent lights, busy roads, or crowded places.
- Be gentle with yourself. Self-hatred and judgment makes everything worse.



ANGELL  
GALLERIES  
1926-1930  
ROGER  
4-1970

BOOKS  
1933-35

TRUMAN  
GILVER  
JOHN  
1935

FLANNER  
JANET

the Coca-Cola contract at our university. I moved out of the dorms and was no longer surrounded by a community that could distract me from myself. Many of my friends had left to study abroad, others were just as busy as I was going to school and working. When paying the bills and being a good student are top priorities it's difficult to not allow social networks to crumble to pieces. As I began to feel more and more empty and helpless, I gradually stopped going to all political meetings because I felt that it was useless. I couldn't get myself out of the house to go to dance classes and I became totally disconnected from everything that I had loved previously. I couldn't read the news, because of all of the terrible stuff that was happening everywhere. It was hard for me to comprehend any real possibility for change in this insane, nonsensical, fucked up world.

ELL  
PH  
1910-5  
EV  
1943

After coming back to Minneapolis from hanging out with my friends and family over Christmas break and dreading going back to school I decided that I finally needed to get myself some help. In the mornings if I was on the phone with my mom and she happened to ask the simple question, "How are you doing?" It would send me into a sobbing fit for a half hour that would be extremely difficult to recover from. It was odd because I had always been one of

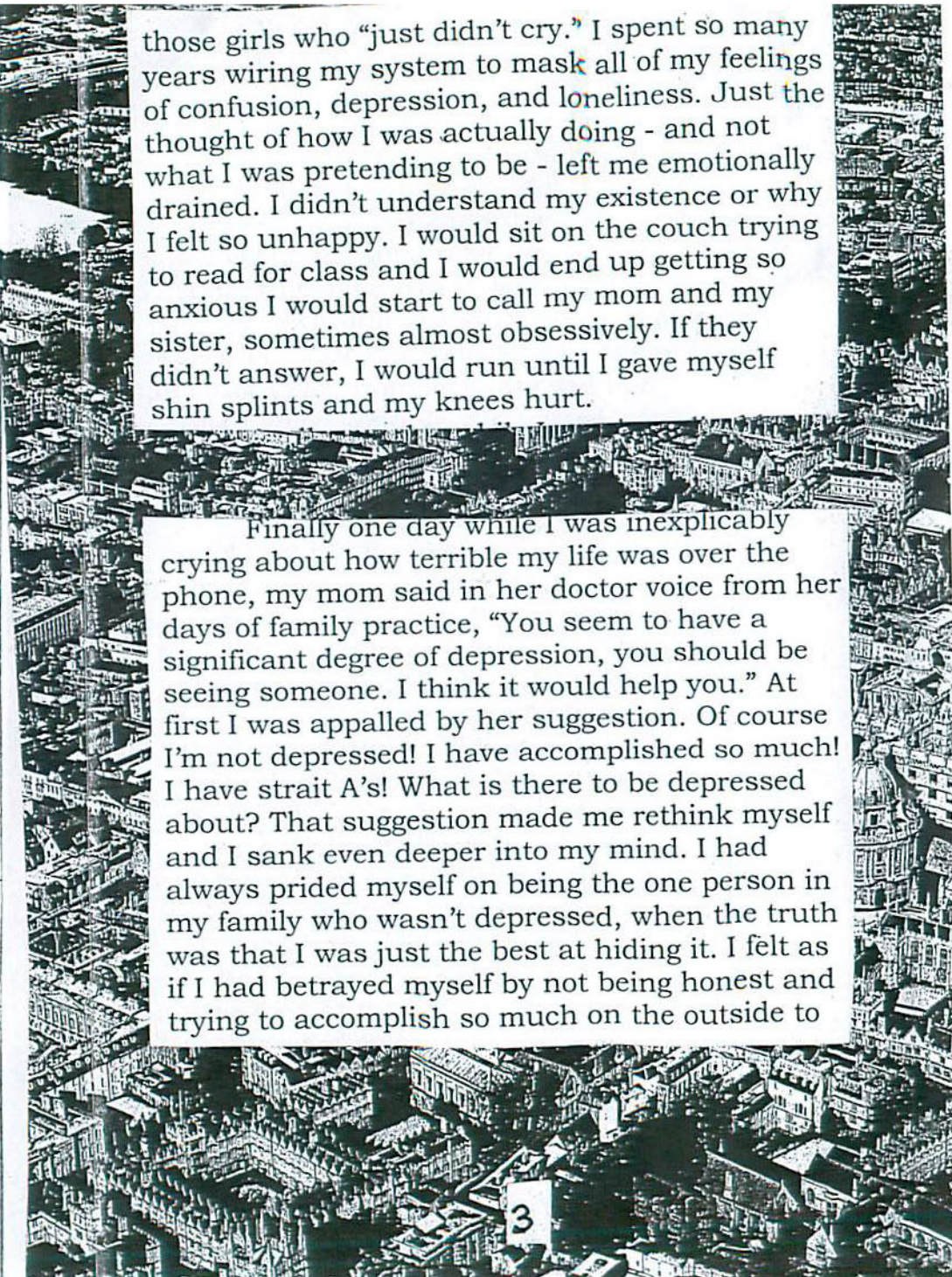
IRWIN  
REP  
1912-

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1939-1961  
JERBER  
JAMES

945-1961  
NORRISON

1961  
PA  
F

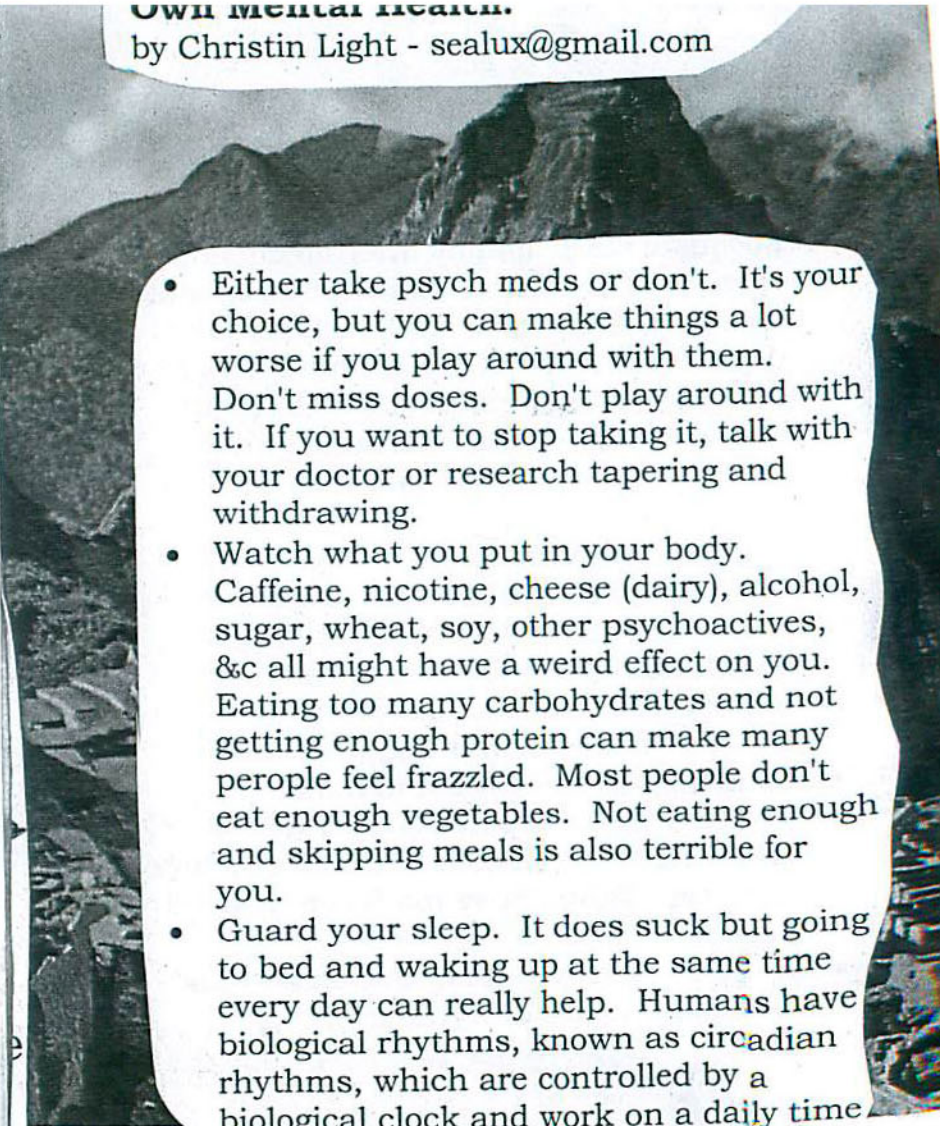


those girls who "just didn't cry." I spent so many years wiring my system to mask all of my feelings of confusion, depression, and loneliness. Just the thought of how I was actually doing - and not what I was pretending to be - left me emotionally drained. I didn't understand my existence or why I felt so unhappy. I would sit on the couch trying to read for class and I would end up getting so anxious I would start to call my mom and my sister, sometimes almost obsessively. If they didn't answer, I would run until I gave myself shin splints and my knees hurt.

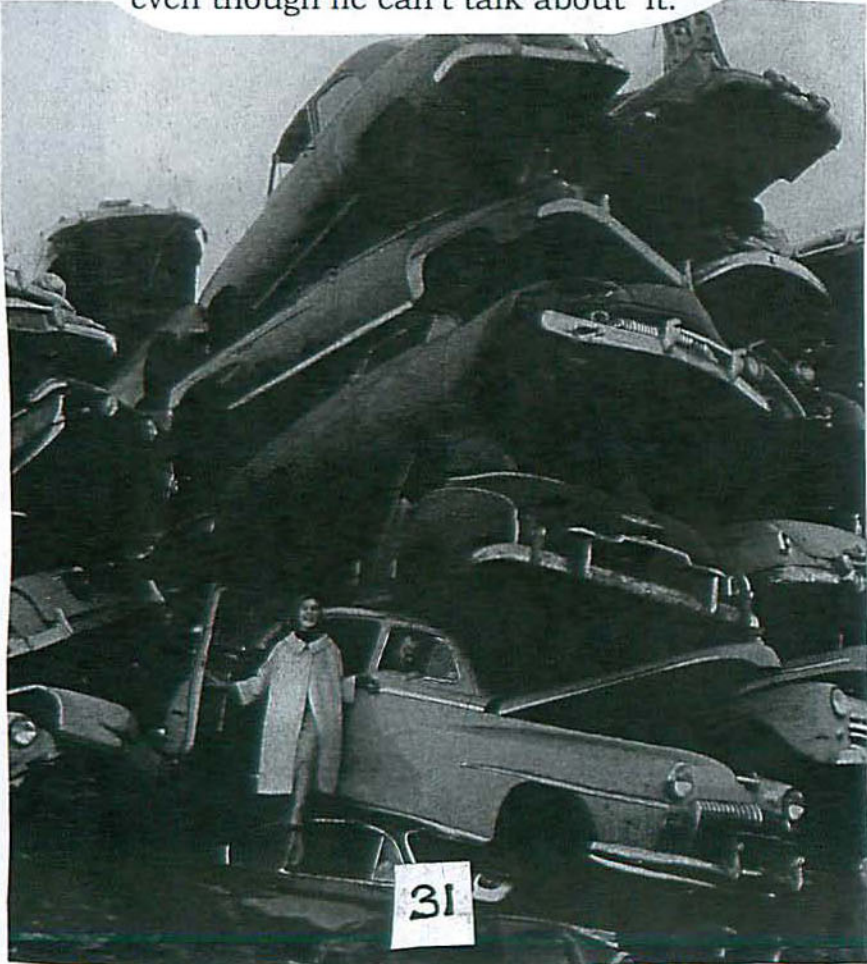
Finally one day while I was inexplicably crying about how terrible my life was over the phone, my mom said in her doctor voice from her days of family practice, "You seem to have a significant degree of depression, you should be seeing someone. I think it would help you." At first I was appalled by her suggestion. Of course I'm not depressed! I have accomplished so much! I have strait A's! What is there to be depressed about? That suggestion made me rethink myself and I sank even deeper into my mind. I had always prided myself on being the one person in my family who wasn't depressed, when the truth was that I was just the best at hiding it. I felt as if I had betrayed myself by not being honest and trying to accomplish so much on the outside to

## Own Mental Health.

by Christin Light - sealux@gmail.com

- 
- Either take psych meds or don't. It's your choice, but you can make things a lot worse if you play around with them. Don't miss doses. Don't play around with it. If you want to stop taking it, talk with your doctor or research tapering and withdrawing.
  - Watch what you put in your body. Caffeine, nicotine, cheese (dairy), alcohol, sugar, wheat, soy, other psychoactives, &c all might have a weird effect on you. Eating too many carbohydrates and not getting enough protein can make many people feel frazzled. Most people don't eat enough vegetables. Not eating enough and skipping meals is also terrible for you.
  - Guard your sleep. It does suck but going to bed and waking up at the same time every day can really help. Humans have biological rhythms, known as circadian rhythms, which are controlled by a biological clock and work on a daily time

realized that it wasn't a slam or lack of love for me, but it brought up painful memories of when his mother had many breakdowns and was hospitalized when he was little. It's not my job to force him to deal with this. As much as I would like more support, I realize now that he gives what he can and visits me in the hospital even though he can't talk about it.



make up for my personal insecurities and lack of real relationships.

When I become depressed I become extremely self centered and self conscious. I always thought that people didn't like me, that I had done something weird, etc. It was to the point that often I just wouldn't say anything in a conversation and I would unintentionally alienate myself. I was afraid to show up at people's houses without a friend who also knew people there. My social life suffered significantly, and this was not only due to the Minnesota winter.

I spent long nights on the phone with my needy long-distance boyfriend, bawling my eyes out for no apparent reason. He seemed to be the only one who uniquely cared. He would tell me that I was really okay, that I would get over it, everyone gets depressed sometimes, anti depressants and therapists couldn't help me. "We could get through it together." The messed up thing was that I'm pretty sure he was worse off than I was. After searching umn.edu extensively for all the mental health links I could find for over a month, I stumbled upon a student counseling service. I decided to give it a try. I went into the oldest building on campus, up the cold cement stairs and into the large cement lobby. I felt strange; proud of myself but scared and ashamed at the same time. I felt like I was

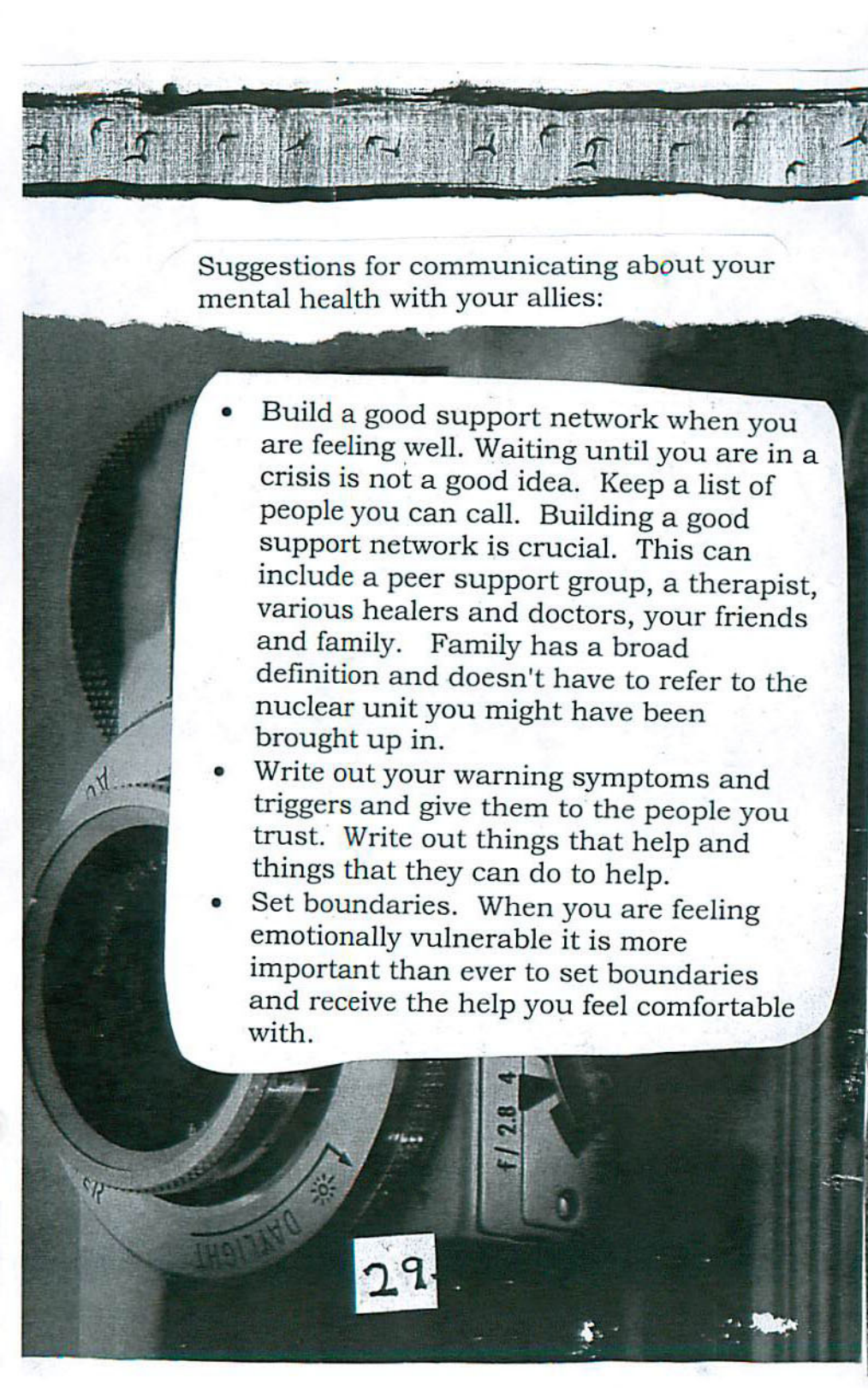
just being a typical depressed girl and should just get over it. It's difficult when society and your inner voice conflict to such a strong degree. I remember talking to people on the phone right after I left the building about coordinating an event that I was organizing for Witness for Peace. I wanted to tell them right away, "I just filled out the paper work to see a counselor, things are going to get better, I'm digging myself out of this hole!" But of course that is not appropriate, so I kept it to myself. I looked at the other people that I saw in the halls wondering if they were also going to go see a counselor.

I had an appointment scheduled for the next week. They made sure that I wasn't going to kill myself. They asked me in that sort of "I'm a tired and bored receptionist and I hope you don't want to kill yourself because that would be a pain in the ass to schedule" tone of voice. My anxiety attacks were getting worse and worse as time progressed.

I showed up for the appointment a week later, a small cheery young Ph.D. student with short curly hair greeted me and brought took me up several more flights of cold cement stairs and down a hallway of small, cement, cubicle like rooms. We sat down and I had to fill out paperwork, first a consent form, then another form, then a form that said that they could video

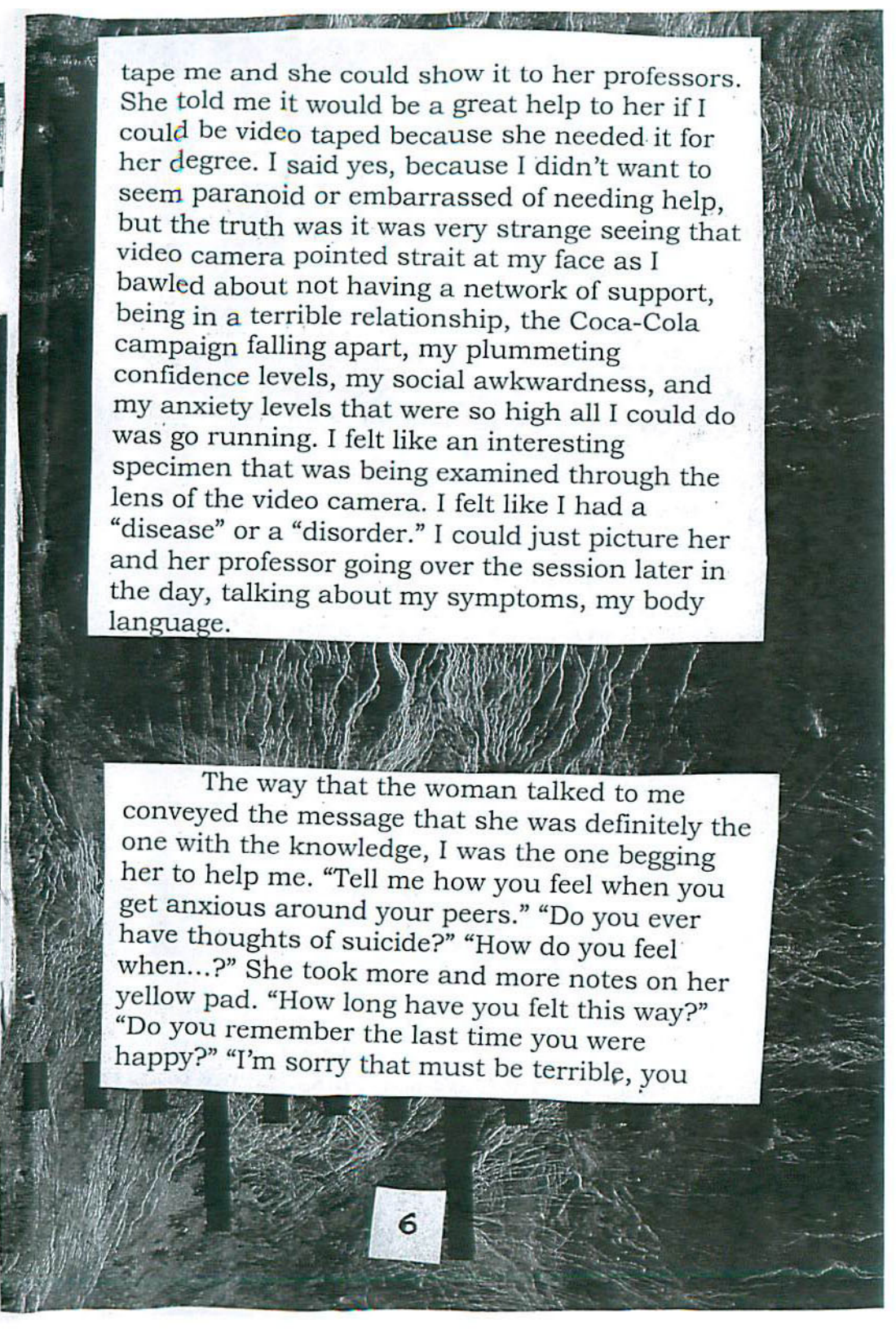
- Communicate your needs. If you need attention - say it. Don't expect someone to know what's going on unless you say it.
- There's a difference between communicating, venting and dumping.
- Give when you can. There's nothing worse than being that person that is a constant energy drain on everyone around them. I know, because I've been that person before. I have felt like a vacuum sucking the life out of others and some of it I couldn't help and some of it I could. Don't use it as a crutch or cop out for everything. So when you have the energy give back. Be appreciative and do nice things for people that have helped you before. Use your experiences to have greater empathy and be supportive to those around you. When you are feeling well, go to a peer support group to listen and bring positive energy.
- Don't push it. People have their reasons for shutting down, being cruel or avoiding you during a mental crisis. It's usually fear. For years my father has had a very difficult time talking about my mental health and being supportive. I finally





Suggestions for communicating about your mental health with your allies:

- Build a good support network when you are feeling well. Waiting until you are in a crisis is not a good idea. Keep a list of people you can call. Building a good support network is crucial. This can include a peer support group, a therapist, various healers and doctors, your friends and family. Family has a broad definition and doesn't have to refer to the nuclear unit you might have been brought up in.
- Write out your warning symptoms and triggers and give them to the people you trust. Write out things that help and things that they can do to help.
- Set boundaries. When you are feeling emotionally vulnerable it is more important than ever to set boundaries and receive the help you feel comfortable with.



tape me and she could show it to her professors. She told me it would be a great help to her if I could be video taped because she needed it for her degree. I said yes, because I didn't want to seem paranoid or embarrassed of needing help, but the truth was it was very strange seeing that video camera pointed straight at my face as I bawled about not having a network of support, being in a terrible relationship, the Coca-Cola campaign falling apart, my plummeting confidence levels, my social awkwardness, and my anxiety levels that were so high all I could do was go running. I felt like an interesting specimen that was being examined through the lens of the video camera. I felt like I had a "disease" or a "disorder." I could just picture her and her professor going over the session later in the day, talking about my symptoms, my body language.

The way that the woman talked to me conveyed the message that she was definitely the one with the knowledge, I was the one begging her to help me. "Tell me how you feel when you get anxious around your peers." "Do you ever have thoughts of suicide?" "How do you feel when...?" She took more and more notes on her yellow pad. "How long have you felt this way?" "Do you remember the last time you were happy?" "I'm sorry that must be terrible, you

seem to be dealing with a lot." "For people in your position we often suggest some kind of antidepressant medication." "How do you feel about that?" "I could write you a referral." "I was so overwhelmed I began to cry. "I see that you are tearing up? What are you thinking?" "What do you want to get out of coming here?" "I want to be able to live normally without falling apart all the time," I said.

I left the appointment shook up and feeling like a wreck. I decided that going back was a bad idea. It was the most stereotypically terrible counseling experience of my life. I could barely pull myself together before I went to work. People would ask me what was wrong and I couldn't talk about it - if I said one word about what I was going through I would completely fall apart. It was like letting out a little bit would make everything come tumbling out. I began to search the internet for other therapists, but couldn't find any. All I found was page after page of lame middle aged smiles looking back at me, with their Christian values, or their "excellence in helping adolescents."

At a party several weeks later I got in a confrontation with a friend who told me I didn't want to be friends with him anyway because he was lame and then admitted his inability to have real feelings. He told me about how he had just

## Communication with Allies

by Christin Light - sealux@gmail.com

We live in such a crazy world that it's not surprising that there are many people absorbing that insanity. Regardless of what you think causes mental health issues most people are stressed out, overstimulated and somewhat lonely at a minimum. We are not really taught how to take care of ourselves or help out other people going through a crisis. This is a road map that I have created having experience being the crazy one and helping others out when they are going through a rough time.

I don't know why it can be so difficult to talk with your friends and family about your mental health but it really can be. If it is too difficult at first to talk about in person write them a letter or email and tell them it makes you uncomfortable to talk about but you trust them and want to share this aspect of your life with them. One thing that keeps things interesting is that people surprise you. Someone you think might be close-minded or emotionally distant may actually be really supportive and cool. The people you may think

you can absolutely depend on may flake out or let you down.

PARASOL MUSHROOM

put into the project, not how much more you have to do. Recognize and respect the time taken to work on the project and any sacrifices either of you have made in order to get things done. Be vocal! Give praise; don't just assume that because you aren't criticizing someone that they know you think they are doing a good job. Focus on constructive criticism rather than destructive criticism. Be sure to be aware of the people who have come before you. Not only is it comforting to know the stories of people who have fought before you, but we can learn a lot from history. No need to reinvent the wheel! Give credit where credit is due.


BOLETUS LUTEUS

This problem cannot be solved by one article, and I don't think the solution is to come up with an alternative ideal. We should each be setting our own standards and not trying to live up to someone else's. That flexibility is what attracted me to anarchism in the first place: do what works best for you while maintaining accountability and equality. I think that what is important is that we have dialogue on the topics discussed in this piece.

MANY CAP CLITOCYBE

known that I wasn't alone. It surprised me that by talking to people about my experience they would willingly open up to me and tell me their stories. It was as if they were waiting for someone to ask. Everyone had a different way of dealing with their feelings. I met people who were just trying drug after drug to make themselves "better," some people were seeing counselors, others were just doing what they could to live normally. I learned about close friends stints in the hospital because of their depression, I heard about my friends years of depression in which they barely left the house and had tons of meaningless sex to distract themselves from what was really going on in their heads.

There needs to be a new way to deal with mental health issues. Pamphlets from the student health center that simply tell you to "practice deep breathing" or "try a Pilates class!" cannot solve all of our problems, neither can the cold faced psychiatrists who want to prescribe you with different medicines and are more than willing to double your dose even if you are not sure about it. We need to create a community in which we can seek support from our peers. This is especially true within the activist community where the number one priority is ending the war, or the Coca-Cola contract, or organizing the best speaking event ever to have hit the campus - and



not how one is personally doing. If we want to create a movement that is self sustaining and can be effective at making change we must have healthy minds and healthy spirits. Mental health needs to become a priority and something that isn't just considered a diagnosis. If we are successful at creating a space where there can be an open dialogue about mental health issues, people will feel more inclined to share their stories, less alone, and more empowered.

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not how I would do it?

I think this last one is important to note. There are all different types of activism and resistance. There is no "one way" to do things. That mentality is very counterproductive, not to mention ableist and symptomatic of the white supremacy culture that dominates this country\*. If we only praise people who do activism "our way," we are excluding others. We are creating a dynamic that places the "ideal" at the top and implies that other models are inferior or nonproductive.

One important solution that should be discussed is creating a culture of appreciation. The dominant culture in this country does not teach us to appreciate the hard work and contributions of the people around us. We need to change this pattern.

To do so will take commitment; it is unlearning an aspect of our socialization. Next time you are working on a project with someone, take some time out to think about the amount of work that the both of you have

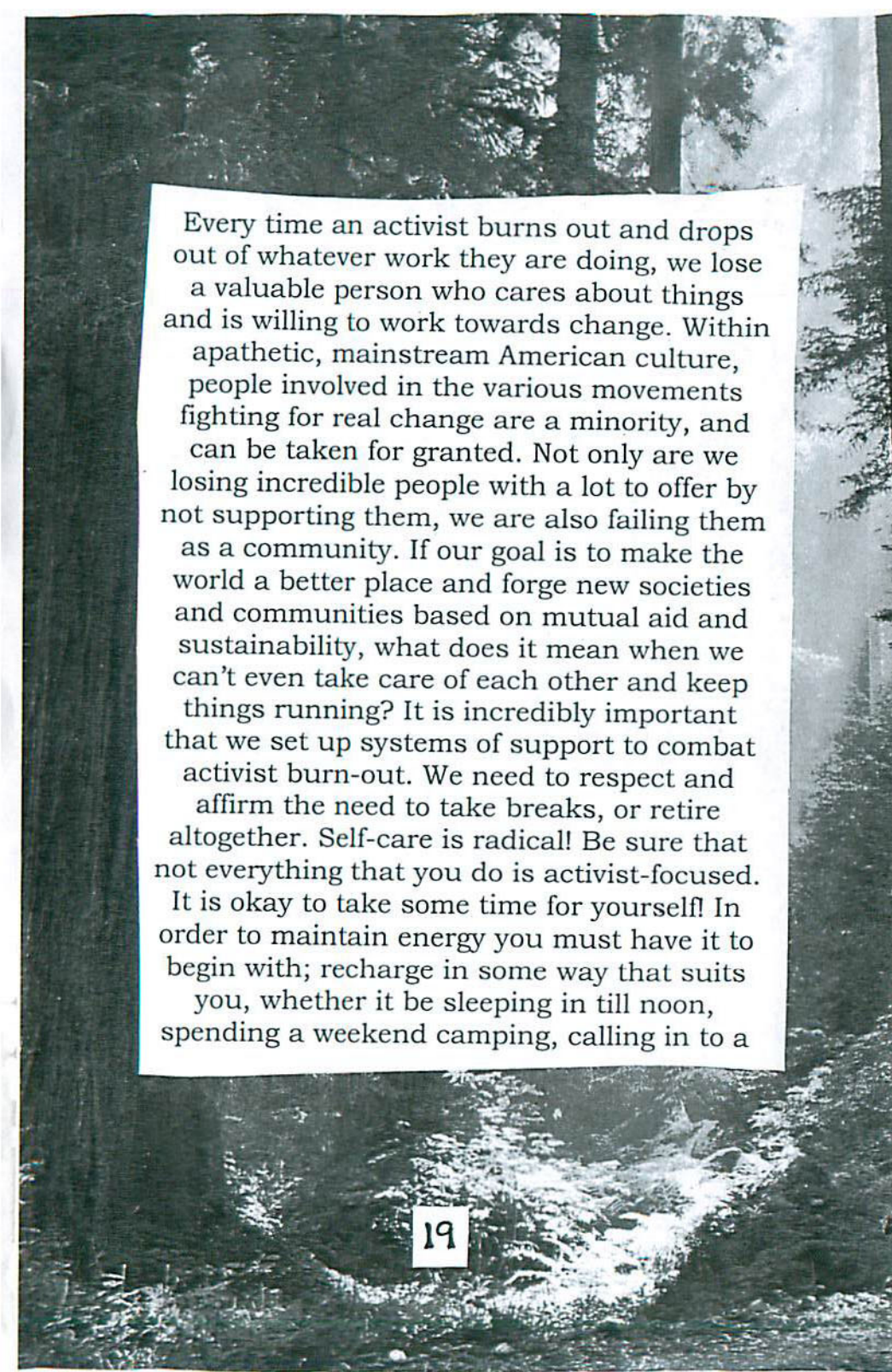
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DEADLY AMANITA

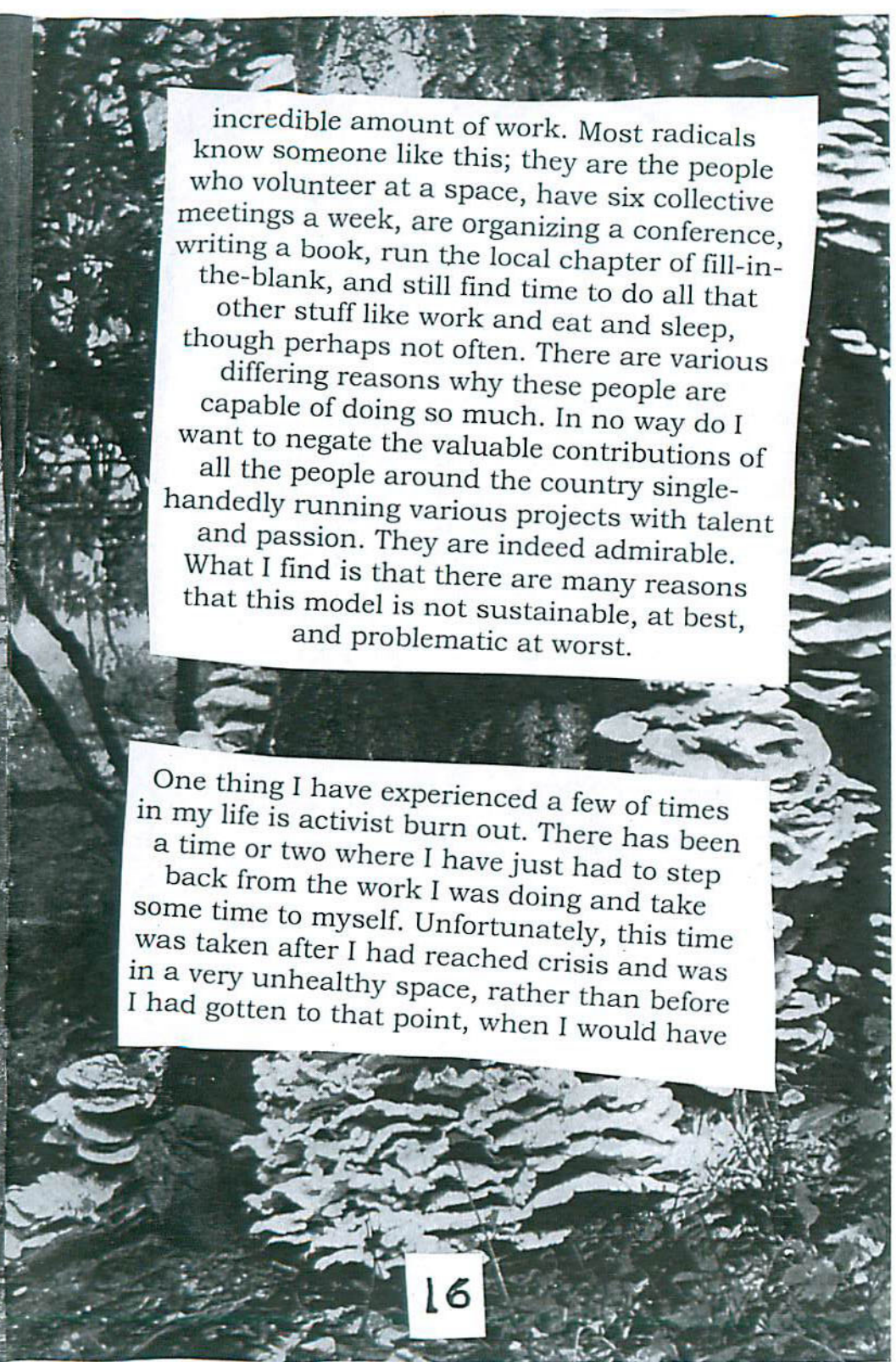
RUDOLPH  
FRECHES

JACK O' LANTERN

BELL-SHAPED PANAEOLUS

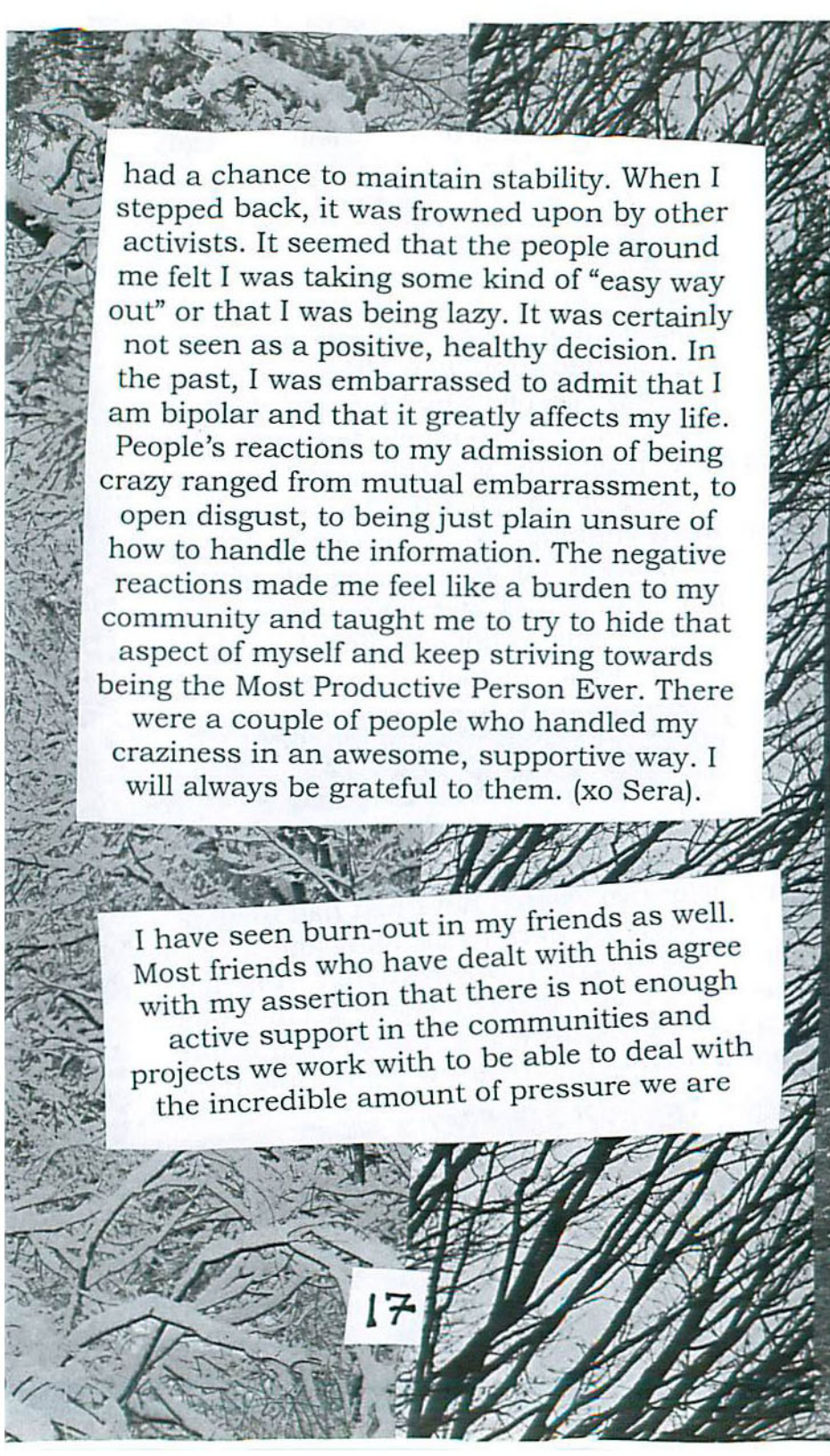


Every time an activist burns out and drops out of whatever work they are doing, we lose a valuable person who cares about things and is willing to work towards change. Within apathetic, mainstream American culture, people involved in the various movements fighting for real change are a minority, and can be taken for granted. Not only are we losing incredible people with a lot to offer by not supporting them, we are also failing them as a community. If our goal is to make the world a better place and forge new societies and communities based on mutual aid and sustainability, what does it mean when we can't even take care of each other and keep things running? It is incredibly important that we set up systems of support to combat activist burn-out. We need to respect and affirm the need to take breaks, or retire altogether. Self-care is radical! Be sure that not everything that you do is activist-focused. It is okay to take some time for yourself! In order to maintain energy you must have it to begin with; recharge in some way that suits you, whether it be sleeping in till noon, spending a weekend camping, calling in to a



incredible amount of work. Most radicals know someone like this; they are the people who volunteer at a space, have six collective meetings a week, are organizing a conference, writing a book, run the local chapter of fill-in-the-blank, and still find time to do all that other stuff like work and eat and sleep, though perhaps not often. There are various differing reasons why these people are capable of doing so much. In no way do I want to negate the valuable contributions of all the people around the country single-handedly running various projects with talent and passion. They are indeed admirable. What I find is that there are many reasons that this model is not sustainable, at best, and problematic at worst.

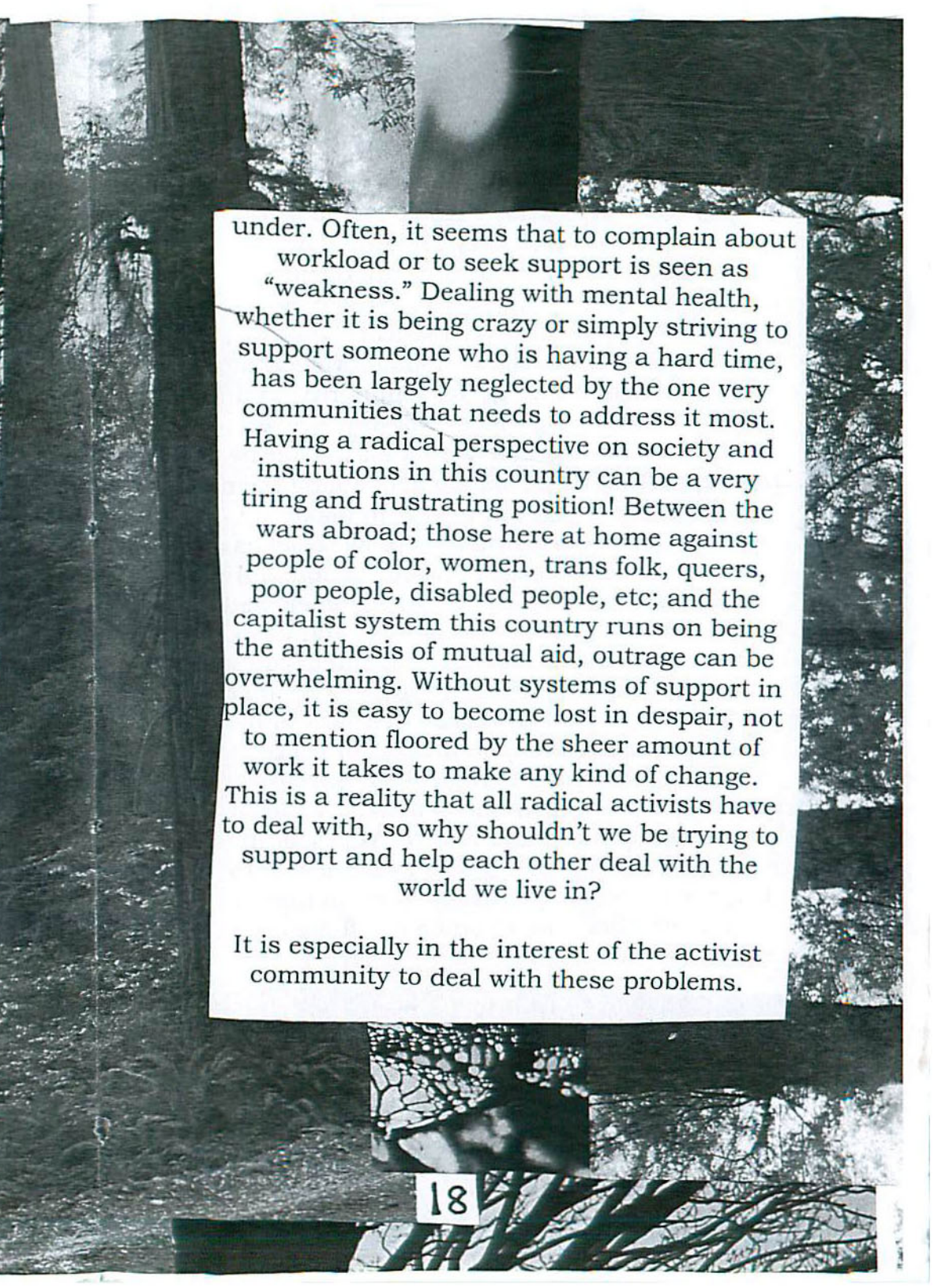
One thing I have experienced a few of times in my life is activist burn out. There has been a time or two where I have just had to step back from the work I was doing and take some time to myself. Unfortunately, this time was taken after I had reached crisis and was in a very unhealthy space, rather than before I had gotten to that point, when I would have



had a chance to maintain stability. When I stepped back, it was frowned upon by other activists. It seemed that the people around me felt I was taking some kind of "easy way out" or that I was being lazy. It was certainly not seen as a positive, healthy decision. In the past, I was embarrassed to admit that I am bipolar and that it greatly affects my life. People's reactions to my admission of being crazy ranged from mutual embarrassment, to open disgust, to being just plain unsure of how to handle the information. The negative reactions made me feel like a burden to my community and taught me to try to hide that aspect of myself and keep striving towards being the Most Productive Person Ever. There were a couple of people who handled my craziness in an awesome, supportive way. I will always be grateful to them. (xo Sera).

I have seen burn-out in my friends as well. Most friends who have dealt with this agree with my assertion that there is not enough active support in the communities and projects we work with to be able to deal with the incredible amount of pressure we are

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under. Often, it seems that to complain about workload or to seek support is seen as "weakness." Dealing with mental health, whether it is being crazy or simply striving to support someone who is having a hard time, has been largely neglected by the one very communities that needs to address it most. Having a radical perspective on society and institutions in this country can be a very tiring and frustrating position! Between the wars abroad; those here at home against people of color, women, trans folk, queers, poor people, disabled people, etc; and the capitalist system this country runs on being the antithesis of mutual aid, outrage can be overwhelming. Without systems of support in place, it is easy to become lost in despair, not to mention floored by the sheer amount of work it takes to make any kind of change. This is a reality that all radical activists have to deal with, so why shouldn't we be trying to support and help each other deal with the world we live in?

It is especially in the interest of the activist community to deal with these problems.

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NONPOISONOUS

PEPPERY LACTARIUS

DELICIOUS LACTARIUS

CHANTERELLE

having the cards stacked against them. I just find myself wondering why the activist community holds up this ideal that is not within the capabilities of so many types of people; often times the very people activists claim to be fighting for. Often, progressively minded folks do not recognize this behavior in themselves until it is pointed out to them. Some questions to ask yourself are:

What privileges allow me to be working on this project?

What are my attitudes towards my fellow activists?

What are my attitudes towards the people I am "fighting for?"

Am I contributing to the self-empowerment of people or are my attitudes more paternalistic?

Do I think I am "saving" people?

Do I recognize the work of others, even if it is

### Do's and Don'ts of Avoiding Activist Burnout

#### Do!

- Delegate!
- Avoid Perfectionism
- Focus on Inspiration- keep "inspiration focused" instead of "meeting focused" once an organization or group starts to be the meetings, when going to meetings, making decisions, and carrying out decisions becomes automatic and loses touch with inspiration. "Inspiration/Purpose focus" on the other hand, pairs goals and strategies to get them done.

#### Don't!

- Take up all the slack...
- Use this work to avoid dealing with other issues in your life!



## Activist Burnout: A Crazy Critique

Rogue-rogue@riseup.net

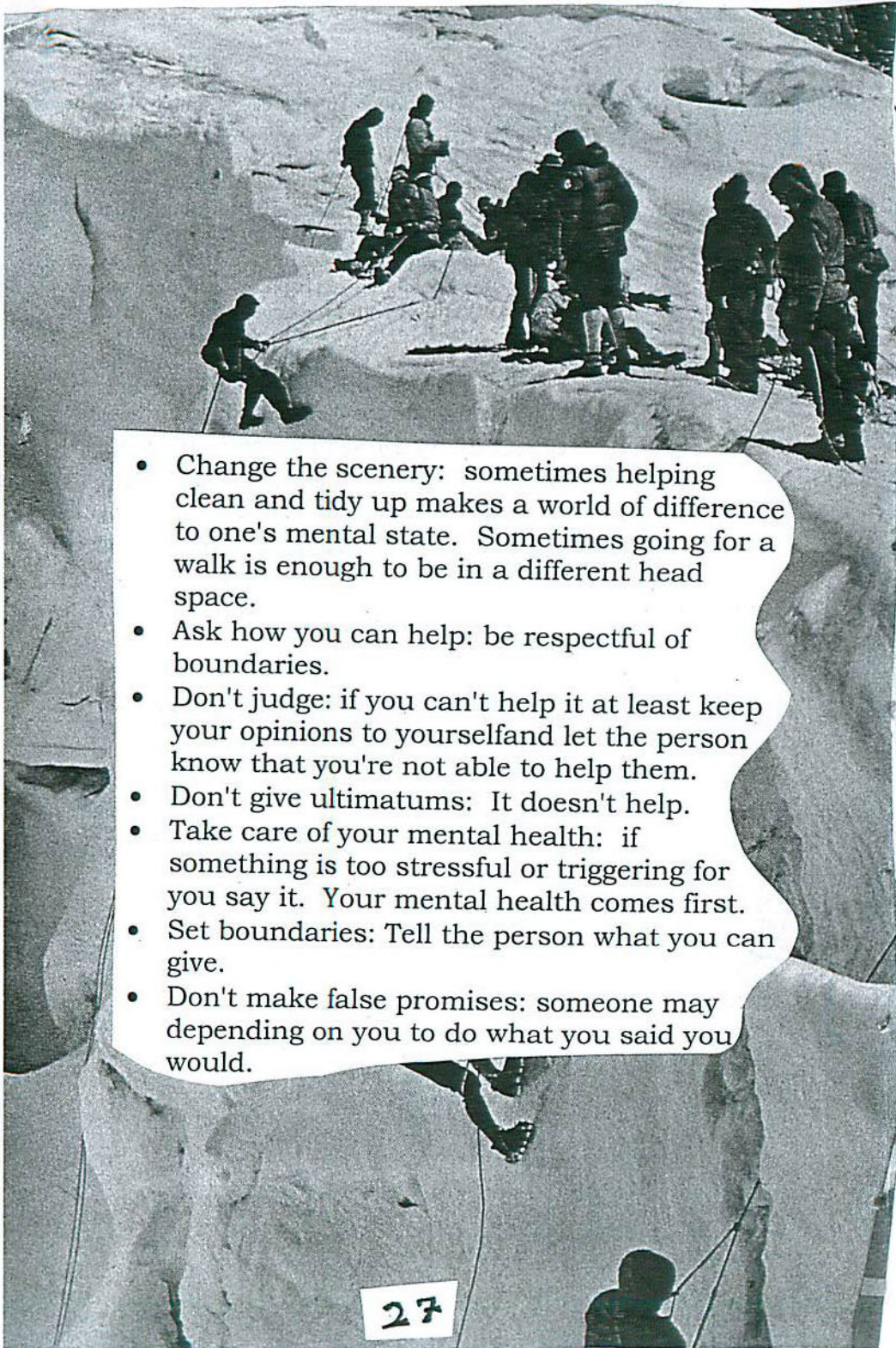
I have been active in the radical/anarchist community for a pretty long time now, and through my interactions with that community as a crazy person some things have become obvious to me. I have noticed that most of the folks active in the anarchist community hold themselves up to a standard that most cannot achieve. This leads to activist burnout, and says something about how accessible and accountable we are to people who cannot achieve this ideal. There are many reasons that the activist community at large needs to deal with the problems that this paragon of revolution presents.

It seems to me that there is an ideal of what an activist should be that exists in the community that I have primarily been a part of since I was around sixteen; the anarchist punk community. I have seen this model both discussed and personified. Most of the people who are revered in this scene are involved in numerous projects and do an

meeting and going to a movie instead- take some time off! We should all be working towards a community in which it is possible for people to do this. If one person is in charge of an entire project, how can they ever take time for themselves? Or, for that matter, live their lives? Work forty hours a week? Raise their children? If our project would fall apart if one or two people took time off, then we need to look at the model. That isn't very sustainable.

This leads me to another problem I see in this model of the "perfect activist." Not all people are capable of funneling endless amounts of energy into activism. I know that for myself, there are days that I can't even get out of bed. There is a myriad of reasons why someone couldn't dedicate the majority of their life to "The Revolution", whether it be that they are a single mom with three jobs, or they are a bipolar, socially anxious crazy kid (like me); many people can't maintain that level of energy. This is not to discount the work of the many people who manage to devote boundless energy to projects even while





- Change the scenery: sometimes helping clean and tidy up makes a world of difference to one's mental state. Sometimes going for a walk is enough to be in a different head space.
- Ask how you can help: be respectful of boundaries.
- Don't judge: if you can't help it at least keep your opinions to yourself and let the person know that you're not able to help them.
- Don't give ultimatums: It doesn't help.
- Take care of your mental health: if something is too stressful or triggering for you say it. Your mental health comes first.
- Set boundaries: Tell the person what you can give.
- Don't make false promises: someone may depend on you to do what you said you would.

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started anti-depressants and how he thought they were already working. I was partially upset that he hadn't confided this to me earlier. The next day after nursing a nasty hangover and being a useless person all day even though exams were coming up, I laid down in my bed at eight o'clock, called my boyfriend at the time and began to cry. I need help, I said, something is wrong with me. I tried breaking up with him. It didn't work. I couldn't do it. I hung up feeling like a wreck and stared at the ceiling for many sleepless hours before I finally drifted off to sleep - only to be woken up, anxious and depressed, an hour before I had to wake up.

I decided that I needed to see someone immediately. I made an appointment and went to fill out the necessary paperwork. I made an appointment with a therapist who had patients stay an extra 20 minutes so she could get to know them very well. The woman seemed nice enough on my first visit, motherly and also a Unitarian Universalist, like I was raised. Then she asked me about my drug use, and even though I told her that I smoked pot "on occasion" she went off on me very seriously about how if I cared for human rights I could not support the drug trade. She also told me that she didn't want me to attend parties where people would be drinking more than three drinks. I left feeling

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slightly better, and decided that her judgmental side would fade away and it was just something she had to tell me because she worked for the school's health service. I wanted to believe that the system would work for me.

I made an appointment with the psychiatrist and eventually, after questions and more questions about my medical history and if I had any morbid feelings, I finally was given what I had come for - a prescription for Prozac. The same drug everyone in my family currently takes, including our two cats: It's afoam that you rub in their ears. My mom and her husband decided that cats peeing in the house meant that they were depressed and so for them too Prozac was the answer.

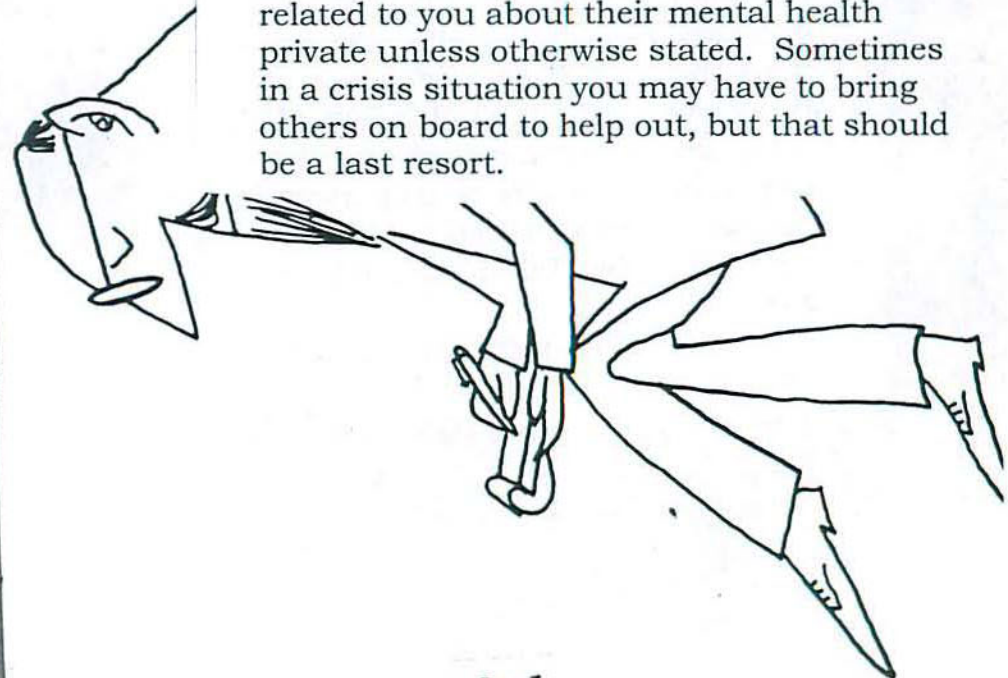
I continued to see the therapist for several more weeks. She wanted to see me on a weekly basis to track how I was doing with my social interactions. She simplified my life in a way that didn't relate to how I was feeling at all. I could tell that she felt like she knew the answers and if I only really tried to do her mental exercises I would be okay. After a weekend at a crazy music festival with one night hookups and an excessive amounts of drugs and alcohol I knew I couldn't go back. If I went back she would ask me about how the music festival went, how my social interactions were, if I made any real connections.

## Suggestions On Being Supportive of a Friend or Family Member Dealing with Mental Health Issues

by Christin Light - sealux@gmail.com



- Use the language and diagnostic labels s/he is comfortable with.
- Don't relate everything back to you: there is a difference between empathy and turning the conversation back on you.
- Enjoy the silence: sometimes just being there is enough. Silence is only uncomfortable if you make it that way.
- Learn how to listen: I'm still learning how.
- It's not your secret to tell: consider everything related to you about their mental health private unless otherwise stated. Sometimes in a crisis situation you may have to bring others on board to help out, but that should be a last resort.



# Help Getting To Sleep

## Information Sheet

Not sleeping for long periods of time is extremely dangerous for physical and emotional wellbeing. Lack of sleep can lead to accidents, make you more likely to get sick, and is one of the primary reasons for emotional crisis, mania, or psychosis.

This information sheet was created to aid in maintaining a healthy sleep schedule.

### What is good sleep?

Everyone is different in how much sleep they need, and it can change with changing life situations. Most adults need 7-8 hours a night, but this varies by person. Teens need around 9 hours, children up to 3 years 14-16 hours. The best sleep happens when we get to bed early.

### What interferes with good sleep?

- \* *Stress/anxiety/trauma.*
- \* *Medication side effects. Read labels carefully.*
- \* *Caffeine, esp. when taken after 2pm. Caffeine is in many products not just coffee. Many teas such as green and black tea contain caffeine, as do chocolate, energy drinks, and some cold and headache medicines.*
- \* *Poor nutrition or lack of food. You might also have food allergies that interfere with sleeping.*
- \* *Alcohol taken 2hrs before bedtime can prevent the body from reaching the deep stage of sleep necessary for the body to rejuvenate itself.*
- \* *Sugar, corn syrup, and sweeteners.*

### What helps people get to sleep?

Routine is important. Try to go to bed at the same time every night. Your body automatically will start to feel tired at this time.

Don't read or watch tv in bed. Train your body to associate your bed with sleep. If you are having a hard time, get out of bed. Turn a light on and read, or watch a movie for half an hour or so before trying to sleep in bed.

Meditation can help to relax. One method is to concentrate on watching your breath rise and fall in your belly, notice when you are distracted by thoughts, and then return to your breath.

Try progressively relaxing your body, starting with your feet all the way to your head.



Deep, slow breathing from the belly can help -- don't push or use effort, breathe naturally but deeply.

Nightmares, sometimes caused by trauma, can prevent deep sleep. Talk about the dream as soon as you awake to reaffirm what is real and what is not. If another person is not available, writing it down may help get it out of your head.

Acupuncture, including ear treatment, is extremely effective for many people to get to sleep, including people in manic states or with extreme lack of sleep. Ask to find a practitioner in your area.

Simple yoga stretches, a bath, or massage will help to relax your muscles. Visualize releasing tension in each part of your body: "My toes are relaxing... my feet are relaxing...my ankles are relaxing..."

If you missed sleep, take a short nap during the day.

Herbal teas (such as chamomile) can help, as can bananas. Oat straw, melatonin, passion-fruit extract, and fish oil support healthy sleep. An herbalist can guide you on what to try.

Use earplugs if your environment is loud and distracting. If you are used to noise in the background, turn on some background music such as a fan with a towel over it.

Doctors prescribe benzodiazapines such as Xanax, Valium, and Ativan for sleep. These drugs can help in the short term, but are extremely addictive and in the long term can make sleep problems worse. Use them with great care, or find alternatives.

Keeping your bedroom dark and a comfortable temperature will help you get to sleep.

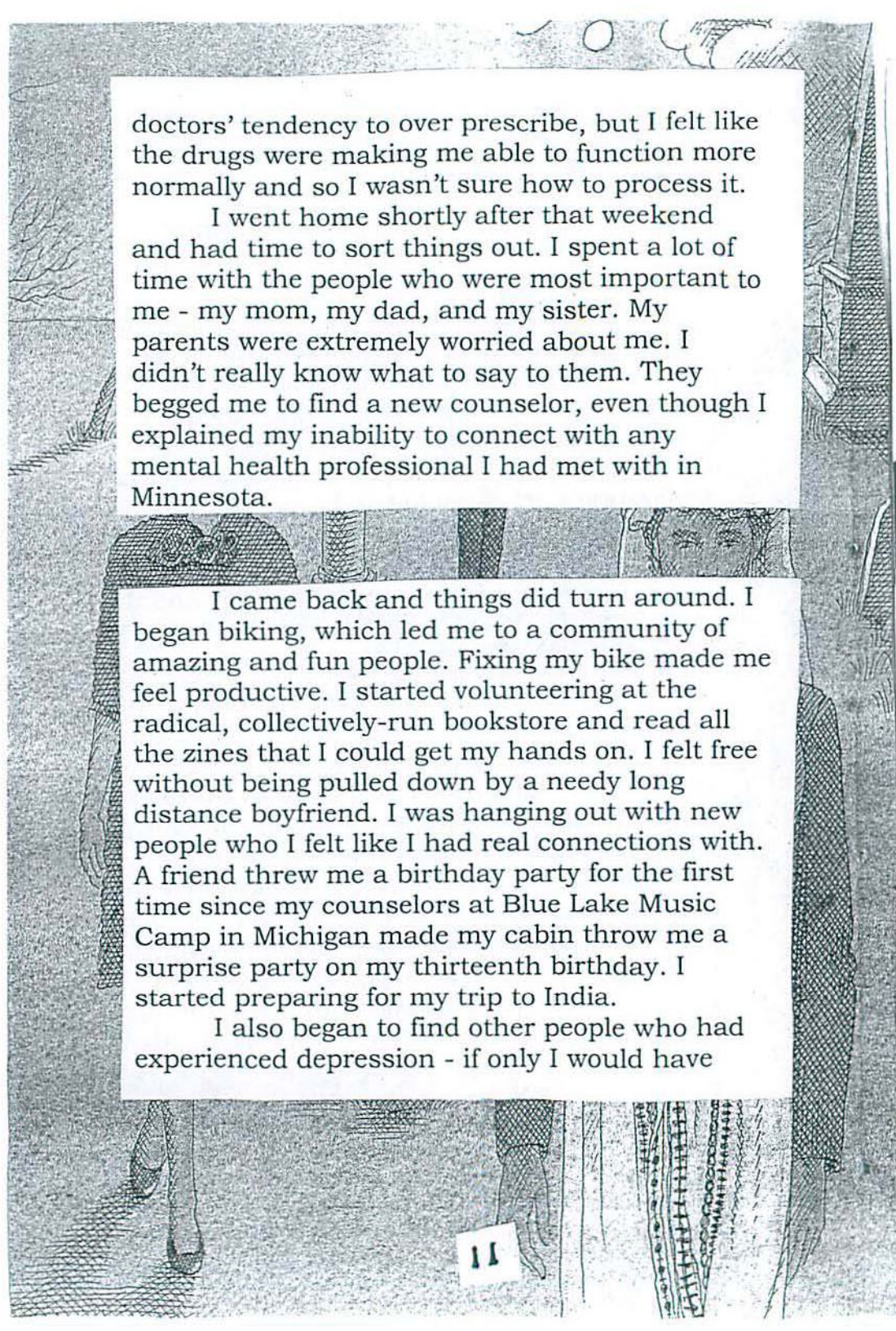
Physically exhausting yourself through exercise will help you get to sleep. Exercising 3-5 times a week will help your body expend excess energy and feel tired.

Sleeping too much can be a sign of depression, malnutrition, or physical illness.

DRAFT created 5-1-06 for the Common Ground Health Clinic by the Freedom Center and Icarus Project. Send feedback and suggestions to: [will@freedom-center.org](mailto:will@freedom-center.org).

I couldn't just go and say: "Actually I just broke up with my boyfriend for the last time on Thursday so instead of having a healthy weekend of enjoying the music and having enlightening conversations like we had planned, I numbed myself physically and spiritually-taking every drug I got my hands on, drinking bloody maries with my coffee for breakfast and neglecting to eat anything substantial for days. I felt like I had betrayed my friends for not hanging out with them enough and I felt totally unlike myself. I thought about stealing everything I saw and while sitting in an outhouse I decided that I was at the worst part of my life and I had to think of a way out of it. I stopped seeing the therapist completely, although I continued to take my Prozac, which I had many mixed feelings about.

A friend asked me what I was taking one morning and I told her. She looked at me, her eyes filled with sadness, and said: "You are so young - you don't need to be on that, having real feelings is good." I tried to explain my inability to function, but it was clear that she didn't understand. I also had heard horror stories from other friends about their psychiatrists that had prescribed them ridiculously high amounts of anti-depressants as a teenager, only because they had a crush on someone who was dating their best friend. I agreed with their claim about



doctors' tendency to over prescribe, but I felt like the drugs were making me able to function more normally and so I wasn't sure how to process it.

I went home shortly after that weekend and had time to sort things out. I spent a lot of time with the people who were most important to me - my mom, my dad, and my sister. My parents were extremely worried about me. I didn't really know what to say to them. They begged me to find a new counselor, even though I explained my inability to connect with any mental health professional I had met with in Minnesota.

I came back and things did turn around. I began biking, which led me to a community of amazing and fun people. Fixing my bike made me feel productive. I started volunteering at the radical, collectively-run bookstore and read all the zines that I could get my hands on. I felt free without being pulled down by a needy long distance boyfriend. I was hanging out with new people who I felt like I had real connections with. A friend threw me a birthday party for the first time since my counselors at Blue Lake Music Camp in Michigan made my cabin throw me a surprise party on my thirteenth birthday. I started preparing for my trip to India.

I also began to find other people who had experienced depression - if only I would have



How can we support crazy folks? How can we support non-crazy folks having a hard time? How can we prevent crisis or activist burn-out before it happens? It is up to us to create the solutions. The only thing stopping us is an ideal that many of us erroneously hold ourselves up to; it is time we stopped looking up to that person we are trying to be and look to each other instead. We are all valuable, productive and creative people; it is time to scrap the model that tells us otherwise!

\* See Tema Okun's article "White Supremacy Culture" on the Challenging White Supremacy website.