

# UNMUTE

**Heal Out Loud Monthly Newsletter-May 2025**  
Mental Health Awareness ~ Quiet No More



## Quote of The Month

“Your story is the key that can unlock someone else’s prison. Dont be afraid to share it”

~Unknown

## A Healing Word From Naomi

Hello Family,

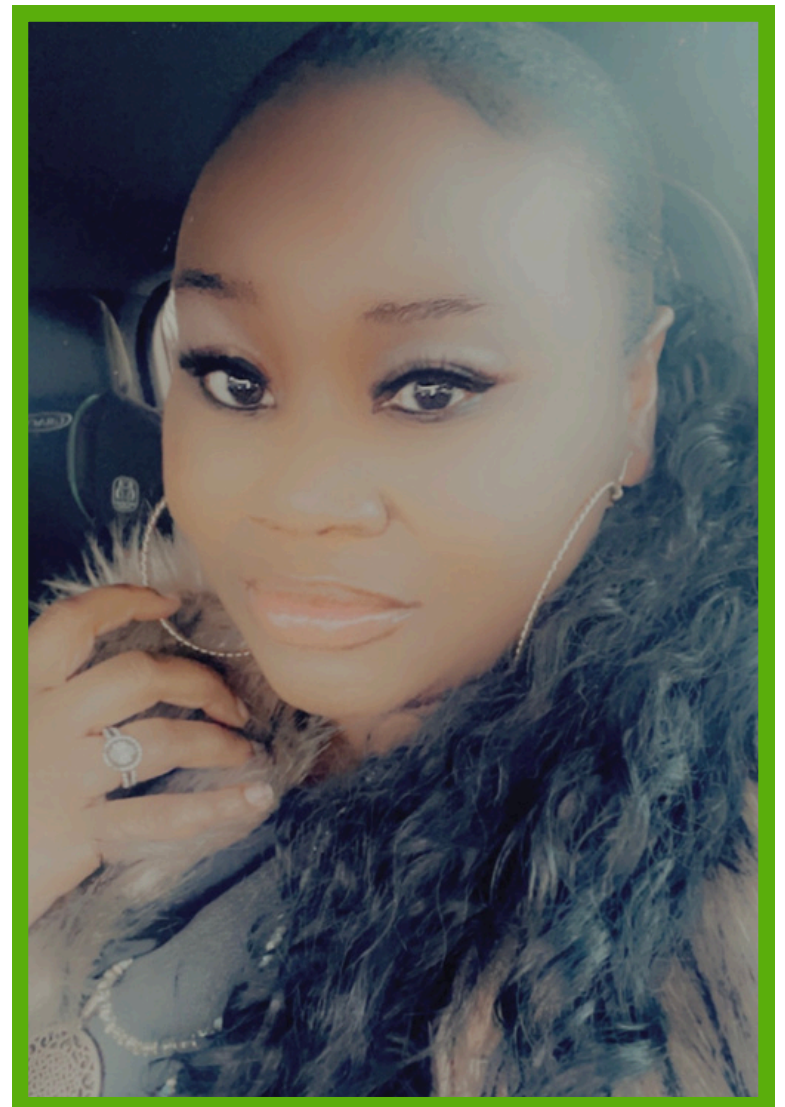
May is Mental Health Awareness Month, and I want to start by saying: Your healing matters. Its time to unmute ourselves.

I created Heal Out Loud because I know what it feels like to suffer in silence. Along my journey I came to know the freedom that comes when you give yourself permission to be vulnerable, to be seen, to be heard and to begin again with God.

Healing is not linear and there is no time limit.

This month, I challenge you to reflect on your own life’s journey. Is there anything you need to heal from? Is there anything you have healed from? Is there anything you can share to help someone who is experiencing what you have been through? The time is NOW to Heal Out Loud! Everyone is worthy of healing! No more silent suffering! We got you!

With love,  
Naomi Hinton   
Founder, Heal Out Loud



## Scripture of the Month

“The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.”

— Psalm 34:18 (NIV)



# Heal Out Loud

Heal Out Loud is an organization where we believe in empowering individuals to embrace their mental health journey. Our mission is to bring awareness to mental health and end silent suffering through faith, storytelling, and creating sacred spaces for healing. Join us!

Delivered

Nice. What's in it for me?

We offer many community events to bring awareness to mental health. We have created a platform called Speak your Truth as a safe space for individuals to share their story. We direct those in need of help to get the resources they are needing. We offer self care give a ways, sell mental health awareness merchandise and much more!

Delivered

That's awesome. How can I keep up with upcoming events and learn more?

By visiting our website [www.healoutloud.co](http://www.healoutloud.co) and clicking the subscribe button. You can also join us on 6/21 for the launch party for detailed information. Admissions is free but \$10 for a delicious plate of food!

Delivered

I'm so excited. I'm signing up now and bringing my family and friends. See you soon.

# Our 1<sup>st</sup> Community Event

**You're Invited!!**

Heal Out Loud

**LAUNCH**

**GATHERING**

**June 21<sup>st</sup> 1pm**



**1215 Calhoun St  
Columbia SC 29201**



LOOK WHO'S

## UNMUTE

Connie L. Johnson



I was taught to remain silent at an early age. My grandfather who helped raise me was a staunch believer that children were to be seen and not heard. And although it was never said directly to me, my family lived by the old adage, “What goes on in this house stays in this house”.

World renowned poet, activist and writer Maya Angelou eloquently documented her experience as a mute child in her memoir *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*. Angelou shares the account of being sexually assaulted by a family friend who is later murdered. The assailant was beaten and stabbed to death not long after being released from prison only four days after being arrested. Because an 8 year old Maya testified against him in court, she believed that her words were so powerful they could kill. In response she silenced her voice for five years. Silence is a thief.

Unlike Maya, I remained silent about every sexual assault I’ve ever endured. The first experience happened when I was about 9. An older female neighbor I believed to be a friend coerced me into playing a “game” that turned out to be an unwanted sexual act. I remember feeling ashamed because my body betrayed me. Mentally I hated was happening but my body responded with pleasure. For that reason, I never uttered a word to anyone. Instead of speaking, I began eating. Food became a friend that I relied on for temporary relief. I began hiding snacks in my bedroom. Then I would eat them while everyone else slept.

Food filled the void of my father’s absence as well. My parents divorced when I was about 5. I believe adults underestimate the amount of trauma that happens to a child when they decide to part ways. At five my familial foundation was shaken and was never really pieced back together. The distance between my first love and I was my first heartbreak. What do you do when your core idea of love is framed by abandonment, neglect and rejection? You accept abuse as love because pain feels like love.







At 14, I silently lost my virginity to a 21 year old dropout who I met over the phone who told me he was 16. My mother’s reaction to the guy’s presence in our home let me know I could never tell her the truth about his visit. She was so disappointed and angry that she beat me with a ruler and grounded me for three months. We never talked about that day again. If we had, I probably would have told her how much his entering my body hurt and how scared I was to tell him no. He was muscular and smelled like beer and pushed himself inside of me like a raging bull. I lied there limp and motionless waiting for him to finish so he could leave and the nightmare would end. I didn't speak of this event until I was well into my 30’s.

That encounter was the first of three sexual assaults I endured as a teen. The other two are so violently gruesome, I have yet to find the language to describe them in prose. It wasn’t until I was diagnosed with AIDS at 26 that I began speaking. I’m not sure why but saying “I have HIV.” gave me an unexpected sense of relief. Although I was stunned and dazed, I knew enough about this illness to know that it was too heavy to carry alone. So on the day I was diagnosed, I told my family and a few friends. A few months later, I joined a support group where I could freely express what I was experiencing. Seven years later, I did my first speaking engagement as an HIV/AIDS advocate. It took place at a small church in rural South Carolina. I spoke from the heart and shared my story. The audience listened intently and later asked their questions. Afterward, I was approached by several people who had lost family members or who had been diagnosed with HIV/AIDS. They wanted to know how they could help their loved ones who were living in silence. That day, I became aware that my silence was no longer an option.

At the core of silence is fear. But 1 John 4:18 reassures me that perfect love casts out fear. At 48, I’m now able to speak and write the truth of my experiences because I know that I am protected by the greatest power in the universe. Love. God’s love for me and the love I now have for myself supersedes the shame and guilt I once carried about my past. This process of confronting myself and my past has not been easy but it’s worth every tear and ache. I have learned to see myself as God sees me. When I look in the mirror I no longer see a wounded, broken girl. I see a woman of purpose who has fought to become a powerful change agent who uses her God given gifts to help others find their voice and end their silence.

Connie L. Johnson

"Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure."  
Marianne Williamson






# HEAL WITH US

See whats going on in our community

## May Local Events



GIRL GET UP SOCIETY PRESENTS

### MINDFUL STEPS

4TH ANNUAL MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS WALK  
COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH SCREENING DAY

# 2025

Welcoming families of all ages, this event will feature exciting activities, delicious food, engaging entertainment, and so much more!

A groundbreaking community gathering awaits, spotlighting complimentary mental health screenings with brief 15-minute sessions. Certified Mental Health Professionals will be readily available onsite to provide support and guidance.

 Saturday  
May 3, 2025

 Start Time  
09:00 am

 The Keenan House  
801 Wildwood Ave Columbia, SC

REGISTER ONLINE ➔



## COFFEE & CONVERSATIONS



United Way of the Piedmont

## BREAK THE Stigma



### RUN / WALK FROM ANYWHERE!

May 12-18, 2025

## SELFLESS CHURCH

Presents  
1st Annual

# WALK FOR CHRIST

*Walking in FAITH*



**GIVE AWAY**

REGISTER FOR A CHANCE TO WIN \$200 GIFT CARD FOR GROCERIES

**SATURDAY MAY 24, 2025**

Come and ACTIVATE your faith with us as we walk a mile believing God for the things we have asked

1215 CALHOUN ST  
COLUMBIA SC 29201

Check In & Stretch: 9:00am    Walk Starts: 10:00am

PLEASE REGISTER FOR A WALK FOR CHRIST T-SHIRT



Visit

# selfless

## CHURCH

CONNECT | GROW | SERVE

1215 Calhoun St Columbia SC 29201

Unapologetically Healing with the Community!

Until next time 