



# Breaking Free

April 2017

## From the Editor

Welcome to the April edition of *Breaking Free* for 2017.

Inspirational women, smiling minds, anchors and how to talk about trauma are all included in April *Breaking Free*. The feature article explains the idea of creating anchors to help reduce overwhelm, anxiety and distress. The MY STORY is by Peter who gives us an insight into a lesser known church group; he hopes his story may encourage others to come forward.

We share a story from Queensland, and introduce some inspirational women. There is a link to our newest downloadable resource Talking Trauma - a guide to support anyone in the community when having conversations about trauma.

It is wonderful to hear from so many readers; your ideas, tips, tools, and resources for self care will enrich this newsletter and future issues. If you have any ideas to share feel free to make contact via the email address provided below.

In our SELF CARE RESOURCES section this month we include an app kindly reviewed by Lee, one of our readers: Smiling Mind. She explains how she has been using it and what has been really useful for her. The first website reviewed this month is An Infinite Mind that focuses on dissociative disorders and it provides education and advocacy. The second website reviewed is a new government hosted site on eSafety – many useful tools and tips on how to keep safe on the web.

The Helpline Counselling Team believe that the self care section of *Breaking Free* will become an essential resource for callers and community members as the collection continues to grow. As with all self help tools what is helpful for one person may not be for another so please experiment, explore and find what suits you.

Our readers find inspiration and comfort when we share stories from other survivors and supporters. We are interested in hearing from you in any format - stories/poems/artwork - to name a few. The preferred maximum word count for My Story submissions is 1000 words. However, we are flexible with this in the new online format. Please send to [newsletter@blueknot.org.au](mailto:newsletter@blueknot.org.au).

Warm Regards,  
Jane Macnaught | Editor

# Exploring Anchors

By Breaking Free editor Jane Macnaught

In this article we will consider the concept of anchors and their use as a self care practice. We will provide some ideas around finding your own anchors and explain how to use them.

“Painful feelings can be like a tidal wave; they rise up and bowl us over and carry us away often before we are aware of it...Developing a mental state of expansion, by stepping back and looking at the waves with curiosity, we can become like the sky, vast open spacious. And then we have created room for the waves no matter how turbulent they are. We can do this by keeping ourselves anchored.” p.92 The Reality Slap; Russ Harris

## Anchor found from memories

An anchor is a concrete observable resource which is usually drawn from your own life. Try to find your own anchor to create positive memories in both your mind and body. Your anchor may be a person, (grandmother, partner, teacher) or an animal/pet, a place, an object (boat, tree, stone) or even an activity.

*A suitable anchor gives you a feeling of relief (in body & emotion) and well-being.*

## Anchor found from supports

Support systems are important as they can help us overcome difficulties in life. How do you communicate your needs to get the help you need? What are some of the ways you can nurture and foster your support systems? Phone calls, postcard, text message, facebook message, share a photo, arrange to meet up, book an appointment – we all use different modes depending on the relationship.

Can you relate to the anchor... what anchors you? And where do you draw your strength from?

You might like to draw or write out your anchors. Think about new sources of anchors for yourself. Think about how to strengthen anchors which are weak. Perhaps you can write down the names of people in your support system and the specific ways they help/support you.

## Using the body as an ANCHOR

### **Drop an Anchor:-**

Take five to ten seconds to do the following:

Push your feet hard into the floor and straighten your spine. As you do this, take a slow, deep breath.

5. Look around and notice five things you can see.
4. Listen carefully and notice four things you can hear.
3. Touching - can you feel three things?
2. Becoming aware, can you smell two things?
1. And what one thing can you taste?

### **Notice where you are and what you are doing.**

When we use anchors consistently in our day to day life we usually feel more grounded and less overwhelmed. Please let us know how you found this article. We welcome any feedback on the articles in this newsletter.



# Legacy Of The Experiences Are Significant But Not Obvious

*This is written by a survivor of child sexual abuse who wishes to share his experiences with the broader community. The publication of this article represents a significant step in his personal redress journey.*

**Trigger warning: This article may contain content that may disturb some readers. If reading this story causes you distress and you need support, please call the Blue Knot Helpline on 1300 657 380 (9am-5pm AEST, 7 days). Calls that cannot be answered directly will be returned as soon as possible, so please leave a message with your phone number and state of residence. Also please tell us if it is okay for us to leave a message so you'll know when we call back.**

When I turned 12 in the mid 1970's I started attending a program of activities for Christian boys and young men in a church hall near where we lived in Sydney. \*\*

I remember the first night I went along to the church hall with my older brother. Later in the evening we played a game of hide and seek in the hall. I chose to hide under a table in the dimly lit kitchen. One of the leaders came into the kitchen and I crawled out from my hiding place when he spied me. He sat on a chair and pulled me onto his lap, put his arms around my stomach and said ...I'm so glad you're coming here. Is this your first time? You're going to like it I'm sure. I remember feeling confused by this interaction. I'm sure at one level I appreciated this man's friendly welcome to me as a new kid in the group, but I also felt uncomfortable with such an intimate display of affection from someone I hardly knew.

This man was not one of our regular group leaders but he held a senior leadership role in the church at a statewide level. He would visit our group from time to time and join in the evening's activities.

A few months after the incident in the kitchen this same leader established a pattern of behaviour where he would ask me to stay back at the end of the evening to help him with an unspecified chore. After everyone had left for the night he would take me to a carpeted area which was a kind of storage room. He would often tell me that I had been "naughty" earlier in the evening and would suggest that I needed to be punished in some way. I sometimes would say I haven't been naughty, have I? I was never sure how serious he was because he said it in a playful way - "Now you're gonna pay for your sins, boy".



I grew up in a family that was intimately involved in church life. I therefore had very limited exposure to what some might call "the sins of the world." I think this may partly explain why I did not understand the true nature of what was done to me in that musty storeroom in a church hall with this man who was a very senior youth leader.

I didn't tell anyone about it afterwards, because I didn't really know what it was or how to explain it and because I was worried that I was in trouble for something and I didn't want to get into any more trouble. I really think I just

stored the memory away somewhere and didn't think about it until recently.

As I remember it now, with my adult mind, I know that what was done to me, on several occasions, by that leader, was clearly a serious act of sexual assault, but carried out in a manner that left me feeling that it was some sort of game. I feel that the time has come to acknowledge the painful and unsavoury truth that one of the key youth church organisations did not provide a sufficiently safe and wholesome place for young boys to attend.

I regret to say that the particular leader mentioned above was not the only man to sexually assault me when I was 12. On one other occasion, another church leader, a veteran and senior official within the organisation at that time, also sexually assaulted me after creating a situation where I was alone with him. Many years later I learnt that this particular leader was known by others to be a paedophile, though I have no knowledge of whether there were ever any reports made to the police.



Sometimes it seems incredible to me that I did not understand the sexual nature of these assaults. I honestly don't think I even thought of them as assaults at all, yet I know that at a deeper level I was greatly traumatised by them. I remember coming home after each occasion and having a strong wish to hide somewhere. I would typically lock myself in the toilet or bathroom for a few minutes. I would always feel extremely tired in my head, and very fatigued in my body. I found I needed to tune out for a while. I also remember on these occasions experiencing a shivering in my body that felt like a release of stress. Later, I would go to the kitchen and seek out a favourite food, usually a bowl of ice cream. I had a great need for comfort and reassurance and would usually have a bath and go straight to bed.

The legacy of these experiences upon my life has been significant but not always obvious. By the time I reached adulthood I seemed quite unable to "grasp the nettle" in any area of my life. Throughout my 20's I struggled to complete an education program, develop relationships and find employment. I felt I carried an injury from my childhood, but despite seeking professional help, could not clearly recall the origin of this injury. I know that during this period I was often a source of considerable worry for both family and friends.

Shortly after I turned 31 I developed a number of debilitating physical symptoms that persisted for many years. These symptoms appeared to have no underlying medical cause, although one medical specialist suggested I suffered from "adrenal fatigue," a condition typically associated with chronic stress. I remember going through periods where I felt so bad I had to take time off work, on one occasion for more than a year.

The path to healing, both for myself and for the wider family of the church that I grew up in, is not entirely clear to me. I know that it begins with a painful and rather agonising encounter with the truth of what occurred. For me, this "encounter with the truth" began about 2 years ago, when quite spontaneously, the memories from childhood returned to my mind as if I had put them away in a drawer many years ago and forgotten I had put them there.

At first they were very upsetting and perplexing. I found I really needed to use my adult mind to try to make sense of all the things I had not properly understood as a child. It has been encouraging to notice a considerable improvement in my physical well being since I started working on these memories.

As I reflect upon my experiences I am reminded of the reasons why we acknowledge and seek to protect the innocence of children. I am painfully aware that, even as an older child, I was unable to understand many aspects of the adult world and could not therefore properly identify and protect myself from a sexual predator, especially one

who held a position of trust and authority in my community.

I recall the line from that well known hymn - Trust and obey, for there is no other way... and know that I did, like most children, trust and obey, but in doing so I fear that I co-operated, in some sense, with a terrible crime against my body and my soul.

The time has come for us to learn a better understanding of what it means, within a community of faith, to trust and obey those who guide us in that faith, especially our elders but also each other.

Peter

\*\* The Order of Knights known as the OKs, was an organisation in the Methodist Church that provided a program of activities for Christian boys and young men.

This article first appeared in INSIGHTS, the magazine of the Uniting Church of NSW & ACT <http://www.insights.uca.org.au/> 20 December, 2016

# Talking about Trauma: Guide to Everyday Conversations for the General Public

*Talking about trauma: guide to everyday conversations for the general public* has been researched and written by Blue Knot Foundation to help fill that gap. It provides a simple guide, in plain English, to support these critical conversations.

This [downloadable document](#) is a useful and timely resource for the broader community. As a member of our Blue Knot community we invite you to have a look at the paper and share the link in your circles so that we can play a part in creating a more trauma-informed society.

In recent years more and more members of the general public are becoming aware of the prevalence and effects of trauma. However, many people feel poorly equipped to have everyday conversations with people they know or suspect have actually experienced trauma.

Whether you are starting the conversation yourself (because you suspect a person is experiencing/has experienced trauma) or you are responding to a person telling you about their trauma. The document contains up to date information, evidence and tips to help manage the conversation challenges and minimise the risks.

As with everything Blue Knot Foundation in involved with we are guided by the trauma-informed principles. **Safety – Trustworthiness – Collaboration – Choice – Empowerment**

When we are starting to talk about trauma we need to base every conversation on these principles. Doing so is not only supportive, but will help make conversations less upsetting and distressing. In addition, as far as possible we need to be aware of the person's background, life choices, cultural, religious and gender orientations as well.

If we incorporate these principles as much as we can, and are sensitive to a person's life path, experience and background, this will make these conversations easier. We will be less likely to subject the person to additional trauma (re-traumatise), which can occur if we do not incorporate trauma-informed principles.

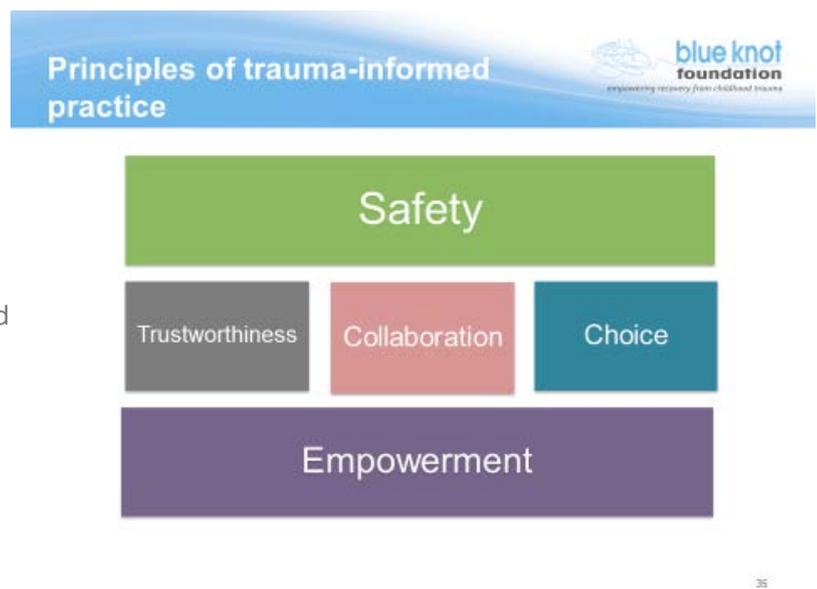
Applying trauma-informed principles is important whether we are starting the conversation or responding to one in which we know or suspect a person may be experiencing interpersonal trauma.

Within our guide *Talking about trauma* you will learn to look for ways to bring SAFETY, TRUSTWORTHINESS, CHOICE, COLLABORATION and EMPOWERMENT into all interactions and conversations.

For Example (extracted from the guide)

COLLABORATION MEANS:

- Doing something 'with' a person rather than doing something 'for' or 'to' a person
- Not assuming that the person can't act on their behalf or engage in decisions and actions which affect them
- Recognising when additional assistance may be necessary
- Recognising we engage more effectively with people when we cooperate with them



- Acting in a spirit of cooperation whenever and as much as we can

#### TOWARDS EMPOWERMENT:

- Understand that interpersonal trauma often stems from and fosters disempowerment, and that taking steps to feeling more empowered is essential to healing.
- Recognise that the way in which a conversation is arranged and conducted can contribute to a sense of empowerment.
- Recognise that trauma which occurs in relationships erodes self-esteem and a person's sense of their own abilities. It is important to identify ways to make your interactions respectful, democratic and inclusive.
- As far as possible, seek the person's preferences around the logistics of your conversation and try to meet them in a collaborative way.

The guide provides useful ideas when there are complexities around having a conversation with someone you know like a family member, a friend, a colleague. This also applies to conversations with people we don't know like friend of friends or distressed stranger. Core principles for conversations are covered in an easy-to-follow format. We hope this will become a well read and widely distributed document.

# SELF CARE RESOURCES

In this section, we will review self care/help resources our Blue Knot Helpline counselling team collects to share with people who call the Helpline. We are delighted to share these ideas with our Breaking Free readers. What is helpful for one person may not be right for someone else so please experiment, explore and find what suits you.

[App suggestion from Blue Knot Helpline](#)

## Smiling Mind App

*"It's like your own personal mindfulness coach wherever you go, just as long as you have your phone with you." - Lee from NSW*

***Recently Lee put up a comment on Blue Knot Facebook recommending the Smiling Mind App. We invited her to give us a review which is printed here below.***

"I was introduced to the Smiling Mind Application two years ago when I was beginning to learn about the importance of grounding and mindfulness as strategy tools to help me cope with my healing journey.

Initially these concepts were foreign to me and I had little faith they would help, but I was struggling a great deal to stay in the present moment. Intrusive thoughts and other symptoms from trauma that survivors experience make the task of embracing mindfulness practices difficult.

Desperate to improve my quality of life I decided to give this mindfulness app a try so I downloaded it to my phone and tablet and set a reminder on my phone to use it daily at a time that suited me.

After using this App I can't recommend it highly enough - it's amazing and it's free.

The scientific evidence base of mindfulness practice is explained as is the way in which regular practice can:

- help change our brain structure
- the way we think and;
- improve our quality of life

The following are some of Smiling Mind App best features:

- it caters for 7 year old children through to adults
- each age bracket has a number of modules and sessions with a variety of exercises
- the Adult section covers breathing, connection to body, sleep meditations, emotions, extended meditations and many more including activities for journaling and letter writing
- each session tells you how long it will take
- there are also 'bitesize' meditations of only 1-3 minutes
- there are sessions designed for classrooms and workplaces

The Smiling Mind App also allows me to see how the exercises are helping me. Each session starts with a self assessment rating in relation to happiness, contentment and alertness. I find this feature helpful as it provides

feedback and helps me work out which sessions are working best.

The dashboard section of the App also tracks which sessions and hours I have completed. The 'Favourites' icon allows me to download and save my favourite sessions so I can find them more quickly.

I try to use this App regularly even when I'm feeling Okay but especially when I'm running on adrenaline and my head is very busy and I need to slow my body and brain down.

I find it particularly useful at night when I'm having trouble sleeping. I plug in my earphones, set up the session I need and others in the house are not disturbed with noise. Sometimes when I'm really struggling I will do the breathing or body scan exercise 3 to 4 times and this is so easy to do.

It's like your own personal mindfulness coach wherever you go just as long as you have your phone with you.

So if you're struggling with mindfulness and not sure where to start give this App a try to help you with your healing journey."

Lee

*I would like readers to know that I have no connections to the developers nor has there been any incentive to provide a review on this App other than I really find it helpful.*

*Blue Knot Foundation makes every effort to provide readers of its website and newsletters with information which is accurate and helpful. It is not however a substitute for counselling or professional advice. While all attempts have been made to verify all information provided, Blue Knot Foundation cannot guarantee and does not assume any responsibility for currency, errors, omissions or contrary interpretation of the information provided.*

## An Infinite Mind

[www.aninfinitemind.com](http://www.aninfinitemind.com)

An Infinite Mind is a website developed to provide more accurate information on all dissociative disorders, but especially DID – Dissociative Identity Disorder. They aim to educate and advocate for people with DID; it is a volunteer run service, based in USA and many of the people involved are themselves survivors.



As the website states: "Far too often, people with dissociative identities are portrayed as crazy, or unstable. They have faced accusations of making up this disorder. The stigma associated with DID has led to countless men and women living with dissociative identities to hide their true, whole self in fear of the repercussions if they are found out."

It is important to note that dissociation itself does not always suggest a disorder. Everyone dissociates at some time; simply daydreaming, being absorbed in a book, and lost in music, or a movie is a form of dissociation. When dissociation interferes with everyday functioning it is often diagnosed as a disorder.

*Breaking Free* Editor: "I was really inspired reading the page devoted to survivors sharing how they are thriving, not just surviving with DID. There is another section with a comprehensive list of resources, books, website and references from a variety of sources, mainly based in USA however the content is relevant for many in our Blue Knot Community."

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## Tips for Safety & Empowerment whilst Surfing - eSafety

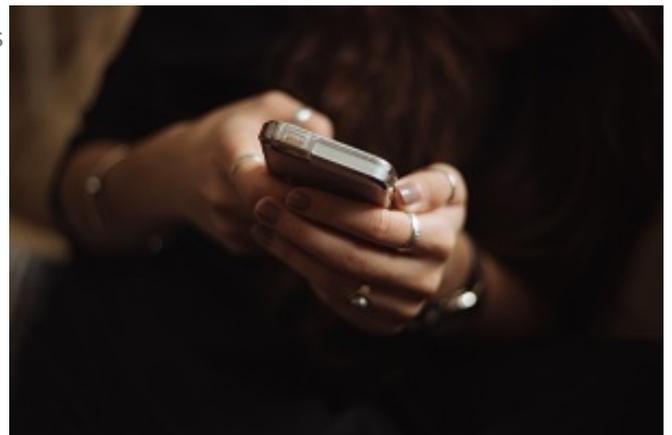
[www.eSafety.gov.au](http://www.eSafety.gov.au)

This new website created by the new Office of the Children's eSafety Commissioner, is committed to helping young people have safe, positive experiences online. There is also a comprehensive section designed to empower women to take control online. [www.eSafety.gov.au/women](http://www.eSafety.gov.au/women)

The information is detailed and presented in print and with video tutorials. Parents, adults, and anyone using the online environment will find excellent information and tools to make their world safer. I found some interesting new facts and here I am sharing just a few:

**Wi-Fi hotspots** are convenient, but they come with some risks to personal information and safety. Did you know it is easy to hack free Wi-Fi hotspots, giving hackers access your personal information, such as credit card and banking details, or allowing them to download malware onto your devices?

To stay safe you can learn more here: <https://www.esafety.gov.au/women/lifestyle/using-your-device/wifi-and-wifi-hotspots>



**Two Factor Identification** makes you more secure. You need something extra to access your accounts like having a finger print or a verification code sent to your phone account and this makes hacking much harder. Most banks insist on this kind of two step process however you can set this up in Google and many other platforms used regularly. For more information: <https://www.esafety.gov.au/full-screen-video?id=5070ad80-07b4-44f0-9d8b-97a40364dd9c>

**Location services** on devices allow apps to track users and tailor ads for their region, amongst other things. It is easy to turn location services off, but by doing this you might prevent some apps, like map-related apps, from working properly. It is recommended to review your settings regularly, especially the privacy and security settings, particularly after installing operating platform and app updates as sometimes location services are switched on during the update.

The advice is to turn location services off for all apps, and then turn them back on only for the apps that use it for legitimate functions. If you can't turn off the location function on an app, it may be better not to use that app. For more information: <https://www.esafety.gov.au/women/lifestyle/know-your-device/phones-and-tablets>

There are tours, checkups and workshops offered from the site. We think this is a great government initiative. Let us know if you find something particularly useful for you on this site.

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# IN THE NEWS

## STOP TREATING SOLUTIONS LIKE PROBLEMS — AN ACE'S INFORMED APPROACH TO SUBSTANCE ABUSE TREATMENT

"We treat people's solutions as problems." Vincent Felitti MD, eminent author of the original ACE's (Adverse Childhood Experiences) study, often makes this point when discussing how we focus on eliminating people's desperate means of coping, without recognizing their adaptive functions.

When addressing substance abuse (the most common method of tolerating overwhelming fear and pain) do we commit the same error of attempting to control the "solution" while largely ignoring the underlying core problems associated with traumatic exposures? For many people with struggling with addictions, substance abuse represents survival.

The linkage between ACE's and trauma and substance abuse disorders (SUD's) is compelling. In his paper, Origins of Addiction, Felitti reports that people who experience 4 or more ACE's are 500% more likely to abuse alcohol. People who report five ACE's or more are 7 to 10 times more likely to report illicit drug abuse. A jaw-dropping data point indicates that individuals who survive 6 or more ACE's are 46 times more likely to be IV drug abusers than people who report no ACE's. Trauma truly is the "gateway drug" to addictions.

Kanwarpal Dhaliwal and the youth at RYSE (Richmond Youth Services) have amplified the ACE's pyramid to include the toxic impacts of social conditions and local contexts such as poverty, racism and historical trauma. This expanded view helps us recognize that it's not just what has happened to you, but what environmental stressors and social conditions you inhabit.

Read full blog article at <http://www.acesconnection.com/blog/stop-treating-solutions-like-problems-an-ace-s-informed-approach-to-substance-abuse-treatment>

## TACKLING TRAUMA: THE PAIN BEHIND THE BLUE LINE

When we read about murders, horrific accidents or agonising stories of child abuse, the last people we tend to spare a thought for are the people behind the scenes.

Yet the police officers and lawyers dealing with trauma are never truly behind the scenes, they're the ones dealing with the aftermath -- or in some cases they're right in the firing line.

The recent Royal commission into child abuse and the Catholic church also uncovered the trauma experienced by lawyers representing survivors. Blue Knot Foundation is a national organisation that supports around five million adults survivors of childhood abuse.

They're trying to gain recognition for the legal and justice workers and to ensure they are 'trauma-informed', as so many people working in the child abuse area suffer from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) themselves.

Blue Knot Foundation has published a reference paper Trauma and the law applying trauma-informed practice to legal and judicial contexts.

Blue Knot president, Dr Cathy Kezelman told The Huffington Post Australia it's no secret that anyone dealing with traumatic material is at their own risk of experiencing secondary, or vicarious trauma.

Read full article at [http://www.huffingtonpost.com.au/2017/03/15/tackling-trauma-the-pain-behind-the-blue-line\\_a\\_21897190/?utm\\_hp\\_ref=au-homepage](http://www.huffingtonpost.com.au/2017/03/15/tackling-trauma-the-pain-behind-the-blue-line_a_21897190/?utm_hp_ref=au-homepage)

## JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES REFUSE TO CHANGE TWO-WITNESS RULE BECAUSE 'THAT'S OUR STAND'

Child sexual assault is a secret crime carried out by men and women who do everything they can to avoid detection.

Which is why one passage in the Bible is a Get Out of Jail Free card for offenders, particularly when adhered to so strictly by those within religious organisations.

Timothy 5:19: demands followers "do not entertain an accusation against an elder unless it is brought by two or three witnesses".

It's a message echoed in Matthew 18:16: that reads, among other things, "... at the mouth of two or three witnesses every matter may be established".

The two passages became the focus this week of a royal commission into institutional child sexual abuse within the Jehovah's Witness church in Australia, of which there are 65,000 followers.

Having adopted a number of recommendations in the name of greater transparency, there was only one thing the church refused to change: a 2000-year-old protocol requiring two witnesses before a child sexual assault allegation be investigated.

Before the commission, Jehovah's Witness spokesman Terrence O'Brien said the church "considered the implications of the finding" that the two-witness rule should be scrapped.

Read full article at <http://www.news.com.au/lifestyle/real-life/news-life/jehovahs-witnesses-refuse-to-change-two-witness-rule-because-thats-our-stand/news-story/ee1f5bdd2561d99f6d1f608f039ee200>

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