



Breaking Free

June 2017

From the Editor

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

Read about kindness, natural music, a special tribute, reading suggestions, apps and websites. Our feature article encourages readers to explore kindness and comfort as a way to increase self-compassion and self-care. We share our enthusiasm for “Kindness Cards” a small movement of goodness spreading across the nation.

Cathy Kezelman honours Anthony Foster with a heartfelt tribute to his humanity and achievements for our community.

Sonja shares her beautiful poem in the My Story section – we welcome submissions from our readers, stories/poems and your stories are gratefully accepted. We share an app that can be downloaded onto your device – the natural sounds recorded in various locations are extraordinary.

Blue Knot Helpline counsellors and a Blue Knot Helpline caller share their thoughts on Bessel van der Kolk’s book, whilst he continues to lead research at the Trauma Centre (USA).

Finally we are seeking your support as we raise funds to host the upcoming series of survivor workshops nationally.

If you have comments about what you have read in this issue or suggestions for future issues, please contact me at newsletter@blueknot.org.au.

Warm Regards,
Jane Macnaught | Editor

My Story – Seeking Kindness

By *Breaking Free* editor Jane Macnaught

When I experience kindness I feel so grateful. Small, simple acts can be unexpected, heart warming and show that someone cares – witnessing acts of kindness makes my heart sing. I invite you to consider where kindness exists in your world. This article discusses research on self-compassion and ideas on self-care, comfort and kindness.

“No act of kindness, however small, is ever wasted.” Aesop



Self-Compassion

What about offering yourself kindness - this can be as important as offering kindness to another person. Have you considered that having compassion for yourself might be as important as having compassion for others?

Being kind to yourself builds self-compassion and a sense of wellbeing, and it takes little effort. However it does require a shift in your focus. Consider treating yourself with the same kindness, caring, and compassion you would show a good friend — or perhaps even a stranger.

If you have been finding the idea of self-compassion, self-love, or self-kindness a struggle – and we all do at times – then, may I suggest you make a start.

Start In This Moment: Now

What could you do in this moment to make yourself more comfortable - attend to micro tasks: fluff your pillow/cushion, pop another one under your arm, place a warm rug on your lap, move the chair, stretch your arms, turn on some soothing music, dim the lights, and place one hand on your chest/heart space. Consider your hand as a 'healing hand'. As it rests on your chest you might like to notice your breath, perhaps this calms the mind for a few moments – spend a few minutes getting really comfortable. Could you prepare some comfort food – maybe a cup of tea, bowl of porridge, hot chocolate - what is your comfort snack? You might like to write a list of comforting foods and keep it handy for times when you might need a reminder to be kind to yourself.

How was this experience? If you were not able to join us in getting comfortable then I encourage you to set some moments aside later today and give it a try.

When we are consciously and mindfully making an effort to give comfort to ourselves we are being kind, it is an act of self-compassion and self-care and it may feel like self-love. These concepts overlap, and one way to build self-compassion is by starting with providing yourself kindness and comfort.

“...self-love transmutes self-hatred into mindfulness... and from mindfulness kindness flows.” Danielle LaPorte

“The nurturing quality of self-compassion allows us to flourish” says Kristin Neff, the pioneering self-compassion researcher, author and teacher. More information at: www.self-compassion.org.

Neff and her colleagues have conducted research over the past decade, the results show that “self-compassion is a powerful way to achieve emotional well-being and contentment in our lives, helping us avoid destructive patterns of fear, negativity, and isolation... The nurturing quality of self-compassion allows us to flourish, to appreciate the beauty and richness of life, even in hard times. When we soothe our agitated minds with self-compassion, we’re better able to notice what’s right as well as what’s wrong, so that we can orient ourselves toward that which gives us joy.”



An Island of Calm

"Self-compassion provides an island of calm, a refuge from the stormy seas of endless positive & negative self-judgment, so that we can finally stop asking, 'Am I as good as they are? Am I good enough?' By tapping into our inner wellsprings of kindness, acknowledging the shared nature of our imperfect human condition, we can start to feel more secure, accepted, and alive. It does take work to break the self-criticizing habits of a lifetime, but at the end of the day, you are only being asked to relax, allow life to be as it is, and open your heart to yourself. It's easier than you might think, and it could change your life."

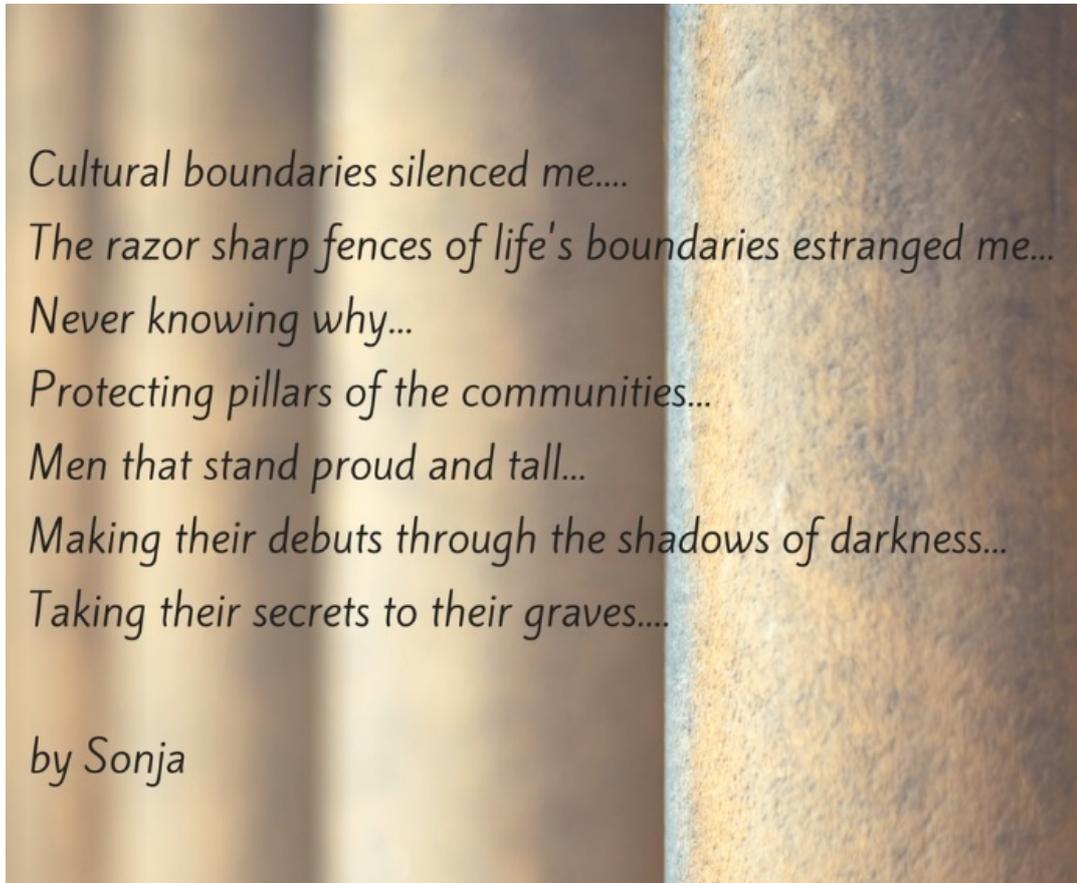
Kristin Neff

Read a full article by Kristin Neff about the benefits of self-kindness at: <http://www.yesmagazine.org/happiness/self-esteem-might-boost-our-egos-but-self-compassion-opens-our-hearts-20170404>

I hope you find the time to offer yourself more moments of comfort and thereby developing kindness, self-care, and self-compassion. Please let us know your thoughts on this and any articles in Breaking Free.

My Story – Cultural Boundaries

by Sonja



*Cultural boundaries silenced me....
The razor sharp fences of life's boundaries estranged me...
Never knowing why...
Protecting pillars of the communities...
Men that stand proud and tall...
Making their debuts through the shadows of darkness...
Taking their secrets to their graves....*

by Sonja

A tribute to Anthony Foster – a true champion of righteousness

By Dr Cathy Kezelman, Blue Knot president

The untimely death of Anthony Foster spurned an unprecedented national outpouring of tributes. The Victorian Premier, The Hon Daniel Andrews MP hosted a State funeral in recognition of the selfless contribution Anthony made, day in and day out, to make Australia a safer place for children.

Not often in life do everyday citizens inspire a nation. Anthony Foster was one such person. He and his wife,

Chrissie were steadfast and forthright champions for justice for victims of child sexual abuse for decades. It was not only what the Fosters achieved but the manner in which they went about it – with grace and dignity, driven by what is fair and right, with a voice of reason and integrity.

Chrissie and Anthony Foster did not choose to become champions for victims of child sexual abuse. The criminal acts, which shattered the sanctity of their family, their lives and those of their children mobilised them to excavate the truth. Anthony and Chrissie sought justice and redress initially for themselves but, over time, for countless others as well.

Remarkably Anthony and Chrissie's intense personal losses never compromised their humanity. They never demanded anything more of others than they modelled themselves. And that was to treat their fellow human beings with honesty, compassion and empathy, their own behaviour often contrasting starkly with those of the powerful institutional leaders with whom they crossed swords.

Anthony did not shy away from the tough battles. He repeatedly tackled bastions of power with honour and balance. Undeterred by the trappings of authority and hierarchy he challenged the highest echelons of one of the most powerful religious institutions in the world, that of the Catholic Church, to explain how innocent children could time and again be raped and brutalised within its walls. And how the structure, culture and moral compass of the Church had steered it to protect those who perpetrated crimes against children rather than the children themselves.

Where Anthony perceived wrongs, he challenged them, regardless of who perpetrated or enabled them. And he did so because they were wrong and because his own unwavering moral compass told him so. Anthony did so not only on a national scale, but also on the global stage, including at the heart of the Catholic Church, in the Vatican itself.

Anthony's moral outrage and focussed determination inspired many others to rise up alongside him and Chrissie. Whether it was in advocating for or informing the Victorian Parliamentary Inquiry into child sexual abuse or the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, Anthony was at the forefront of driving change for victims, for decades.

The toll on Anthony of this fight, and of the harm done to his family, by the original perpetrator and within systems of punitive blame, obfuscation, betrayal and denial was immeasurable. Anthony gave so much of himself. Chrissie and Anthony attended countless days of Royal Commission's public hearings, listening and hearing, supporting and comforting, understanding and learning. Anthony's commitment was staggering, and his personal sacrifice, immense.



SELF-CARE RESOURCES

In this section, we 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.

Website suggestion from Blue Knot Helpline

Kindness cards

Have you seen kindness cards? You can order some from the Wake Up Project – no cost. With a set of kindness cards you are encouraged and motivated to think about what you can do for another person (neighbour, colleague, stranger). Anonymously deliver on your act of kindness (flowers, card, coffee, etc.) and leave a kindness card on the person's doorstep/desk etc. The card asks them to 'pay it forward' and repeat the game with someone else.

If you are struggling to find kindness in your life you may enjoy some inspiration from stories and ideas at the website below, and order some cards whilst you are there.

<http://wakeupproject.com.au/kindness-cards/>



App suggestion from Blue Knot Helpline

Naturespace App

Nature recorded in 3D

The producers of this app have been recording nature in 3D for over 10 years, and the quality and variety of sounds, music and recordings in their free downloadable app are wonderful.

Why 3D matters? From their website...

“Of the five human senses, only your hearing can tell you what is going on behind you. Although we live in a world that strongly emphasizes vision, we rely on sound to tell us about our environment and to (help us) gauge whether we are safe or not. We listen, both consciously and subconsciously, to the everyday sonic landscape to determine the safety of our surroundings. In the same way that we can detect potential danger with our sense of hearing, we can also hear its absence: peace.”

The developers claim that by supplying your brain with extremely realistic, tranquil natural environmental sounds, free from the auditory chaos of urban life, you are more likely to feel relaxed.

“You do not need to "listen" to Naturespace (or apply any concentrated effort) to benefit from its effects - you simply need to hear it...

Because Naturespace sounds so real, your subconscious will respond with a feeling of relaxation regardless of whether you are paying attention to it or not. This frees up the creative parts of your brain, making Naturespace an amazing catalyst for creative and focused thought, all while easing mental tension. Spatially accurate outdoor sound can have a profound effect on one's state of mind. For many, it becomes an integral part of a daily routine and a dependable source of solace.”

<http://www.naturespace.org/about-naturespace>



What we found...

- A number of tracks are available in the free download. Alternatively you might like to explore the catalog to preview & download (for a small fee approx. \$1.49) a multitude of serene sounds recorded in nature. I was transported into a beautiful dreamlike state after a few minutes of relaxing to the “Infinite Shoreline” sounds of gently crashing waves and watery splashes and a gentle breeze.
- Try the “Natural White Noise” – useful when traffic or daytime sounds etc. need to be muffled. There are recordings of e.g. “Liquid Sunshine”, “Riverbank Trance” or “Soft Forest Rain”.
- There are sections for De-Stress & Relax, Focus & Clarity, Meditations, Ambience for Sleeping and much more where you can access single tracks or Discount packages.
- You can set the transitions Sleep Timer to play a track and then gently fade it out after a period of time or the Wake Timer will gently fade in a track that you choose to hear upon waking.
- If you think that some natural sounds could add more peace and calm to your day, give this app a go. Download by searching “Naturespace – Relax Meditate Focus Sleep”.



Book suggestion from Blue Knot Helpline

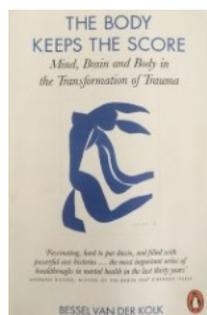
The Body Keeps the Score

Blue Knot Helpline telephone counsellors have a list of books to which they refer and sometimes suggest to callers. *The Body Keeps The Score - Mind, Brain and Body in The Transformation of Trauma* by Bessel van der Kolk is the one of the more frequently recommended books.

Why is this so?

Counsellors feel that many callers will benefit from reading in depth about the effects of trauma and pathways to recovery. van der Kolk is a great storyteller, and a compassionate thinker: the book is interesting to read and absolutely fascinating.

He is an active clinician, researcher and teacher in the area of complex posttraumatic stress and trauma and devotes much of his life to studying, writing and working with clients in the Trauma Centre in Boston USA.



van der Kolk integrates neuroscience with his clinical research and wisdom from other disciplines, to communicate and invoke greater understanding about the long-term effects of trauma for people who have experienced it.

This book was one of the first to transform our understanding of trauma and explains how childhood trauma shapes the wiring and structure of the brain. He explains how innovative treatment approaches including body work, neurofeedback, mindfulness techniques, play, yoga, EMDR and other therapies can help to reactivate the wiring. His research has shown many treatments can be effective in treating trauma in addition to talk therapies.

Helpline Caller Feedback:

One Blue Knot Helpline user contacted us recently to share her enthusiasm for *The Body Keeps The Score*. She is telling everyone she meets to read van der Kolk's book - friends, doctors, nurses... She believes this book is a "must read" providing a good, simple, clear understanding of what happens to people who experienced childhood trauma and now, like her, have complex PTSD or post traumatic stress. She likes the way the author links what he is finding in his research to real situations.

"It was so easy to read, I couldn't put the book down. But you don't need a degree to understand what he is saying. I never realized how the mind and the body are so connected – now I feel like I understand what is going on for me - I'm starting to piece it all together.

So when I get triggered, I now notice that I also feel it in my body – I wasn't aware of that before. I never realized stuff that happens is not just remembered in the brain, it is also remembered in the body."

Bessel van der Kolk has written several books and journal articles and you can find podcasts, recordings and videos on line with interviews and talks on this book and related topics: <http://www.traumacenter.org/>.

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.

Survivor Workshops - 2017 Appeal

Help us spread the word

During the month of June we are working towards raising \$48,000 to fund educational workshops for adult survivors of childhood trauma across Australia.

Thanks to the generosity of the community, we have been able to reach our goal for the past two years and deliver life affirming workshops to survivors throughout the country.



In 2017 the workshops remain unfunded and our aim right now is to secure funding for the Blue Knot Foundation Survivor Workshops to enable us to help adult survivors of childhood trauma in every state over the coming 12 months.

The support we received last year enabled us to run workshops that were described as “invaluable”, “a breath of fresh air”, and as supporting “a massive step of healing”...

“Today was brilliant. A massive step of healing taken. To be in a public space with this being talked about as if it were normal. I feel a bit more normal as a consequence. Because for so many of us these experiences have been our norm. It felt so good to finally fit in. My head has known there's many people out there like me. But to sit in a room with these people today, well, there's a little less shame now as I walk out.”

Donations make an enormous difference. Collectively every donation made during the Blue Knot Foundation End Of Year Appeal goes directly to the delivery of these workshops.

To support the program you can make a general donation, sponsor a survivor to attend or sponsor an entire workshop. To learn more, click here: <http://www.blueknot.org.au/Donate>

Please share with your networks.