



National Centre of Excellence
for Complex Trauma



Welcome to the September edition of Breaking Free

This month we publish the first part of our two-part series which looks at our sense of self, our identity and how we relate to other people and to the world around us.

Our Self Care article explores the Window of Tolerance, and the different states of arousal that can be experienced when we are outside of our window. If we learn to recognise the signs, we can engage strategies to help us return to our Window of Tolerance, the zone in which we function most effectively.

Guest contributor Bec Moran shares her findings from her study which looks at lessons learned from the Australian Child Abuse Royal Commission. Her interviews with survivors who made submissions to the Commission have provided valuable insight into how those participants felt, with many attesting that it was one of the most healing and meaningful experiences of their lives.

We are also pleased to announce tailored half-day Power, Threat, Meaning Workshops for survivors to be held in both Sydney Perth. These workshops will be delivered by Professor David Pilgrim free of charge for mental health consumers and survivors of complex trauma. Places are limited so we recommend booking now.

Blue Knot Day is on the 28th of October and there are lots of ways that you can get involved, share the message, and show your support. This year marks the 10th anniversary of Blue Knot Day, so we encourage you to be a part of this important milestone, and join us as we continue to "Untangle the Knot of Complex Trauma".

Until next time, if you have any comments about what you have read in this issue, contributions for the My Story section, or suggestions for future issues, please contact the editor at newsletter@blueknot.org.au

With warm regards,
The Blue Knot Team.



Identity and Belonging – Part 1

This is the first of a 2-part article which explores some common challenges many of us have, regardless of life's journey – our sense of self, our identity and how we relate to other people and to the world around us.

Feeling comfortable in our own skin and in our different communities can prove particularly challenging for people who as children, and, as adults, have experienced repeated abuse, violence and/or neglect, or been taken away from our home, family and place. If you sometimes feel like this, or even often, it can help to understand how different life experiences and circumstances can leave a person feeling ashamed and unworthy. In understanding more about how trauma can affect people, many survivors who have long lived blaming themselves for what happened to them, when they weren't to blame at all, can start to let go of their sense of self blame.

With the right information and support, we can become more patient with ourselves and show ourselves the compassion we needed and deserved as a child. This can help us learn to change the way we see ourselves and others, to feel safer in ourselves and with others, and to build relationships of trust over time. Let's think about children. Babies, children and young adults all depend on the people they are living with to help them feel safe and secure, nurtured and protected.

When this doesn't happen, and children aren't safe and don't feel safe, they put all the energy a child usually devotes towards learning and exploring to simply surviving (Perry, 2009). Depending on the ages and stages at which this happens, different parts of a child's development can be disrupted. This includes having a secure basis from which to develop a strong every-day sense of themselves and to learn how to build healthy connections with other people around them.

If this has happened to you and you face some of these challenges, this article and part 2 in the October newsletter might help you understand more about them, what you can do, and the support you might need to make positive change.

Identity and Our Sense of Self

As human beings, we have grappled with philosophical questions about identity for thousands of years. But there is more to identity than how we look and sound. Our identity has a lot to do with how we steer our way through the world. The debate over whether nature or

nurture determines who we become (a debate which is now more focussed on nature and nurture) can distract attention from the interaction of our biological make-up with our environment in the context of our relationships. That is, the processes of attachment and socialisation - how the world responds to us and how we respond to it - which play a big part in how we develop and grow.

As we grow up, regardless of our circumstances, different events and experiences shape and influence our core basic beliefs about:

- Ourselves
- Others
- The world

Our core beliefs then become a framework according to which we process our thoughts, feelings, emotions, and behaviours. They are the lens through which we see and interpret our world. We often hold on tightly to our core beliefs, even if they are upsetting, distressing, and even when they seem to others to be against our best interests.

The good news is that just as past events including traumatic experiences affect our core beliefs, so too new and different events and experiences can also affect them. Sometimes new experiences firm up our core beliefs, but at other times they might cause us to question them. In fact, when we experience more and more positive experiences, we might question our negative core beliefs so much that they may start to change.

From birth, experience actively shapes and formulates a child's developing self. This process involves complex interactions between the child and their family, all of which occur within their home, community, culture and society. A child's interactions with their caregivers, particularly their emotional interactions, plays a big role in this process. When the people who are caring for a child or with whom the child is living, are attuned to the child, they model how to relate in a healthy way. This forms a model for positive relationships for the child with themselves and others.

Other family or household challenges can also affect a child as they develop. When a caregiver has their own experiences of trauma and victimisation (Bromfield et al., 2010), they may continue to face major challenges in their own lives. This can affect their ability to meet their child's needs, particularly their emotional needs, and make it harder for them to connect securely with their infants or children. This in turn can affect the way a child attaches, bonds or connects to their caregiver and to others over time.

There is little doubt that emotional and physical security, consistent affection, validation, support and guidance help a child develop a sense of autonomy and set them on a healthy developmental path (Cozolino, 2012; Shonkoff, 2012).

Developing a Sense of Self and the Capacity for Healthy Relationships

A caregiver who responds sensitively to a child's feelings and needs helps equip the child to cope with life's challenges. Care-giving, like all relationships, cannot be perfect but it needs to be 'good enough'. But it is not all about what caregivers or parents do and don't do. Struggles with poverty, being socially isolated or not having stable housing (Bromfield et al., 2010) can further compound life's challenges for both the caregiver and their children.

People who have experienced single-incident trauma i.e. a one-off traumatic event - often say that they want to get back to the way they were before (i.e. with the sense of safety and wellbeing the trauma has eroded). This is very different from survivors of childhood trauma, who often have no sense of having ever functioned well and many of whom cannot recall ever having felt healthy or happy.

The good news is the people can and do heal from trauma, including childhood trauma. The process of building self-esteem and a stronger sense of self is a gradual one, but forms an important part of many people's healing journey. The fact is that the reality of having survived is testament to a person's strength and resilience. Recognising and acknowledging this core strength and building on it can develop through a range of practices. These include mindfulness, therapy/counselling, and support from family and friends. Safe relationships of trust, self-compassion and a range of different strategies and tools can help survivors understand how the trauma they experienced affected their body, mind, and emotions, and how these different parts of them did or didn't work together.

With support and processing, survivors can also understand how they coped and how they are coping now. This understanding can help survivors to recognise their triggers and reactions, that these are to be expected, but that it is possible to learn a range of skills to help manage them better. As safety builds, many survivors can start to challenge their negative core beliefs over time.

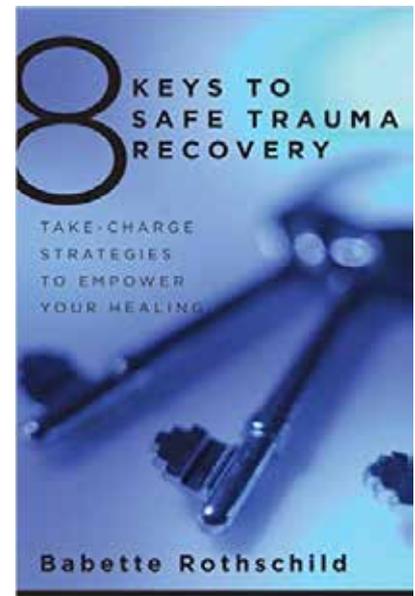
Part of this includes embracing a sense of hope and optimism, and the possibility of a life no longer overwhelmed by trauma and its impacts and reactions. It also includes a growing sense of themselves in the world and a new story for their life's journey; a story which can include trauma as part of life's journey.

*"Today you are you, that is truer than true.
There is no one alive who is youer than you."
-Dr. Seuss*

Book Recommendation

8 Keys to Safe Trauma Recovery – take charge strategies to empower your healing

by Babette Rothschild, 2010



Babette Rothschild is the author of 5 books, including the bestselling 'The Body Remembers'. She travels the world giving professional lectures, trainings and consultations. Babette is in Australia this month, many of the Blue Knot community – staff, trainers, counsellors are attending trainings delivered by her.

The 8 Keys to Safe Trauma Recovery is a very practical book, filled with common sense ideas steeped in clinically proven methods. Rothschild's approach is very much "try it and see if it works - if it doesn't then stop!" It isn't dogmatic or prescriptive but offers several key principles that can make the process of trauma recovery safe and effective. This is brief book and therefore accessible to a wide audience. It can be used as a self-help book to be used on your own, for people in counselling and therapists as well. The book directly targets safe, successful recovery in a way that compels and convinces the reader to give their 'keys' a try, as tools which can help them steer their own road to recovery.

In the introduction to each 'key' Rothschild invites readers to ask themselves: Does this concept 'make sense to you?' If so the reader should complete the exercises. If the concept described in the chapter makes no sense, - or the reader feels at all distressed Rothschild suggests to either simply read through the chapter, postpone further reading or skip to the next chapter.

QUOTES from the book:

"The best trauma recovery program for you will be the one that is tailored to your individual needs" p5

"Take care with what you say to yourself, as it actually affects you, particularly when it is about trauma. p59

8 Keys to Safe Trauma Recover can be purchased at Booktopia or Amazon.



Survivor Workshops

This full-day educational workshop, informed by current research, provides a safe space for people who have experienced abuse or trauma in childhood, to learn more about abuse and other traumas and how trauma experiences can affect people, at the time of the trauma, and afterwards.

It will raise awareness about survivors' strengths and resilience, the role of coping strategies, how the brain responds to stress, and, most importantly, research which shows that recovery is possible.

There are still places available for Survivor Workshops in the following cities:

Townsville	30 November 2019
Adelaide	29 February 2020
Launceston	14 March 2020
Canberra	23 May 2020
Darwin	20 June 2020

Go to <https://www.blueknot.org.au/Survivors/Support-through-connection/survivor-workshops> to book or call (02) 8920 3611

Sydney, Melbourne and Perth sessions are now full. Please email training@blueknot.org.au if you would like to be added to the waitlist.

BlueKnot Day



BLUEKNOTDAY

Monday 28th October 2019

Blue Knot Day is Blue Knot Foundation's national awareness day celebrated in October every year. On this day, we ask all Australians to unite in support of the 5 million Australian adult survivors of childhood trauma and abuse.

The tangled knot in the Blue Knot Day logo symbolizes the complexity of childhood trauma, with blue representing the colour of the sky and a clear blue sky providing the space for new possibilities.

Our 10th annual national Blue Knot Day, a day on which Blue Knot Foundation asks all Australians to unite in support of adult survivors of complex trauma is fast approaching. This year, to help raise awareness around the foundation and embody the theme "Untangle the Knot of Complex Trauma" we invite you to participate:

- By holding an event in your workplace or community
- Sharing through social media
- Purchasing Blue Knot Foundation merchandise
- Making a donation
- Fundraising on our behalf

Please go to <https://www.blueknot.org.au/BlueKnotDay> to find out more information on how you can get involved. We have developed a whole range of resources to make participating easy!

Sharing on social media is a great way to get involved and spread the word

In the lead up to Blue Knot Day on 28 Oct 2019, we're asking survivors, partners, friends and family, and interested community members to post a piece of blue sky. Each and every post will embody a sign of hope and the possibility of healing to those with complex trauma. In particular, people struggling in their daily lives may have a glimpse of a blue sky moment which may resonate with them, letting them know that they are not alone.

Follow the #BlueKnotDay and #EmpowermentRecoveryResilience hashtags



BLUEKNOTDAY

28 OCTOBER 2019

Please join us for an

Interfaith Service of Reflection

in support of Blue Knot Day, a national awareness day to 'untangle the knot of complex trauma'.

Together we will mourn with, and for, people who have been betrayed and wounded in childhood. We will name our hurts, hear a story of recovery, reflect in silence and with gentle music, pray for justice and healing.

Sunday 3 November

3:00pm – 4:00pm

Redfern Park, Chalmer Street, Redfern

The service will take place by the Park Café – the area will be marked with Blue Knot signage. In the event of rain, the service will take place in the function room above the café.

People of various faiths and spiritualities are welcome

More than 1 in 4 adult Australians are living with the impact of complex trauma – repeated interpersonal trauma, abuse, neglect or violence from childhood, adulthood or both.

Hosted by Blue Knot Foundation and South Sydney Uniting Church.



blueknot.org.au

#blueknotday

#EmpowermentRecoveryResilience

Understanding the Window of Tolerance

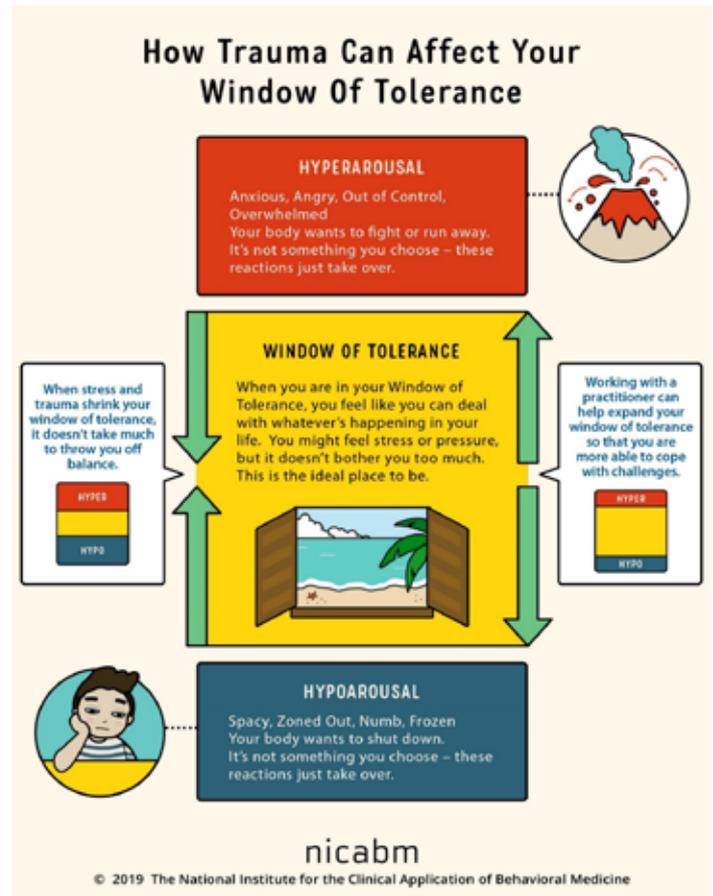
As human beings when we are under threat or perceive that we are under threat our innate physiological responses of: 'fight, flight and freeze' kick in. When you have previously experienced trauma, especially as a child, these habitual survival responses are often far more intense and more readily triggered.

The Window of Tolerance is the zone in which we can all function most effectively in every-day life. Being within our 'Window' enables us all to take effective action. It is here, where we feel capable, able to attend to the task at hand, and can interact meaningfully with others, while also attending to our own emotional state and needs. The Window of Tolerance allows for the ups and downs of emotions we all feel.

When we are outside of our Window of Tolerance, however, our nervous system is in survival mode – fight, flight or freeze. We can either feel overwhelmed and go into hyper-arousal or we can shut down and go into hypo-arousal. Our Window of Tolerance can be narrow or wide and is different for all people and at different times in our lives. When we have experienced trauma our Window of Tolerance often shrinks and is narrower. This means that we are less able to tolerate the ups and downs of emotions of life and can become more readily overwhelmed.

Understanding about the 'Window of Tolerance' (WOT) is a foundation of trauma work. The Window of Tolerance is an emotional, physical, and social state which we can all inhabit. We can all feel more grounded when we bring ourselves back into our Window of Tolerance when we are distressed or traumatised.

In these different states of arousal we can experience a range of feelings and changes including but not limited to: Hyper-arousal – tension, shaking, anger, racing thoughts, intrusive imagery. Hypo-arousal - numb, shut down, no energy, can't think, can't move.



It can be very helpful to recognise the signs, which tell us that we are outside of our Window of Tolerance, and to develop strategies to help us return to it. Different people find different strategies and resources helpful, so it is important to experiment and find what works for you. Our ability to regulate our emotions depends on our ability to be tuned into and aware of our levels of arousal. As we become more aware of our body and its reactions, and of our thoughts and emotions, we can learn to recognize when we are in our optimal zone of arousal or going into hyper or hypo-arousal. When we do, we can also learn how to respond to different levels of arousal. Over time we can learn to contain even intense emotional experiences without moving outside of our window of Tolerance.

Grounding skills are useful skills to help us return to within our window of Tolerance. These include breathing practices, orienting exercises, practices which connect you back into your body. To find out more go to <https://www.blueknot.org.au/Survivors/Self-care/grounding>



A Safe Place to Tell: Part 1

Hope, Trust, and Meaning

Lessons from the Australian Child Abuse Royal Commission

Rebecca J Moran, PhD Candidate, University of New South Wales School of Social Sciences

To protect their privacy and anonymity, all of the survivors whose words are provided below have been given a pseudonym.

As part of a PhD research project at University of New South Wales, Bec Moran interviewed 26 child sexual abuse survivors who made submissions to the Australian Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse (the Australian Royal Commission).

Many participants felt that their contact with the Australian Royal Commission was one of the most healing and meaningful experiences of their lives.

Larry describes what a private session meant for him: I felt a sense of relief that I had been here. I've told them my story, and they haven't dismissed me. They haven't said, "oh, that's not important, it wasn't terribly...you've wasted our time." I had the feeling that when I started to talk that they would say, "oh, ho-hum, that's not terribly bad. So what?" But the fact that they gave me credibility, they accepted what I was saying, and put value onto what I was saying, I thought was wonderful. And that sense of relief that, yes, all those things that I feel have been vindicated. That, in a sense, I don't need

to minimise this anymore. I can just let it be. I can just deal with it as it is.

Alison had a similar experience:

(The Commissioner) turned her chair towards me and just listened. She just looked at me and listened. And I wasn't interrupted and there was no objection and there was no, "Can we stop that there?" It was just these people who were part of our normal government system, and our normal judicial system, and who represent all of us, all of us in Australia, and who are doing this on behalf of the Australian government. It was like, I am sitting here and they are listening to me. They're listening to my story and they're acknowledging me. And I can't tell you, I just cannot tell you how, for me, what a pivotal moment that was. I felt like I could have worn a cloak out there that said "I matter" on the back of it.

However, other people had experiences that were disappointing, distressing, and for some, traumatic. Jay had hoped that the Australian Royal Commission was somewhere that she could finally be heard, but instead felt that she was dismissed as unimportant, and that her abuse experiences were minimised.

Because I feel that nobody has heard me. They've listened without hearing. They've heard it as sort of just waffle words. They don't hear it as anything important, or anything that they need to actually react to. And so, I am now investing enormous amounts of emotional energy into my latest attempt to tell.

Hope, trust, and meaning

Many survivors have historically been disbelieved, had their experiences of abuse minimised, and felt blamed for what happened to them.

A number of research participants said that they expected the Australian Royal Commission would be a relatively safe place to tell their stories, without exposing themselves to frightening legal consequences, or the aggressively sceptical responses they expected from the criminal justice system, institutions and their legal teams. Larry figured that speaking to the Australian Royal Commission might be difficult and exposing, but in his assessment it was 'safe enough', and worth the risk.

I knew that the Commission weren't going to attack me, but I knew that I was exposing myself and I felt a little bit vulnerable about that.

Claire said that she carefully considered what she knew about the Australian Royal Commission from the media coverage, and how this impacted on her decision to make a submission.

I think we found that watching the Royal Commission on the TV or reading it on the Internet, we found that they were really honest and really just upfront with what shame does to a person or why shame is part of trauma, and I feel like they were really brave at putting those messages out there because really you don't hear about trauma in the media a lot and I think we felt really - I guess maybe encouraged in a way to actually face it head on because the Royal Commission were being so brave really and so professional in the way they approached all of everything they did.

Jasmine, who knows that her perpetrators can still hurt her, valued the option of anonymity.

I think because my commission statement I had an option of being anonymous and sending it in, I had an option of giving information that was not necessarily going to damage me, but could kind of give a voice to some of the other kids that were involved that got hurt.

Like many survivors who have been told by perpetrators and others 'don't worry, you can trust me, you are safe here' only to discover that this is not true, Jasmine struggled to figure out whether the Australian Royal Commission really was safe for her, especially considering the links her main perpetrator had within government and law enforcement. Telling her story was very important to Jasmine, but also very difficult and frightening. Jasmine was fortunately well supported by a psychiatrist she trusts and spent time in a private hospital while she prepared for her submission, and afterwards while she recovered from the impact of stirring up memories and fear.

The decision whether to participate was often informed by the survivor's assessment of whether they will be safe enough, but also whether there is enough hope of a meaningful outcome - personally, and on the broader scale of systems change and better futures - to justify the personal cost.

History is littered with examples of public inquiries that did not lead to meaningful change. Survivors are drawn to participate for a mixture of personal reasons such as needing to be heard and believed, and social or political reasons such as wanting to contribute to a safer future for others. If an Inquiry asks survivors to commit to the personal costs of making a submission, it is important that the Inquiry does not let them down.

Many of the recommendations of the Australian Royal Commission have been or are being implemented by State and Federal governments, including changes to legislation, child safety, criminal justice, civil litigation and the National Redress Scheme. There is little doubt that this Inquiry led to meaningful change, although for many, that change has been too slow, too late and not comprehensive enough.

For further information about this study please email Rebecca at rebecca.moran@student.unsw.edu.au



The truth about childhood trauma: 'Healing takes years of work'

By Yasmine Noone

"Dealing with childhood trauma is not a matter of willpower."

By the time many of us reach our 70s, we're most likely to have accumulated a life full of social connections and homely objects.

But Bob, 72, doesn't have a wide network of friends, a mass of possessions, or a permanent home. He has spent the last 41 years of his life squatting, moving from place-to-place, sheltered by a tent.

Bob has resisted ever moving into a permanent home. Just like a free bird, being trapped inside a home makes him feel caged. He shares his struggles with the concept of home in the new series of *Struggle Street* on SBS. All he ever knew as a child was a mother who abandoned him.

"I was seven-years-old when I went in," Bob explains on *Struggle Street* season three. "My mother decided she would get rid of us. She packed all our gear (in the car)

one Saturday afternoon and said we are going on a long drive. Then she parked inside the car park inside the boy's home, grabbed me by the arm and said 'come on you little bastard' and dragged me.

"She knocked on the door (of the home) and (when someone answered, she) said 'I don't want him now. You can have him'. She handed the Salvation Army lady a note with my birth date on it and my name, and that's all. Then she left. She didn't even look back at me."

Childhood trauma: Don't kids 'just get over it'?

Although Bob was abandoned around 65 years ago, the scars of childhood trauma haven't faded into adulthood.

"Years ago, people used to think the brain was hardwired and there wasn't much you could do to change it," said

Dr Pam Stavropoulos, head of research at the Blue Knot Foundation, the National Centre of Excellence for Complex Trauma.

“They also thought that if something traumatic happened to a child, they would just forget about it and 10 to 15 years later they would be fine.

But we now know that is not the case. You will not just ‘get over it’.”

Dr Stavropoulos says current neuroscience recognises that the brain is plastic and can change if influenced by overwhelming stress – or trauma – in childhood. “The impact of trauma can also be life-long. An adverse child experience, whatever a child considers to be overwhelming, can be deeply damaging if it’s not resolved.”

Childhood trauma can be remembered in adulthood explicitly – through memories – and implicitly – through memories and by the behaviour of the body, when it associates a concept, object or sensory stimulation with a traumatic event. So even if you bury the memory into your subconscious, your body may still remember it.

This implicit memory can influence your life choices as an adult, if trauma is not treated. Dr Stavropoulos says it may cause you to duck for cover when you hear a car backfire because your body thinks it’s a gun going off, or perhaps the thought of moving into a ‘home’ may forever scare you.

“Dealing with childhood trauma is not a matter of willpower,” she says. “You can’t just make up your mind to get over it. Trauma needs to be addressed and if it isn’t, it will affect people long-term into adulthood physically emotionally and mentally.”

Trauma causes a long-term scar

According to the Blue Knot Foundation, one in four adult Australians experience trauma during childhood.

Wayne Williams, in his mid-50s, now lives with a scar of childhood trauma. He experienced sexual abuse at school from age 13 to 17.

“You’re just a kid,” Williams says. “You’ve got the pressure of growing up, doing well at school and peer pressure. On top of all of that, you’re dealing with trauma. A child’s brain is not fully developed to cope with everything that’s going on at that point. So I can see why people who experience childhood trauma go off the rails when they become adults.”

Williams didn’t talk about the abuse until he was in his mid-20s. “For a while there, I completely blocked it out. I suppressed (the trauma) as much as I possibly could. It’s probably only been in the last 10 years where I’ve gone and gotten professional help.”

Reflecting on his own traumatic youth, Williams challenges the phrase ‘they’re children: they’ll get over it’. “That statement denigrates what people who have experienced trauma have lived through.”

He says trauma is not something you can fix or get over. However, with the right support and treatment plan, it can heal. “Healing takes years and decades of work. But for me, there’s definitely a scar that needed to be healed. The thing is that it will always be there no matter what I do. Then, suddenly one day, there’ll be a trigger and it will pop up.

“But I now know to acknowledge it and then go on from there. My scar won’t continue to affect me for the rest of my life.”

If this article has raised an issue for you or you’re in need of support, call Lifeline on 13 11 14 or Blue Knot Helpline on 1300 657 380.

Season 3 of Struggle Street premieres Wednesday 9 October at 8.30pm on SBS. The four-part documentary series continues weekly on Wednesdays. Episodes will stream at SBS On Demand after broadcast.

Campaigner against child sex abuse
Manny Waks says many victims and
survivors struggle to get help.
CREDIT: PAT SCALA

Government urged to help victims of child abuse resolve trauma

BY DANA MCCAULEY
SEPTEMBER 2, 2019 — 12.00AM

A victim support group has urged governments to invest heavily in specialist services for child abuse survivors including better training for GPs, counsellors and therapists, estimating changes could save taxpayers billions of dollars.

In a submission to the federal government's Productivity Commission inquiry into the \$9 billion spent annually on mental health, the Blue Knot Foundation said a history of childhood trauma was "the single most significant predictor" of contact with the system.

"Adults who were traumatised as children often experience social, psychological, educational, employment and relationship impairments," its submission said. "They are more likely to enter the criminal justice, healthcare and welfare systems ... These have a significant cost to the individual, their families, communities and government."

Pegasus Economics calculated the higher incidence of obesity, alcoholism, depression, anxiety and attempted or completed suicide among the estimated 3.7 million Australian adults abused as children was costing taxpayers \$6.8 billion in state and federal government spending and

forgone tax revenue due to decreased earnings.

It recommended governments invest in specialist services for abuse survivors, including better training for GPs, counsellors and therapists, as well as helplines and online services. "Addressing child sexual, emotional and physical abuse alone could lead to a potential minimum gain of \$6.8 billion for the combined federal, state and territory government budgets," Pegasus said in a report accompanying Blue Knot's submission. "Active, timely and comprehensive intervention, with appropriate support, resources, services and treatment enables adult survivors to participate more fully and productively in the Australian community."

Manny Waks, an advocate for victims of child sexual abuse, said he only began to address his own trauma "in a serious way" after turning 40, having avoided therapy due to stigma.

"In a closed community like the ultra-Orthodox Jewish community, it is seen as meaning you are a weak person or crazy," he said. "For me it took a crisis situation where I realised I had to take action if I wanted to be able to not only address it, but survive it."

Mr Waks, who was sexually abused by a security guard at Melbourne's Yeshivah Centre in the 1980s and 1990s, said after reaching "the lowest point of despair" and becoming suicidal, he finally found the right therapist and now had strategies to keep himself well.

Pam Stavropoulos, a spokeswoman for the Blue Knot Foundation, said too many Australian survivors of abuse were sent away with a prescription for anti-depressants and weren't accessing treatment through a psychologist or trauma counsellor.

She said GPs, who were often "the first port of call", needed additional training to identify signs of childhood trauma, which could lead to depression, anxiety and addiction. Mental health services too often failed to "identify, acknowledge or appropriately address" the complex trauma that many patients were dealing with, she said.

Health Minister Greg Hunt acknowledged the issue in a speech at the National Press Club earlier this month when he said the "No.1 factor" in mental health problems among children was trauma, including from physical abuse.

Prime Minister Scott Morrison, who last year issued a national apology to victims and survivors of institutionalised child sexual abuse, has made reducing youth suicide a key focus of his government.

But Ms Stavropoulos said there was a long way to go before services met the needs of Australians dealing with childhood trauma. A "perception change" was needed to ensure that more people could access appropriate treatments.

Mr Waks said his GP had never picked up on his underlying trauma and when he initially saw a psychologist he was given "a clean bill of health" as he was so good at "pretending to be fine".

The royal commission into institutionalised child sexual abuse had demonstrated "how male victims in particular need significant encouragement to actually go out and seek help", he said.

If you are experiencing personal difficulties, please contact Lifeline on 13 11 14 or beyondblue on 1300 224 636.

Blue skies for abuse survivors

By Cathy Kezelman September 16, 2019

Blue Knot Day, organised by Blue Knot Foundation, is a national awareness day on October 28 showing support for adult survivors of complex trauma. Complex trauma is the exposure to repeated interpersonal trauma commonly from childhood but also adulthood with impacts that are cumulative.

Launched in 2009, this year will be the 10th anniversary of Blue Knot Day. The theme for Blue Knot Day 2019 is: Untangle the knot of complex trauma – empowerment, recovery and resilience.

The tangled knot in the Blue Knot logo symbolises the complexity of complex trauma, with blue representing the colour of the sky and a clear blue sky providing the space for new possibilities.

Blue Knot Foundation: The National Centre for Complex Trauma is Australia's leading national for-purpose organisation working to improve the lives of adults impacted by complex trauma. The foundation works to raise awareness and understanding of the long-term

impacts of complex trauma, to provide counselling and support to survivors and their loved ones, to educate the community, train professionals and offer services to empower recovery and build resilience.

Complex trauma

More than one in four Australians have experienced complex trauma – repeated ongoing interpersonal trauma and abuse, often from childhood, as an adult, or both.

Complex trauma is more common than single incident trauma and often has more damaging effects. It is costly for individuals, their families, their communities and their workplaces. The effects of complex trauma are often severe and persistent. They are compounded with subsequent traumas, causing cumulative effects.

A significant proportion of complex trauma incidence arises from childhood. When complex trauma arises from childhood it can be especially damaging. Because

it's often repeated and extreme and is perpetrated by trusted adults, and occurs when the brain is growing and developing, it can potentially affect every aspect of a person's functioning through childhood into adolescence and as an adult.

One in four adult Australians has experienced childhood trauma, which includes sexual, physical and emotional abuse, neglect, growing up with domestic violence, or with a parent or carer who has unresolved trauma such as a mental illness or an addiction. That's over five million adults in this country.

Complex trauma experienced during adulthood can occur as a result of a diversity of adverse experiences including domestic and family violence, refugee and war trauma.

Survivors of complex trauma can have challenges with feelings of shame, self-blame and guilt. Many struggle with low self-esteem and find it hard to feel safe, and to trust others. When they haven't received the right support, the effects of their trauma play out in their everyday interactions, at home, in the family and in the workplace. Many survivors struggle with relationships, with partners, within the family, with friends and at work. This can result in difficulties managing anger, aggression and conflict, or shutting down and withdrawing.

Complex trauma often affects mental health and wellbeing, with survivors experiencing high rates of anxiety, depression and other mental health issues. Physical health often suffers as well either because of the use of coping strategies such as smoking, physical inactivity, alcohol and drug use or because of the direct effect, especially of adverse childhood events on physical health.

Research shows it is possible to heal from even severe early trauma. And that when parents have worked through their trauma their children do better. However, to find a path to recovery people need the right support to embrace a sense of hope and optimism on their journey to recovery and building resilience.

How you can help

That's why Blue Knot Day is such an important day and why Blue Knot Foundation is seeking your support in spreading the message of hope and healing.

Dr Cathy Kezelman is President of Blue Knot Foundation.

Blue Knot Helpline 1300 657 380.

www.blueknot.org.au

Forty-five years jail for father who sexually abused daughter to the point she developed thousands of identities

BY MATT CONNELLAN

Richard Haynes will likely die in jail, after he was sentenced to 45 years prison in a Sydney court today

A 74-year-old man who raped and sexually abused his daughter in Sydney so horrendously she developed thousands of identities to cope with her father's actions has been sentenced to 45 years prison by a Sydney court.

Richard Haynes was extradited from the United Kingdom in February 2017 to face 25 of charges of rape, buggery and indecent assault against his daughter, Jeni, in the 1970s and 1980s.

She was aged between four and 11 at the time and was later diagnosed with dissociative identity disorder, previously known as multiple personality disorder.

Haynes, dressed in green, stared blankly at Judge Sarah

Huggett, as she read to the court the horrific details of his offences.

The court heard the offences started in 1974 when the family was living in the Sydney suburb of Greenacre.

They continued after the family had moved to Dulwich Hill, in Sydney's inner west.

Jeni Haynes was regularly, and often violently, sexually assaulted between the ages of 4 and 11, before the family moved back to the UK in April 1981.

She laughed and smiled with friends and supporters in the court before her father arrived.

Later, she sat just metres away from Haynes and wiped away tears as Judge Huggett spent 90 minutes detailing the 25 offences to which Haynes had pleaded guilty.



Jeni testified at a sentencing hearing earlier this year, saying she had developed dissociative identity disorder, and had around 2,500 different personalities.

The prosecutor said at the time that it was a “sophisticated coping mechanism”.

It was only after she had begun her testimony, that her father pleaded guilty.

Judge Huggett said the sentence took into account Haynes’s guilty plea, and his age and ill-health.

The sentence was backdated to 5 January 2017, with a non-parole period of 33 years.

Jeni Haynes arrives at Downing Centre District Court in May to deliver her victim impact statement. Picture: AAP Image/Bianca De MarchiSource: AAP

IN THE NEWS

‘Appalling’ rapist dad to die in jail

A woman who was sexually assaulted by her sadistic dad for seven years has stared him down as his horror crimes were laid bare.
Warning: confronting

GRAPHIC WARNING: This article discusses sexual assault and rape

A man who raped his daughter so sadistically that she developed 2500 personalities as a coping mechanism has been told he will die in prison.

Jeni Haynes put her hand over her mouth and let out a small cry inside the District Court in Sydney today as Judge Sarah Huggett sentenced her father Richard Haynes to 45 years in prison. He will not be eligible for parole until January 2050.

Haynes, 74, put his daughter Jeni through seven years of horrific abuse between the ages of four and 11, which left her body so badly damaged she lives with a colostomy bag, calcified ligaments in her jaw and will never be able to have children.

The now 49-year-old credits her multiple personalities with keeping her alive.

It took Judge Huggett more than an hour to run through the years of abuse Ms Haynes survived, the details of which were so horrific people in court were seen shaking their heads and dropping their face into their hands.

Judge Huggett described the abuse as “completely abhorrent and appalling”, “demeaning and cruel” and said all 25 offences to which Haynes pleaded guilty were “extremely grave”.

She told the court “no sentence can completely reflect the far-reaching impacts” of Haynes’ offending, admitting she was forced to put aside how she felt about the abuse as a “human being” to remain impartial as a judge.

Despite the “sad frequency” of rape cases seen by the courts, Judge Huggett said the level of Haynes’ abuse was “rare” and “horrendous”.

Referring to his age, Judge Huggett said it was likely Haynes “is not released from custody before he passes away”.

Speaking to news.com.au after the sentencing, Ms Haynes said the 45-year jail term was significant.

“It’s one year in jail for him for every year of my life he’s ruined,” she said.

“(Judge Huggett) could’ve sentenced him to life, which could be over in 15 years for him, but she deliberately said

45. I was expecting 25 so I got a bonus 20," Ms Haynes added with a laugh.

"I hope he goes back to his cell and cries his eyes out.

"My life begins today. She (the judge) has released me. I feel so relieved and a sense of freedom."

Ms Haynes deliberately sat in the front row at court today.

"I wanted him to understand that I'm not going away until I get justice," she told news.com.au.

"But of course he didn't look at me because he's a coward. I wanted to go up there and grab his face and say, 'Look at me you prick.'"

The court heard Haynes had been threatened "multiple times" in prison and spent significant time in his cell by himself, monitored by CCTV after he tried to take his life in 2017.

Earlier in court, the Crown said that should not affect his sentence.

"It's unsurprising given the offences he's been convicted of that he has not found fame with fellow inmates," the Crown said.

Judge Huggett told the court, after reading Haynes' psychological report, there was "nothing" in his personal history that "explained or mitigated" the seven years of abuse.

"The only available conclusion is he was sexually attracted to his young daughter and that he derived a perverted gratification from exerting complete power over his vulnerable daughter," she said.

Haynes wore a prison-green jumper today, leaning back in the dock, closing his eyes and staring at his hands while Judge Huggett ran through the damning evidence against him.

Ms Haynes sat in the front row of the court, surrounded by supporters and staring fiercely ahead.

The 49-year-old broke down a handful of times as Judge Huggett ran through the 25 charges in detail.

The court heard Ms Haynes would often pass out due to the violent nature of the sexual abuse, which started in 1974 when her father used the then four-year-old's hand puppet Sweep to muffle his daughter's screams and cries while raping her.

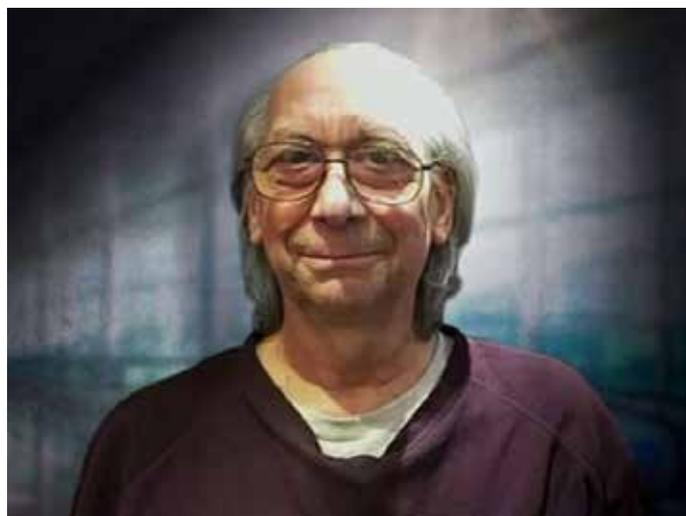
"You're a waste, a truly horrible creature, you should be glad I want to play with you. No one else does, get those pants off now," Haynes told her during one of her abuse ordeals.

Another time, when Ms Haynes was barely four years old and was forced to touch her father's penis, Haynes told her, "Only you can help me like this. You have a great touch, You don't want to hurt your mum or sister." The abuse continued until 1981, when Ms Haynes was 11, after which the family moved back to England.

From the time she was five years old, Haynes marked each of his daughter's birthdays with a sadistic "birthday ritual", where he forced her to "give birth" to a small, plastic Cupie doll.

In sentencing Haynes in Sydney's Downing Centre today, Judge Huggett lashed the 74-year-old for not immediately pleading guilty, forcing his daughter to take the stand.

Judge Huggett described it as a "distressing experience" and an "exacting process" for Ms Haynes.



The judge described Richard Haynes' abuse as 'completely abhorrent and appalling'. Source: Supplied

Haynes crumbled early in his trial, pleading guilty in March hours after he was faced with his daughter taking the stand and delivering her testimony in her many different personalities.

Haynes was extradited from the UK in February 2017 to face dozens of charges of rape, buggery and indecent assault against Ms Haynes in the 1970s and 1980s.

Ms Haynes developed more than 2500 personalities as a result of the trauma, using more than 30 of them in May to deliver her 17-page victim impact statement, which touched on the seven years of terror and horrific injuries she is forced to live with today.

Ms Haynes told reporters back in May that she had to do everything "not to slap the smirk off his face" after her 74-year-old father sat listening to her detail the damaging abuse with a slight smile on his face.

George Pell files appeal with High Court

Rohan Smith and AAP

Disgraced cardinal George Pell has filed papers to appeal his conviction for child sex offences to Australia's High Court. This is what he's arguing.

There has been an angry reaction to news that George Pell will appeal his child sex conviction to the High Court.

Lawyers for Cardinal Pell, who is now a convicted paedophile, are making a last-ditch bid for his release from jail after Victoria's Court of Appeal last month upheld his conviction for historical child sex offences.

The High Court on Tuesday received a special leave application from Pell, which is the first move in a lengthy appeal process and the 78-year-old's last chance to clear his name.

A 12-page document argues the two judges who upheld the conviction erred in their findings that the onus was on Pell's lawyers to prove the offending was impossible.

They also state that law changes relating to evidence since the crimes make it "more difficult to test allegations of sexual assault".

Pell was convicted in December for the rape of a 13-year-old choirboy and sexual assault of another at St Patrick's

Cathedral in Melbourne in 1996.

Last month the Court of Appeal upheld Pell's conviction by two votes to one.

He is now hoping the High Court will look at his case again.

Pell has always denied the abuse but was found guilty by a jury and jailed for six years and must spend at least three years and eight months behind bars before he's eligible for parole.

The High Court will consider the special leave application documents and permit or deny the motion, or may call on parties to hear more information.

The process can take up to six months and is sometimes completed behind closed doors.

If leave is granted, Pell will need to lodge a formal appeal.

Tuesday was the last day Pell was eligible to file his appeal. He did so just after 3.30pm.

One of Pell's victims died in 2014, aged 31, following a drug overdose.

Lawyers representing the father of Pell's deceased victim issued a statement this afternoon.

"Our client is beyond disappointed to hear that George Pell plans to take his legal fight to the High Court," Shine Lawyers' Lisa Flynn said.

"This painful period of his life is simply not coming to an end which continues to take a toll on his health.

"Every time Pell takes his legal fight to the next level our client is reminded of the disgusting abuse he inflicted on his son as a young choirboy.

"Hearing the news this afternoon has made him angry.

"He has no doubt George Pell sexually abused his son and that his son's sudden turmoil and devastation of his life was a direct result of the abuse he suffered inside Melbourne's St Patrick's Cathedral at the hands of George Pell.

"Although he knew this was a possibility, it is still very hard for him to take when his son's abuser was found guilty by a unanimous jury."

Pell was jailed for six years in March for historical sex offences during his time as Archbishop of Melbourne.

He was convicted of orally raping a 13-year-old choirboy in the sacristy at St Patrick's Cathedral and grabbing a 13-year-old choirboy's genitalia in a hallway at the same church two months later.

One of the two choirboys was a key prosecution witness. The other died of an overdose in 2014 at the age of 31 without ever complaining that he had been abused.

Outside court last month, survivors of sexual abuse celebrated the Court of Appeal's decision.

David Mulholland shed tears as he spoke of his gratitude for the two-out-of-three judges that upheld Pell's conviction.

"Ecstatic," he told news.com.au. "Finally the pious religious spirit has been seen through by the expert appeal judges. Bless them, I love them.



Abuse survivor Robert House reacts outside court. Picture: Julian Smith/AAPSource:AAP

"They saw through the lies."

Robert House, a survivor of sexual assault, said he was "exhilarated".

"It sets a standard for people who put themselves in positions of power and abuse that power by raping children. They'll get caught and they'll be put behind bars."

He said it was a "very, very special day" and that he would continue to fight as Pell prepared to take the matter to the High Court.

But Pell's lawyers had foreshadowed a further High Court appeal, saying they were "obviously disappointed with the decision".

"His legal team will thoroughly examine the judgment in order to determine a special leave application to the High Court," Pell's spokesman said, thanking his "many supporters" and maintaining his innocence.

Complex trauma must be prioritised

By Jerome Doraisamy on September 24, 2019

The federal government must ensure that a complex trauma strategy is a “pillar” of the nation’s mental health policy moving forward, says Blue Knot Foundation.

Speaking ahead of Mental Health Week (6-12 October) and the 10th anniversary of Blue Knot Day (Monday, 28 October), the foundation – which is Australia’s National Centre of Excellence for Complex Trauma – said Australia must respond to the public health crisis of complex trauma, with more than one in four adult Australians experiencing the cumulative impacts of complex trauma.

“Over 5 million adults in this country have experiences of complex trauma, which is repeated ongoing interpersonal trauma and abuse, often from childhood, as an adult, or both,” Blue Knot Foundation president Dr Cathy Kezelman said.

“With two-thirds of people presenting to public and private mental health services having experienced sexual and physical abuse, complex trauma must be identified, acknowledged and appropriately addressed.”

“Research establishes that it can significantly affect a person’s mental health and wellbeing, with survivors experiencing high rates of anxiety and depression and other mental health issues.”

Unless we properly address complex trauma now, Dr Kezelman continued, Australia will be having this same conversation in 10 years’ time and then again in another 10 years.

“We need to respond to this growing devastating public mental health issue and its human cost on individuals, families, communities and across generations,” she said.

Complex trauma includes child sexual, physical and emotional abuse; neglect; growing up with domestic violence; and growing up with a parent or carer who has their own unresolved trauma, such as with a mental illness or an addiction, the foundation said in a statement.

In adulthood, it can occur as a result of domestic and family violence and refugee and war trauma, it added.

“Research shows that it is possible to heal from even severe early trauma, and that when parents have worked through their trauma, their children do better. However, to find a path to recovery, people need the right support and to embrace a sense of hope and optimism on their journey to recovery and building resilience,” Dr Kezelman said.

“We hope to bring much needed attention to this important issue during Mental Health Week, help build the capacity of practitioners to respond, and call on the government to come to the table and prioritise complex trauma as part of a national mental health strategy.”



Marco Turner
Psychologist, Headspace
Attendee at PTM Workshop, Sydney 2019

Power, Threat, Meaning Workshops

Survivor workshops announced

These unique events will be delivered in Perth by Professor David Pilgrim straight from UK. David Pilgrim is Honorary Professor of Health and Social Policy, University of Liverpool and Visiting Professor of Clinical Psychology University of Southampton.

There are two versions of the workshop tailored according to whether you are a mental health consumer and/or survivor of complex trauma, or whether you work in the sector. Please choose the session most relevant to you.

PROFESSIONAL WORKSHOPS

This full day workshop is for those working in diverse professions across different sectors:

This workshop will introduce people to the Power Threat Meaning Framework, produced in the UK by a group of psychologists and service users from a strong evidence base drawn from research. The Framework offers an alternative to traditional psychiatric diagnosis. The Framework offers a way of exploring what has happened to people, how they responded and what meanings they attached to their life experiences. This workshop also attracts CPD points for practitioners.

This workshop will facilitate a group process for professionals to apply the framework to their own role and influence from a non-diagnostic approach inclusive of culturally specific perspectives and practices.

Learn more about Professional Workshops here: <https://www.blueknot.org.au/PTMworkshop/professional>

CONSUMER/SURVIVOR WORKSHOPS

This half-day workshop is for mental health consumers and/or survivors of complex trauma

The Power, Threat, Meaning Framework fosters respect for the many ways in which distress is experienced, expressed and healed across the globe. This can help people create more hopeful narratives about their lives and difficulties they have experienced. This is a workshop that acknowledges the power of lived experience, trauma and adversity whilst offering a framework for understanding self, healing and recovery.

If you are a mental health consumer or survivor who has already registered for the professional workshop please contact the Blue Knot Foundation on (02) 8920 3611 or admin@blueknot.org.au

If you are a professional please do not register for the consumer/survivor workshop, as places are limited. It is important that as many people with lived experience can benefit from this free event.

Learn more about Survivor PTM Workshops here: <https://www.blueknot.org.au/PTMworkshop/survivor>



Breaking Free is Blue Knot Foundation's monthly eNewsletter for survivors of childhood trauma, their supporters and community members. For feedback or to contribute, please email newsletter@blueknot.org.au or call (02) 8920 3611.



In-house Training for the second half of 2019

You can browse through our In-House training options for the second half of 2019 here. Please email trainingandservices@blueknot.org.au or call (02) 8920 3611 to find out more.

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