



National Centre of Excellence
for Complex Trauma



Welcome

The summer is over and Autumn has begun. As the days become shorter and the weather colder we take a look at some self-care measures that can be helpful and soothing when you might feel triggered.

In the March issue of Breaking Free, we take a look at how you can look after yourself when faced with traumatic and triggering media and social media, providing a few strategies that we hope will help.

The My Story section this month includes two beautiful poems by Bruce & John. Both poems share stories of strength and courage in facing fears.

We take a look back at the Power Threat Meaning Framework workshops which occurred in February and March with some glowing testimonials and a blog post from lead author Dr Lucy Johnstone explaining this conceptual alternative to psychiatric diagnosis.

In our Self Care section, we share with you some tips on using positive visualisation of places to “anchor” our thoughts and feelings and help us feel calm and safe.

We take a look this month at the Blue Knot Foundation Helpline which is a specialist service providing empathetic, informative and empowering support for adult survivors of childhood trauma and abuse. In this section, we hear some personal experiences of the Helpline and how it has helped many people through difficult times.

We also have a short review of Humanising Mental Health Care in Australia a book in which two Blue Knot Foundation staff members - Dr Cathy Kezelman AM and Pam Stavropoulos PhD - have each written a chapter. This book is a unique and innovative contribution to the healthcare literature that outlines the trauma-informed approaches necessary to reduce the risks of re-traumatisation in the healthcare system.

As always if you have 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

Warm Regards
Charly Binney



Coping with triggering media

Recently there has been a lot of graphic reporting and challenging speculation in the media about child abuse. Media about trauma can be extremely triggering and provoke a range of often intense emotions for survivors of childhood trauma. For people living with the impacts of their own abuse or trauma, it can bring ignite intrusive memories, further disturb often already disrupted sleep, and cause distress, anger and frustration. So we've put together a few tips for how to cope when you are faced with overwhelming media that might be triggering:

Limit your media intake

Whether it's social media or the news, staying away or taking a break from looking at potentially traumatic media can help minimise additional feelings of hopelessness, anxiety and depression. Clickbait news (new which depends on generating more clicks) can often mean that reports might be sensationalised, graphic or purposefully controversial. Often media and specifically social media can be victim blaming, denying and minimising of victim experiences, or even won't believe the victim. Commentators might agree or disagree with certain allegations which can be hard to hear and can leave you feeling upset, powerless and scared.

Therefore, taking a break can be a good idea if you are finding it all too much. You don't need to do a total media fast, but be more intentional about what media you consume - you could avoid media that you know covers triggering topics, or cut out just social media, or limit yourself to only media which you know makes you feel good (such as some of the blogs we have suggested in previous newsletters). This can protect you from the constant bombardment of triggering headlines and graphic content that might make you feel worse.

Ground yourself in the moment

When you do read a sentence or see an image that you find triggering, try to remind yourself that you're in a safe place now and that although the memories you might be experiencing are painful and scary, they are memories of something which happened previously and so aren't dangerous. Focus on something real and tangible to bring you back to reality. Taking deep slow breaths, getting up, walking around and away from the newspaper/magazine/phone/computer and bringing your mind back to the here and now can help prevent a spiral. Remind yourself that they are in the past and try to separate your own experiences from the stories you are reading. You may have your own grounding techniques which you have found useful. [Click here to read more](#)

Lean on your support system

If you have a support system who know about your trauma, talk to them, share how you are feeling and let them be there for you. It is important not to isolate yourself. If you're feeling emotional, take some time out to call a friend or family for a chat. If talking is really difficult, write down how you're feeling - you can send it to someone or just keep it for yourself as a cathartic exercise.

If you would like to speak to someone impartial or don't have people who know about your abuse or trauma, or who you trust, you can reach out to the Blue Knot Helpline on 1300 657 380. The Helpline operates 9-5 Mon-Sun. The main thing is for you to feel and be safe. If you need crisis support you can call LIFELINE on 13 11 14 twenty-four hours a day.

Spend time on self-care and be kind to yourself

Being confronted with triggering media can make you feel overwhelmingly sad and distressed - one way to bring yourself back from this is to focus on caring for yourself. This can be challenging for survivors but perhaps you can start with something simple such as getting plenty of rest and exercise and eating regular meals. Whatever you have found in the past as part of your normal routine, can be a good place to start, so if you can maintain that routine, despite the media, it can be helpful.

It is important to try to do whatever you find soothing relax, whatever that might be for you - yoga, meditation, spending time with friends, taking a bath, listening to music, walking in nature. Reading anything specifically focussed on recovery from trauma can also be helpful - why not try some of the books/podcasts/blogs we've suggested previously or look online [here](#)

Blue Knot Foundation's fact sheets for survivors and family/friends of survivors may also be useful.

Essentially, you need to take time and be kind to yourself - try to accept where you are at in your recovery and be compassionate to yourself.

Seek professional help if you need it

If you are feeling triggered it can be a good idea to seek professional help in the form of a therapist or counsellor as speaking with them may help you understand your strong emotions and manage them better. Additionally, speaking with a counsellor on the Blue Knot Helpline could also help you in the moment, and support you to identify what else you might be able to do.

Above all, it is important to know that your experiences, reactions and emotions are valid for you, and that help is available if you need it.

Blue Knot has also developed a Talking about Trauma publication which can help guide conversations about trauma

Additionally, there are some fact sheets available to support trauma conversations with family members, friends and colleagues



Am I ready to face this?



Am I ready to face this?

I am ready to face this
Why should I be silent?
I have done no wrong
It was you who clothed me in your filthiness
Not I you
Even so, it grew in me as if it was mine
Today I give all of it back to all of you
None of you will have the strength to resist me
Because today I have the courage and its
corresponding strength
Today is the day
Because truth and justice are with me
As is God

By Bruce

Blue Knot Foundation and hundreds of participants looked beyond diagnosis to help them understand mental distress. We take a look at what they thought...

Blue Knot Foundation was proud to host a series of workshops to introduce the Power Threat Meaning Framework and its new conceptualisation for mental distress recently in Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane. The workshops were presented by lead author Dr. Lucy Johnstone and author Prof John Cromby. Other workshops were hosted in Adelaide by ISPS.

These events launching the Framework in Australia were a big success. Here's what a few participants said on Twitter about the workshops.

Lucy Johnstone #FBPE Retweeted



Dr Steve Mayers @stevenmayers · Feb 25

Excited to be here today with @ClinpsychLucy and John Cromby #PTMFramework



1 retweet 11 likes



Katie Wales @ulyssesblue1 · Feb 28

Replying to @ClinpsychLucy @BlueKnotOrg

Thanks to Lucy and John for a brilliant PTMF event in Brisbane today. Bringing some sanity into our diagnosis oriented world!

1 retweet 4 likes

Lucy Johnstone #FBPE Retweeted



Sarah Sutton @sarahsuttonpsyc · 17h

Such a thought provoking & energising day considering alternative models of care. My brothers have been highly medicated for yrs and still experience 'symptoms'. Time to try something new #ptmframework @ClinpsychLucy @franklindbirtle @AilsaRayner @StephenWadeMLC @PMalinauskasMP



Monya M @MonyaMmys

#PTMFramework

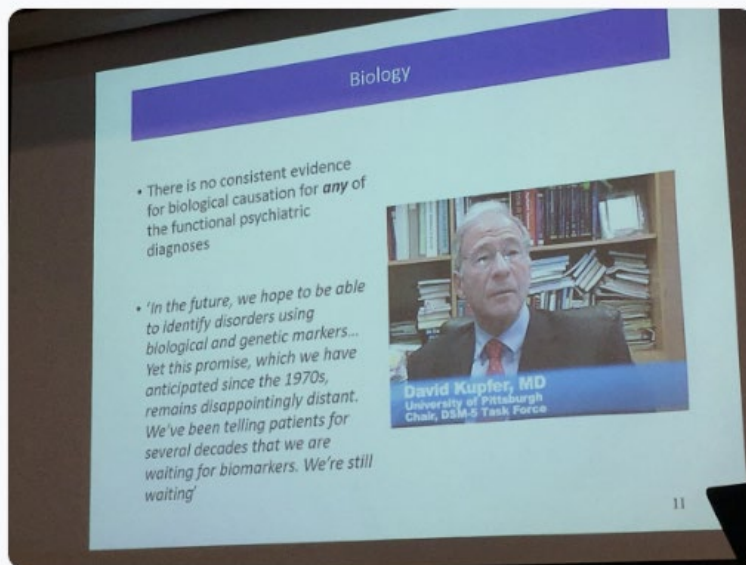
Questions to bear in mind ... for NZ and Australia --
Inspiring, thought provoking presentation & important conversation #Mhealth #SocialChange #TraumaInformed

6 16



Indigo Daya @IndigoDaya · 2h

Thrilled to be at the #PTMframework training in Melbourne! Putting psychiatric diagnoses where they deserve to be, in the embarrassing medical mistakes of history @ClinpsychLucy @BlueKnotOrg



3 10

Some testimonials from attendees below:

"This was one of the most inspiring and great training I have attended in a long time. It feels like it's the next step to TICP (Trauma-Informed Care and Practice). We need the framework for Victoria/Australia!" Sabin Fernbacher, Consultant

The PTMF is the most exciting development in the health sector for many years & this training introduced it in a clear, concise manner and with humility. I left the training inspired both by the material and by the ideas generated among the audience. Thank you to the presenters and to Blue Knot for the prescience to bring this to Australia." Dr. Rosie Saxton, Mental Health GP

"I really enjoyed the training. It was rich in content. Very worthwhile experiencing. It validates the approach we use in my organisation and the learning and resources I received will further enhance the work we do." Eileen Carison, Director of Counselling, Open Doors

"I was totally amazed that the framework is what social work has been applying in the mental health arena and often not a validated methodology. So inspiring to see psychology recognizing this empowering framework." Jeanette Lloyd clinical social worker

"Thank you, thank you, thank you. I feel validated. As a counsellor, I work within a framework that I now can identify or give it a name. My motto for my business is "Everyone has a story to tell" and work with my clients from this perspective. I believe that this Framework is validating and really incorporates respect and the value of the lived experience and how this relates and the overall impact of these experiences and how we adapt to survive rather than the thrive. Once again thank you." Bettina Revens - Counsellor Sonder Counselling Services

We recorded a few video testimonials in Sydney too. Here's one from Marco Turner, Clinical Psychologist at Headspace...

And a photo from the PTM Workshop in Brisbane of Lucy and John with Blue Knot Foundation's President Dr. Cathy Kezelman AM



If you attended the workshops, use #PTMFramework on Social Media to share your thoughts and see what others thought too.

If you didn't make it to the workshops we can help. You can download or purchase a copy of the Power Threat Meaning Framework Overview document [here](#)

We will notify you of any additional resources and developments in upcoming newsletters and on our website.

Additionally, Blue Knot Foundation's trauma-informed training in the second half of the year will incorporate some of the principles of the Power Threat Meaning Framework.

If you or your organisation are looking for staff training, please email trainingandservices@blueknot.org.au or call (02) 8920-3611 and ask to speak with a member of the training team.



Never Let Go

I've got this feeling deep inside
And I wonder how I will survive
I must go on, fate is on my side
Hold on tight for an emotional ride

Feeling down, feeling low
Sometimes I just want to let go
But I know there's an angel watching over us all
I'm not afraid to reach out when I fall

When I'm feeling lonely and I want to hide
I find an inner strength, perhaps its pride
And I will always fight... I will decide
And I will walk, with a steady stride

Feeling down, feeling low
Sometimes I just want to let go
But I know there's an angel watching over us all
I'm not afraid to reach out when I fall

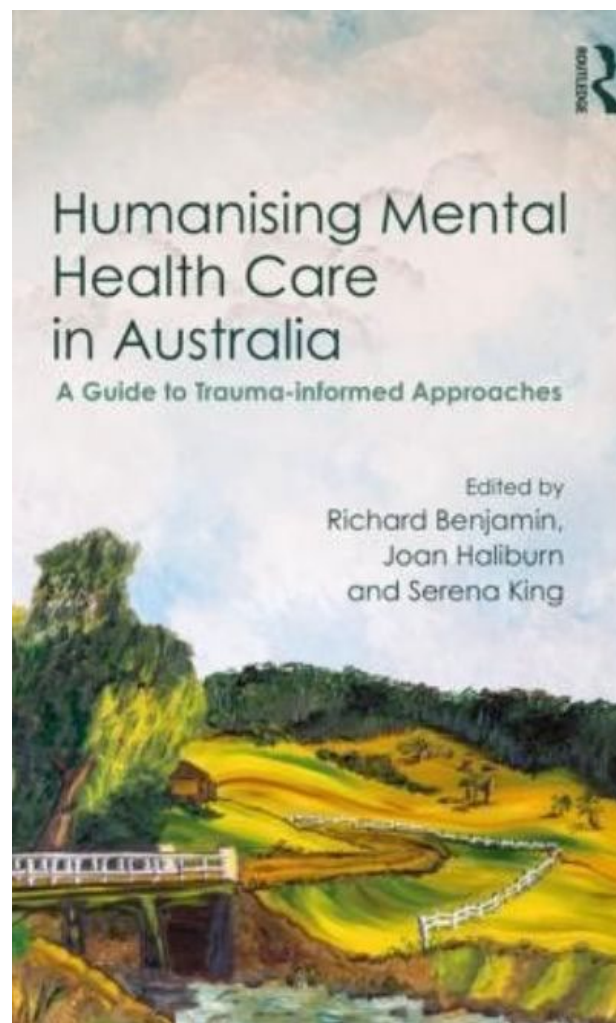
I will not give in its not my style
Now look in the mirror, see a smile
I will march forth along the road ahead
And I will take the falls and rise again instead

Feeling down, feeling low
Sometimes I just want to let go
But I know there's an angel watching over us all
I'm not afraid to reach out when I fall

By John TC

Humanising Mental Health Care in Australia: A Guide to Trauma-informed Approaches

Edited by Richard Benjamin,
Joan Haliburn and Serena King



Humanising Mental Health Care in Australia is a unique and innovative contribution to the healthcare literature that outlines the trauma-informed approaches necessary to provide a more compassionate model of care for those who suffer with mental illness. The impact of abuse and trauma is frequently overlooked in this population, to the detriment of both individual and society. This work highlights the importance of recognising such a history and responding humanely.

The book explores the trauma-informed perspective across four sections. The first outlines theory, constructs and effects of abuse and trauma. The second section addresses the effects of abuse and trauma on specific populations. The third section outlines a diverse range of individual treatment approaches. The final section takes a broader perspective, examining the importance of culture and training as well as the organisation and delivery of services.

Written in an accessible style by a diverse group of national and international experts, Humanising Mental Health Care in Australia is an invaluable resource for mental health clinicians, the community managed and primary health sectors, policymakers and researchers, and will be a helpful reference for people who have experienced trauma and those who care for them.

President of Blue Knot Foundation Cathy Kezelman and Head of Research Pam Stavropoulos have both contributed chapters to this trauma-informed book written by a diverse group of national and international experts. This book was recently released in Australia and is available for purchase from Blue Knot Foundation here.



The Blue Knot Helpline - we're here to help

1300 657 380 or helpline@blueknot.org.au

The Blue Knot Helpline is a specialist service. Between 9 am and 5 pm Monday to Sunday AEST our counsellors are on hand to provide empathetic, informative and empowering support for adult survivors of childhood trauma and abuse.

Our counsellors are here to listen and support you. They understand that everyone's experience of trauma is different and so everyone has different needs. Therefore, when you call the Helpline, you have a counsellor on the line who is solely focused on you and your needs.

Our specialist trauma counsellors provide short-term counselling support, information, referrals for ongoing support and support with redress applications.

On the Helpline, we support adult survivors of childhood trauma and abuse, parents, partners, family and friends as well as the professionals who work with them.

For more information on the Helpline services, please visit our website.

We understand that calling a Helpline can sometimes feel daunting and takes a lot of courage. So we wanted to share with you some feedback from callers

to the Helpline to instil a sense of hope that helpful support is available.

Every day we receive heart-warming messages from callers to our Helpline. They speak about how they have felt safe, heard, listened to and supported. And how the Blue Knot Helpline has taken them a step closer to recovery. We have compiled a few comments from survivors below...

"To anyone experiencing trauma, this Helpline will be the exact comfort you need. After both abuse and trauma, it is normal for us to be confused around what we are needing. This helpline and the counsellors on the other side will allow a safe place for you to explore what you're needing and to have those needs be met. The abuse that results in trauma will inevitably encompass a sense perhaps of a state of shame... which is a terrible feeling to carry. This fact can make it difficult initially to speak to anyone... but the trauma-informed lovely team on this Helpline, they know this. Understanding and empathy will be conveyed (this is the elixir to shame. I have faith in you, gently reach out." Anonymous

"The person (counsellor) on the phone was empathetic and I felt safe. They helped me find a professional who would and did help me. Thank you, I am so grateful." Anonymous

"The telephone counselling service is excellent with very caring counsellors." Anonymous

"Thank you very much for the 2 calls I did receive, I'm on the right track, I understand it will take a long time to put all my practices in place, everything the lady taught me makes so much sense, I just want to say thank you so much for helping me to understand myself more." Vicki Turner

"Blue Knot is awesome. The counselling phone service is very supportive and helpful. We need more organisations like this not only to assist victims of childhood trauma, abuse and neglect yet also for vital education on these topics. If you're thinking of contacting Blue Knot just do it and do it now. This could be a life changing step for you." Kylie

Whether it is about finding the right practitioner, seeking support with redress applications or short term counselling support – we can help.

For support, you can call the Blue Knot Helpline at 1300-657-380 (Mon-Sun, 9AM - 5PM AEST). If you are distressed, in crisis or in immediate need of support please call Lifeline on 13 11 14. Call 000 (Emergency Services) if life is in danger.

Grounding ourselves with anchors

All of us need to take time out from stressful situations. If you have experienced childhood trauma this is particularly important as triggers are not uncommon, and can often make it difficult to regulate your levels of arousal, and your emotions.

The place where we feel okay is the Window of Tolerance. This is the arousal zone in which we can tolerate our feelings. Trauma survivors often have a small Window of Tolerance. This is because your brain is primed to threat and prepared to react to danger. As a trauma survivor, you may feel easily overwhelmed and triggered. Little things can set you off.

While sometimes this can't be helped because it's a biological reaction, it is possible to develop strategies over time to try to manage triggers, mediate your levels of arousal and return to your Window of Tolerance. One method of doing this is through the use of anchors.

Just as an anchor of a boat stops the boat being washed away with the currents – positive images of places can “anchor” our thoughts and feelings. These act as a link to an emotional state - a reminder or a trigger that can bring us back to the Window and restore the balance in our emotions.

You can imagine a place you have been, or places to which you would like to go. The place just needs to be somewhere you feel calm and safe - somewhere you feel at peace.

You could try to remember a part of your house, a favourite coffee shop, a park, a friend's house or even a hospital or health centre. Or you could imagine a place that you have seen in a magazine, book, TV or movie. As you imagine this place, use your senses and immerse yourself in it.

Imagine:

- What it looks like, things you'd see there
- Any sounds you'd hear there
- Any textures, things you'd touch there
- Any smells
- Any tastes
- How does it feel being there?
- What do you really like about it?

Notice how your body feels as you think about this place.

You can think of this place when you feel you are leaving your Window of Tolerance to help you feel calm again. You might feel helpful to use this when you are triggered by media - something we discuss in this newsletter.

For further information on this, and other methods of self-care, please visit the Blue Knot Foundation website.

Self Care Resources Disclaimer

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.



Comment: Why history has left survivors sceptical of the Vatican's child protection summit

The Catholic Church is in the middle of a 'global crisis related to child sexual abuse' says Dr Cathy Kezelman AM, President of trauma support group, Blue Knot Foundation.

As senior figures in the Catholic Church from around the world gather at the Vatican for a four-day summit on the clerical sexual abuse of children, the move by Pope Francis is to be welcomed. So are the expressed daily themes around issues of responsibility, accountability and transparency, if they are to be enacted.

However many survivors are sceptical. Will it be just talks, internal deliberations and more survivors bearing their horrors, to those, who often until now have failed to listen, hear or do anything? The human cost has been immeasurable. Countless children have been betrayed, sexually, physically, emotionally and spiritually. Their innocence has been

violated, their ability to trust obliterated. Many have struggled their whole lives to find a life worth living, one with meaning, health and purpose. Many have been lost to suicide.

In seeking justice, support, empathy and understanding, countless thousands of victims of Catholic Church abuse have been disbelieved, shamed, and repeatedly traumatised in the process of speaking out, seeking redress and acknowledgement of the crimes perpetrated against them.

This must stop now. It should have stopped long ago.

There is indeed a global crisis in the Church related to child sexual abuse. But more than that there is a human and spiritual crisis, compounded through an ongoing systemic entrenched lack of responsibility, accountability and transparency. The recent Vatican defrocking of former

American cardinal, Theodore McCarrick is but one step. It is symbolic of actions which need to be taken, in a system which needs a philosophical cultural paradigm shift. Notably, that action was itself delayed.

Once again, we will hear the testimony of survivors, who have many times told their stories to priests and bishops and cardinals, often to no avail, or even worse, resulting in moving the alleged perpetrators around, often enabling more crimes to be perpetrated.

The Church can no longer remain closed to scrutiny, accountable only to itself, ruled by laws which protect it and its hierarchy while turning the other cheek to the cries of those repeatedly harmed within its walls.

From this summit, survivors need to see a roadmap for change which maps out systemic cultural changes within the Church structure, governance and processes.

Survivors need to know and see that no more children will be harmed. No more victims will be shamed, blamed and punished. No more survivors will be victimised for speaking out. No more priests and clergy will be protected.

Many survivors have waited decades for real change that goes beyond just words. One summit cannot turn an entrenched system around. There needs to be courageous leadership, from the top, which drives zero tolerance to the crime of child sexual abuse.

In Australia, Catholic Church victims were significantly overrepresented in the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual abuse. Multiple recommendations were made specifically to the Catholic Church – will they feature in this summit or is this an internal process once again?

The recommendations include but are not limited to the following:

- Review of governance and canon law in relation to child sexual abuse
- All sexual abuse of children needs to be regarded as a crime and not moral failing
- Pontifical secrets related to child sexual abuse must be removed
- Introduction of voluntary celibacy for clergy
- Transparency around recruitment, training, disciplinary actions regarding all clergy related to child sexual abuse, victim support
- Mandatory reporting of crimes including disclosed in confessional
- Zero tolerance to child sexual abuse

The Catholic Church in Australia specifically needs to sign up to redress – the whole of the Catholic Church and not discrete orders and diocese. Any further delay would seem to perpetuate what abuse survivors have experienced and is further evidence that the Church has still not fundamentally prioritised survivors over its own internal priorities.

There can be no more cover-ups. The safety of children and wellbeing of victims is an absolute priority which must take precedence at all times, not just in Australia but globally.

Dr Cathy Kezelman AM is the President of Blue Knot Foundation.

If you need immediate assistance or support contact:

- Lifeline 13 11 14 www.lifeline.org.au
- beyondblue 1300 22 46 36 www.beyondblue.org.au
- Sexual Assault Counselling Australia 1800 211 028 www.sexualassaultcounselling.org.au
- Blue Knot Foundation 1300 657 380 www.blueknot.org.au



LISTEN

15m 6s

How survivors of child sexual abuse are being affected by the Pell verdict

Cardinal George Pell was last year convicted of sexually abusing two choirboys in 1996, but the Victorian County Court has not allowed media outlets to report the verdict before now.

Dr. Cathy Kezelman, mental health consumer advocate and President of the Blue Knot Foundation National Centre of Excellence for Complex Trauma, explains how survivors might be feeling as a result, and how to help them cope.

The Blue Knot Foundation runs a helpline for adult survivors of child sexual abuse - 1300 657 380, available 9am to 5pm EST.

Other places to find support at this time are 1800 Respect - 1800 737 732 and Lifeline on 13 11 14.

Duration: 15min 6sec

Broadcast: Wed 27 Feb 2019, 9:06am

Listen Here:

<https://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/lifematters/how-survivors-of-child-sexual-abuse-are-being-affected-by-the-p/10852546>