



National Centre of Excellence  
for Complex Trauma



## Welcome to the August edition of Breaking Free

This month we publish the second part of our two-part series which looks at the challenges of parenting with a complex trauma history. We continue to explore strategies to help support parents through the journey of raising caring and independent young people.

Our Self Care Resources article discusses compassion and self-compassion. It suggests techniques that you can engage the next time you feel yourself judging and criticising your perceived shortcomings. With the right support and practice, these skills can develop over time.

We have a busy few months coming up with lots of opportunities to be involved. The dates for Survivor Workshops have been set and bookings are now open. Power Threat Meaning Workshops are also filling quickly, so take the opportunity to participate in this insightful and practical workshop if you can.

Also, Blue Knot Day isn't far away and we are finalising details which will be published in the coming month. There will be plenty of ways to get involved and help share the message of "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](mailto:newsletter@blueknot.org.au)

With warm regards,  
The Blue Knot Team.



# Challenges of Parenting with a Complex Trauma History – Part 2

## Building self esteem

Many survivors struggle with the way they feel about themselves. Feelings of self-blame, guilt and shame are common and can continue from childhood into adulthood. If you feel like this you may struggle to care for yourself, identify your needs and attend to them. It can help to find support to enable you to develop greater compassion for yourself, and to learn how to better meet your own needs, so you can meet your child's.

Developing compassion for yourself, will help you become more empathic to your child. Children develop their sense of self through their interactions with their parents. Your body language, tone of voice, words and actions can play a big role in helping your child to develop their own sense of worth. It is important to be as honest as you can when interacting with your child – praising and rewarding them when they deserve it and reassuring them when they make mistakes. Loving our children doesn't mean that you always love what they do. A part of any parent's role is to help your child to feel okay about learning and developing skills and this includes making mistakes. One of life's certainties is that we continually need

to learn and develop throughout our lives. Building comfort in making mistakes and acknowledging them, and the capacity to learn and develop new skills and ways to approach issues is one of the greatest gifts a parent can give a child.

### Modelling the behaviours and attitudes you want to see

Many survivors of childhood trauma have not learnt to regulate their emotions as effectively as they might. This can be because their own parents didn't have these skills or were not able to help them develop them. If you experienced anger and aggression, or your caregivers showed little interest in you, or withdrew from you, you may find it useful to seek some support so you can build the skills you need to manage your own emotions. These are skills people can acquire at any age with information, insight and support. Many survivors hope to raise their children differently from how their parents or caregivers raised them. Children learn from you just as you did from the adults in your world. Think about the ways you would like your children to develop and approach their world and model those behaviours. Whatever we focus

on as parents will grow and develop in our children. If we focus on their deficits these will grow but if we focus on their strengths and resilience, these will grow instead. We don't always get it right but if we are kind and compassionate to ourselves and approach parenting in a way that we are continually learning and growing skills, we can reflect on why a rupture in the relationship occurred and problem solve how we might do it differently next time. Treat your child as you wanted to be treated when you were a child, with compassion, empathy and understanding. But also, at times, as the parent who creates boundaries and protects and takes care of your child. And remember that there are lots of books, programs and services which can support you to build your own skills, for yourself and for your child.

### Learn how to set reasonable boundaries

You may have grown up with no limits or alternatively have been left to your own devices. Or perhaps you grew up with harsh, violent or chaotic discipline. You may have grown up with a combination of both, never knowing how your caregivers were going to respond. Because of this, you may struggle with setting boundaries. Getting support around this can help you reset your understanding and practice around boundaries, for yourself and for your child. Part of this is setting reasonable rules. When you are creating boundaries it is important to be kind, firm and understanding. When your child has behaved in a way which is not appropriate there will always be reasons for this. Understanding this can help you respond fairly rather than punitively and help them learn for the future.

All parents need to help their children learn the difference between right and wrong. This means setting consistent limits but also being adaptable and flexible. We need to be flexible around giving more freedom as our children move through their developmental milestones. This is the basis of good parenting.

All behaviour has a meaning and children's behaviour expresses a need that the child can't clearly articulate. Understanding your child's basic needs in a particular situation helps the child feel heard, cared for and understood. It doesn't mean that we can't ever say "no" to children or direct them but it does mean that we understand what the child needs in relation to this boundary setting. This is attachment-focused parenting and there are many program, books and services that can help you understand this process and develop these skills.

### Good communication and flexibility are important

When you grew up you might not have had any explanations as to why you had to do something a certain way. Like you, all children deserve to understand why they are expected to behave a certain way or need to comply with your rules. Children want and deserve explanations just like adults do. If we don't explain things, our children will question our motivation.

Let your child know what you expect and if your child doesn't meet your expectations, work to understand what your child needs in the particular situation, and how they feel. Help them settle some of their distress first before letting them know why the issue is important and work on a solution with them. This can include consequences. Make suggestions and offer choices but always be receptive to your child's suggestions too. If your child's behaviour repeatedly disappoints you, you might need to review your expectations, as well as your understanding of your child's needs. Reading relevant books and information can help, as can speaking with other parents. Be flexible, as different children behave differently at different ages. Each milestone brings with it different challenges for parents. Be open, adaptable and seek help and support when you need it.

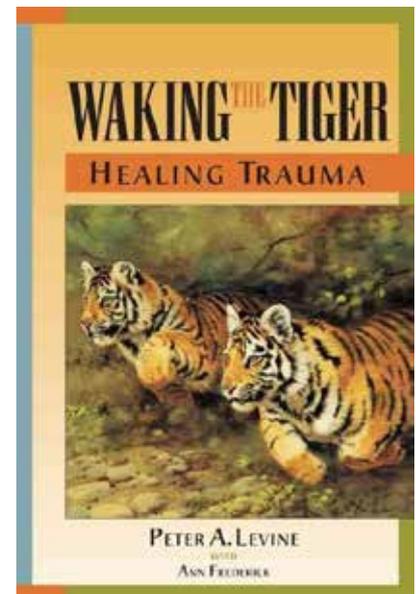
As a parent, it is your role to guide your children as they become more independent and learn. You will have to confront your child at times but when you do, be gentle. Avoid blaming or criticising them as this can undermine their developing self esteem. No matter what happens, show them that you love them regardless. And that you are with them on the journey of developing knowledge, relational skills, emotional intelligence and independence. At the end we want our children to be competent, connected, contributing, caring independent young people in the world.

# Book Recommendation

## Waking The Tiger - Healing Trauma.

The Innate Capacity To Transform  
Overwhelming Experiences. Peter  
Levine Ph.D. with Ann Frederick.

1997



Peter Levine believes that each of us has a great capacity to heal ourselves with support of family, friends and counselling. In his book *Waking the Tiger*, Levine offers a hopeful vision of trauma recovery. He explains how old cultures that use rituals and shamans to heal trauma may use primitive and superstitious practices, “but they have one important advantage – they address the problem directly... most modern cultures, including ours, fall victim to the prevailing attitude that strength means endurance; that it is somehow heroic to be able to carry on regardless of the severity of our symptoms...(ignoring the gentle urges to acknowledge and heal the pain).”

When ignored ... “the traumatic effects will grow steadily more severe, firmly entrenched, and chronic... frozen in our nervous systems like indestructible time bombs... real heroism comes from having the courage to openly acknowledge one’s experiences, not from suppressing or denying them.” (p62-63)

Levine describes a series of exercises that can be tried at home inviting the reader to develop self awareness and recover sensations by developing an understanding of felt sense which is the foundation of somatic experiencing therapies. These easy activities are excellent for family and supporters of survivors.

Later chapters discuss the human instinctual healing forces that are shared with our primitive past stating that “nature has not forgotten us, we have forgotten it. A traumatised person’s nervous system is not damaged; it is frozen... rediscovering the felt sense will bring warmth and vitality to our experiences.” (p86)

In addition the book discuss the human response to threat, the unified defense system - fight, flee or freeze. Freezing being the more common response for children experiencing trauma and abuse – Levine discusses the cumulative effects of freezing. This helps explain how many survivors will sometimes live with unresolved trauma until their middle or older adult years at which time they may be triggered into an overwhelming response that brings all of the past trauma experiences into the foreground, requiring immediate attention and treatment.

In this book Peter Levine explains: “Somatic Experiencing is a gentle step-by-step approach to renegotiation of trauma. Using the felt sense... it is akin to slowly peeling

the layers of skin off an onion, carefully revealing the traumatized inner core.” Levine acknowledges that this process is very slow and can run over many years. He recommends to seek support with a counsellor trained in somatic therapy. The process is not explained in the book however many counsellors in Australia have trained in this area. Some can be accessed by calling the Blue Knot Helpline and asking the counsellor for their details.

Levine goes on to describe and explain many of the very common symptoms of complex trauma - hyperarousal, dissociation, and helplessness. He provides a series of easy exercises that explore these symptoms so that everyone can get a sense of what they feel like. Later he discusses the larger list of possible symptoms and how they affect physical and mental states.

This book is recommended reading for many callers to the Blue Knot Helpline and anyone who wants to explore the premise that trauma is part of a natural physiological process. Levine normalises the symptoms of trauma and the steps needed to heal.

*Waking the Tiger* is full of interesting information, case studies, stories and reflections. The book can be purchased from [https://www.amazon.com.au/Waking-Tiger-Peter-Levine/dp/155643233X/ref=asc\\_df\\_155643233X/?tag=googleshopdsk-22&linkCode=df0&hvadid=341792439332&hvpos=1o3&hvnetw=g&hvrand=3839888792953047215&hvpone=&hvptwo=&hvqmt=&hvdev=c&hvdvcmld=&hvlocint=&hvlocphy=1000286&hvtargid=pla-436402731263&psc=1](https://www.amazon.com.au/Waking-Tiger-Peter-Levine/dp/155643233X/ref=asc_df_155643233X/?tag=googleshopdsk-22&linkCode=df0&hvadid=341792439332&hvpos=1o3&hvnetw=g&hvrand=3839888792953047215&hvpone=&hvptwo=&hvqmt=&hvdev=c&hvdvcmld=&hvlocint=&hvlocphy=1000286&hvtargid=pla-436402731263&psc=1)



## Self Care Resources

# Compassion and self-compassion

Having compassion for ourselves is really no different to having compassion for others. When we show compassion, we can see that another person is suffering in some way and feel moved by their experience. When we feel compassionate towards another person, we feel warmth, caring and a desire help and support them. When another person is compassionate towards you it helps you to feel understood and to experience a sense of kindness and non-judgement towards your circumstances. There is a sense that as humans we all make mistakes, or don't know the way at that point in times, and the other person provides comfort and care. Self-compassion is really no different. This article discusses the ways in which we can start to be compassionate with ourselves and move away from judging and criticizing ourselves for our perceived shortcomings.

*"No act of kindness, however small, is ever wasted."*  
Aesop

### Childhood trauma and self-compassion

When those who care for children are not attuned to a child's needs or if a child grows up in an environment that isn't psychologically, emotionally and/or physically safe that child can grow up without the opportunity to develop the skills they need for some of life's challenges. Children learn about themselves through their relationships with those who care for them. If the messages that the child receives about themselves and their self-worth are harsh, critical and judgemental, the child can and often does internalise those messages. Those messages can become fixed beliefs over time. We call this negative self-talk and it can mean that the child can find it difficult to be compassionate and caring towards themselves as they grow up. Many survivors struggle with a sense of feeling worthwhile and good about themselves. However, with the right support and practice these skills can develop over time.

## Self-Compassion

Being compassionate to ourselves is as important as being compassionate to others. Many people who have experienced childhood trauma find it easier to be compassionate to others, than they do to be compassionate towards themselves. Self-compassion means that you honour and accept your humanness and this means accepting that you will make mistakes, fall short at times and have limitations. However, this is a shared human experience that doesn't define you as a person.

For many survivors, self-compassion is very challenging. It takes time and practice to begin the process of opening your heart to being kind to yourself, understanding that you are human and taking a balanced approach to managing the negative self-talk developed in childhood and the emotions and patterns of thought that accompany them.

"The nurturing quality of self-compassion allows us to flourish" says Kristin Neff, the pioneering self-compassion researcher, author and teacher.

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."

The first place to start is to acknowledge that for many of us, it doesn't come easy. Being kind to yourself builds self-compassion and a sense of wellbeing, and little steps can be the way to go. Here are some suggestions that you might like to try and remember - everyone's different, and if it isn't the right time for you to start, that's okay too.

## Mindfulness

The state of mindfulness is a way of paying attention to what is happening in the present in a non-judgemental manner. It is a skill that we can develop over time. It can teach us to be more self-aware as well as less reactive to negative events. Through a mindfulness practice we can become aware of the times that we have critical or harsh thoughts about ourselves and others and make choices about how to manage these patterns.

With mindfulness and awareness, you may start to notice not only how you typically judge and criticise yourself but also become aware of the language that you use. You might then start to reframe your language to be more kind, supportive and understanding, remembering that you are human, acknowledging your vulnerabilities

and flaws a take a continued learning approach to life. What can I learn about myself in this situation and how can I be more understanding and curious about why this happened?

## Compassionate breathing

Start with finding a comfortable and safe place, either sitting or lying down. You may

- Fluff your pillow/cushion, pop another one under your arm
- Place a warm rug on your lap
- Move your chair
- Stretch your arms
- Turn on some soothing music, dim the lights, light a candle
- Place one hand on your chest/heart space.

Bring your attention to your breathing. Notice where you feel your breath. Some people feel it in their nostrils, perhaps a cool breeze on the upper lip. Other people feel the rising and falling of their chest. Others feel their breath in their abdomen as their belly expands with every inbreath and contracts with every outbreath. Gently explore your body and discover where your breathing is easiest to notice. Just stay with your breath for a while - when you notice your mind wandering bring it back to the breath.

Some people find it easier to pay attention to just their inbreath or their outbreath. Just let your body breathe for you and notice how the breath moves through your body. Now place your hand on your heart for a moment to remind yourself that you will be bringing kind attention to your breathing. Be aware how your breath nourishes you whether you are paying attention or not. It has been with you from birth and has sustained your life wherever you go. If your mind wanders gently bring it back to the breath with gratitude and appreciation. Rest in the experience of your body and when you are ready gently open your eyes.

There are a number of strategies that people may use to help develop self-compassion aside from mindfulness and self-awareness. These include:

## Healing Heart Activity

Place one hand on your chest/heart space. Consider perceiving 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. You might place both hands on your chest and notice the difference between one hand and two. You may make small circles with your hand. Feel the natural rising and falling of your chest as you breathe in and out. Linger with this feeling for as long as you like.

## Nurturing Yourself

Prepare a drink or some food which you might find comforting and which is healthy- maybe a cup of tea, bowl of porridge, hot chocolate - do you have a 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. Make sure that these are not only comforting but also health promoting and nutritious. Notice when you are eating or drinking these and bring your focus on the gratitude you feel for this nurturing that this food/drink is giving your body

## Practice Forgiveness

Accept that you are not perfect and be gentle with your shortcomings. Understand that you don't have to be a certain way to be worthy of love. Some people have sayings that help them and remind them about this, such as: "There is no sense in punishing your future for the mistakes of your past. Forgive yourself, grow from it, and then let it go" Melanie Koulouris

## Employ a Growth Mindset

There is a lot of research about the impact of our mindset on wellbeing. Viewing challenges as opportunities to learn and grow rather than obstacles to enhance our wellbeing.

## 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-compassion here: <https://www.yesmagazine.org/happiness/self-esteem-might-boost-our-egos-but-self-compassion-opens-our-hearts-20170404>

Remember you are worthy of love and care. Next time you feel yourself not rising to the expectations you have for yourself, pause and take a moment to reassess by using some of these techniques or others with which you are comfortable.

# Understanding Traumatic Memories

WHY IT CAN BE CHALLENGING TO RECALL TRAUMATIC MEMORIES

## 1. TRAUMATIC MEMORIES ARE IMPLICIT

Like all implicit memories, traumatic memories are carried and experienced in and by the body rather than a narrative memory of the past.



## 2. SEVERE STRESS/TRAUMA INHIBITS CONSOLIDATION OF NARRATIVE/EXPLICIT MEMORY

Extreme stress/trauma releases extra cortisol and impedes functioning of hippocampus, thereby impeding the consolidation of explicit memory



## 3. IMPLICIT MEMORY IS INTENSIFIED DURING TRAUMA

At the same time, trauma activates the amygdala and releases adrenaline which together intensify implicit memory and gets stored in the body.



# Workshops - Power Threat Meaning Framework

A RADICAL NEW APPROACH TO  
UNDERSTANDING DISTRESS AND UNUSUAL  
EXPERIENCES WITHOUT USING  
PSYCHIATRIC DIAGNOSIS

PERTH 1 NOVEMBER 2019  
SYDNEY 6 NOVEMBER 2019

## Book now for Power, Threat, Meaning Workshops

This unique event will be delivered in Perth and Sydney 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.

This one day workshop presents robust research from biology, neuroscience, and trauma studies, and marries them with social science and psychology to explore the dynamics of power, the threats power imposes, our responses to those threats and the meaning we, as individuals, and as a society have made of those responses.

This framework complements and extends existing models to foster a holistic understanding of people's thoughts, feelings, behaviours and actions. This evidence suggests that if we know enough about people's relationships, social situations, life stories, and their past and current struggles, including trauma and adverse life events, then we can make sense of these experiences. And that if we also think about people's strengths and supports, we may be able to come up with new ways forward. The Power Threat Meaning Framework supports the acknowledgement of prior and ongoing trauma including working towards culturally safer environments.

Registration Fee is \$385 and includes a complimentary copy of The Power Threat Meaning Framework Overview (138 pages). Morning tea, lunch and afternoon tea is

included in the cost. Present your registration ticket on the day to collect your complimentary copy. Blue Knot Foundation is hosting workshops that will explore how power operates in people's lives, the threat it poses, the responses people have and the meaning they make of it to offer new ways forward. Attendees from all backgrounds are welcome. If you missed out last time, now is your chance to participate in this insightful and practical workshop.

### PERTH

DATE AND TIME  
FRI 1 NOVEMBER 2019  
9:30 AM - 5:00 PM AWST

LOCATION  
ADINA APARTMENT HOTEL  
33 MOUNTS BAY ROAD  
PERTH WA 6000

### SYDNEY

DATE AND TIME  
WED 6 NOVEMBER 2019  
9:30 AM - 5:00 PM AEDT

LOCATION  
AERIAL UTS FUNCTION CENTRE  
235 JONES ST  
BUILDING 10, LEVEL 7  
ULTIMO NSW 2007

CALL BLUE KNOT FOUNDATION TO BOOK (02) 8920 3611



# Survivor Workshops

As a result of the generosity of our supporters and the success of our EOFY campaign and other donations, Blue Knot Foundation is excited to announce that we will be scheduling survivor workshops, 1 in each state and territory of Australia.

Melbourne	12 October 2019
Townsville	30 November 2019
Adelaide	29 February 2020
Launceston	14 March 2020
Perth	18 April 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

Due to high demand, the Sydney workshop has been filled by those on the waitlist and we are looking to schedule another Sydney workshop as soon as possible. We will advise when the next date is confirmed.

## George Pell's appeal against conviction denied

Rohan Smith and Natalie Wolfe [news.com.au](https://www.news.com.au)

The Vatican has responded to the Court of Appeal's decision to deny George Pell's bid for freedom as Australia's highest ranking member of the Catholic Church failed to have his appeal against child sex convictions dismissed in court.

By a majority of two to one, Victoria's Supreme Court dismissed the appeal earlier today, ordering Pell to "return to prison".

"He will continue to serve his sentence of six years' imprisonment," Chief Justice Anne Ferguson said.

"He will remain eligible to apply for parole after he has served three years and eight months of the sentence."

In a statement this afternoon, the Vatican "reiterated its respect for the Australian judicial system" and acknowledged "the court's decision to dismiss Cardinal Pell's appeal".

"As the proceedings continue to develop, the Holy See recalls that the Cardinal has always maintained his innocence throughout the judicial process and that it is his right to appeal to the High Court," the Vatican said.

"At this time, together with the Church in Australia, the Holy See confirms its closeness to the victims of sexual abuse and its commitment to pursue, through the competent

ecclesiastical authorities, those members of the clergy who commit such abuse."

Earlier today, Pell sat and listened intently as Chief Justice Anne Ferguson read out her reasons for rejecting his appeal. The 78-year-old looked dejected as he hunched forward to hear his appeal be denied.

Head bowed, with his grey hair hanging loosely around his face, the cardinal was led out of the courtroom just before 10am to serve out the rest of his jail sentence.

Chief Justice Ferguson told the court the judges had found the complainant "believable", dismissed an animation created by Pell's legal team about the cathedral abuse as biased and slapped down Pell's argument that it was impossible for the abuse to have occurred.

Justice Weinberg did not side with Chief Justice Ferguson or Justice Maxwell, stating "there was significant and in some places impressive evidence suggesting that the complainant's account was, in a realistic sense, impossible to accept".



George Pell arrives at the Supreme Court.  
Picture: Julian Smith/AAPSource:AAP

Despite this dissenting view, Pell’s appeal was denied.

Cheers were heard from inside the courtroom as dozens of people outside, watching the appeal on the livestream, listened to the judges slap down Pell’s appeal.

The 78-year-old’s legal team are already looking at taking his appeal to the High Court, Australia’s final arbiter and the cardinal’s last attempt to have his convictions quashed.

His legal team confirmed this through a statement earlier today, saying Pell was “obviously disappointed with the decision”.

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

Pell could now also be stripped of his Order of Australia award after losing the appeal against his child sex abuse conviction.

In a statement, Governor-General David Hurley said he was waiting to see Pell pursue all legal avenues.

“Appointments to the Order of Australia may be terminated and one of the grounds is conviction for a crime or offence under a law of the Commonwealth, State or Territory,” the governor-general said.

“Once all legal proceedings have run their course, the Council for the Order of Australia may make a recommendation to me as Chancellor of the Order, which I will act on.”

Pell shared the courtroom with the world’s media, his own supporters and the family members of the two boys he was found guilty of sexually abusing in 1996.

Pell’s entire family were in the courtroom, including his brother. Chrissie Foster, the mother of two Catholic Church sex abuse victims, was also inside.

Pell’s main argument that he put to the three judges — Chief Justice Anne Ferguson, Court of Appeal president Justice

Chris Maxwell and Justice Mark Weinberg — was that the abuse simply didn’t happen, that it was impossible.

Chief Justice Ferguson denied that argument, telling the court the survivor was “clearly not a liar”.

“Justice Maxwell and I accepted the prosecution’s submission that the complainant was a compelling witness, was clearly not a liar, was not a fantasist and was a witness of truth,” Chief Justice Ferguson said.

“Throughout (the complainant’s) evidence, the complainant came across as someone who was telling the truth. He did not seek to embellish his evidence or tailor it in a manner favourable to the prosecution.”

She said the case of Pell had “divided the community” but the jury verdict from his original trial had been unanimous.

Chief Justice Ferguson said the three appeal judges also “did not experience a doubt”.

She said the three judges had watched all the recordings from the trial, including the recorded interview with Cardinal Pell and the evidence given by 12 of the 24 witnesses.

“Those recordings went for more than 30 hours and we’ve watched them more than once,” she said.



Cardinal George Pell was found guilty of abusing two choirboys in March. Picture: Andy Brownbill/APSource:AP

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Pell presented the three appeal judges with “13 solid obstacles in the path of a conviction”.

Chief Justice Ferguson and Justice Maxwell rejected all 13, she said.

One they rejected was the notion that George Pell’s robes were “not able to be moved” to reveal his genitalia because of various layers of material. She told the court “the robes were not so heavy, nor so immovable as the evidence of Monsignor Portelli suggested”.

Pell’s legal team also presented the Court of Appeal with an

animation depicting a blueprint of Melbourne's St Patrick's Cathedral with dots and lines depicting people in the church for Sunday mass.

Chief Justice Ferguson described the animation, that depicted text from witnesses favourable to Pell, as "tendentious in the extreme".

"The trial judge ruled that the animation could not be shown to the jury as part of the defence final address. We have agreed with the trial judge," she said.

"The animation bore little resemblance to the actual state of the evidence, but rather presented a distorted picture of that evidence. The animation was tendentious in the extreme.

"It was plainly intended to implant in the minds of the jury that the complainant's account must have been impossible because the evidence showed that there were concelebrant

priests in the room at the time of the alleged offending.

"The visual representation ostensibly based on the evidence of trial, had the potential of misleading, or at least confusing the jury."

In a heartbreaking statement after Pell's appeal decision was dismissed, the man to survive the cardinal's abuse said he hoped "it is all over now".

Often referred to as the choirboy, the man gave a statement through his lawyer Dr Viv Waller, who took his case pro bono after he made a statement to police four years ago.

"The criminal process has been stressful," Dr Waller read.

"The journey has taken me to places that, in my darkest moments, I feared I would not return from.

"I appreciate that the criminal process has afforded Pell every opportunity to challenge the charges and every opportunity to be heard. I am glad he has had the best legal representation that money can buy. There are a lot of checks and balances in the criminal justice system and the appeals process is one of them. I just hope that it is all over now."

The complainant said his friend's funeral four years ago, who died after a drug overdose directly linked to his PTSD from Pell's abuse, gave him a "responsibility to come forward".

"I knew that he had been in a dark place. I had been in a dark place," he said.

"I gave a statement to the police because I was thinking of him and his family. I felt that I should say what I saw and what had happened to me. I had experienced something terrible as a child, and I wanted some good to come of it.

"I would like to acknowledge the courage of those people who reported to the police. For one reason or another, your matters did not proceed. My heart goes out to you."

The complainant also rejected the suggestion he was out to cause damage to the Catholic Church.

"I am not on a mission to do anybody any harm," he said.

"Although my faith has taken a battering, it is still a part of my life, and a part of the lives of my loved ones. I am not an advocate. You wouldn't know my name. I am not a champion for the cause of sexual abuse survivors, although I am glad that those advocates are out there, but that is not my path."

In February, when other sex abuse cases against Pell were thrown out, the choirboy was "left in the spotlight alone".

"I asked Viv Waller to help me manage the considerable media interest in the case and to protect my identity and to protect my family," he said.

"I could not afford legal representation, but that did not matter to her. I will be forever grateful that Viv agreed to help me and to do so for free.

"She has liaised with the media on my behalf. She has allowed the storms of public opinion to buffet her so that my young family could find safe harbour. My journey has not been an easy one. It has been all the more stressful because it involved a high-profile figure."

The choirboy said his privacy was paramount, especially after recently becoming a father.

"I need to be able to define myself away from all of this," he said.



Dr Viv Waller, the lawyer for the complainant, reading a statement for him. Picture: ABC NewsSource:ABC

"Recently, I have started a new chapter in my life as a father. The experiences I have been through have helped me understand what is truly important."

Dr Viv Waller, the lawyer for the complainant, reading a statement for him. Picture: ABC News

Dr Viv Waller, the lawyer for the complainant, reading a statement for him. Picture: ABC NewsSource:ABC

The father of the other choirboy, who died in 2014 at the age of 31 from a drug overdose related to his PTSD, also spoke through his lawyer Lisa Flynn from Shine Lawyers.

"The disgraced cardinal is in the right place behind bars," Ms Flynn said for the victim's father.

"Our client has always said that he does not want the man who he holds responsible for his son's downhill spiral and subsequent fatal heroin overdose to ever again have contact with any members of society."

"It's been an extremely tough wait for our client who has had to deal with the awful thought that maybe the man who destroyed his son's life could have his conviction overturned.

"He shed tears of relief in the courtroom when the judgement was handed down this morning."

"The court of appeal today agreed that our community representatives got it right and this sends a powerful message to all survivors of sexual abuse. You are finally being heard.

"We can only hope that this drawn out process is over once and for all and that the case does not now end up in the High Court of Australia.

"Regardless of today's appeal outcome, our client was always going to continue to pursue a civil claim. We will continue to fight for compensation for him. He has suffered immensely knowing what George Pell did to his son as a young choirboy."

Child sex abuse survivors and their supporters screamed with joy as Pell was told he was going back to jail.

Julie Cameron, an advocate for child sex abuse victims, told reporters outside court the Catholic Church was "busted".

Valda Ann Hogan, whose late brother was molested by members of the Catholic Church, told news.com.au today was another step towards healing.

"It means a lot to us," she said. "It shows people what did go on. These buggers got away with it for years."

Dressed in a pink cap with the word "guilty" written on it, Ms Hogan said she had been let down by priests and that today's judgment was a relief.

David Mulholland shed tears as he spoke of his gratitude for the 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.

"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.

Pell arrived just after 8.30am and was led from a prison van wearing handcuffs.

There was a heavy police presence around the courthouse as dozens of supporters and sex abuse survivors gather outside.



A van arrives with Cardinal George Pell at the Supreme Court. Picture: Erik Anderson/AAPSource:AAP

The 78-year-old, dressed in black clerical clothes, was hunched over as he was led into the court.

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.

Pell has always maintained his innocence.



Pell was convicted of sexually abusing the teens inside St Patrick's Cathedral in Melbourne, pictured. Picture: Darrian Traynor/Getty ImagesSource:Getty Images

The judgment comes as prison authorities from the Melbourne Assessment Prison investigate a letter purporting to be from Pell that was circulated on social media earlier this month.

The letter, dated August 1, was sent around by supporters. It read: "My faith in our Lord, like yours, is a source of strength.



The world's media will converge on the Victorian Supreme Court this morning. Picture: Darrian Traynor/Getty ImagesSource:Getty Images

"The knowledge that my small suffering can be used for good purposes through being joined to Jesus' suffering gives me purpose and direction."

Prison rules forbid prisoners from posting on social media, using the internet or asking others to post on their behalf.

Melbourne Archbishop Peter Comensoli told the ABC last week he had visited Pell in prison and the 78-year-old's mental state was "a bit like a calm in a storm".

Comensoli said Pell's imprisonment — being held in protective custody as a convicted paedophile and spending 23 hours a day alone in his cell — "takes its toll".

"There'd be a psychological agitation about waiting for what's going to be the outcome of the appeal, but I found him strong ... spiritually and calm and very conversive," Comensoli said.

Pell's appeal hung on key arguments outlined during earlier hearings. His lawyers argued he had an alibi, the attacks could not have happened where and when they did, and a priest who may have given contradictory evidence was never interviewed.

Bret Walker SC told the court it was "literally impossible" for the offences to have taken place in the five to six minute time frame accepted by the jury — given the "activities, rituals, practices and customary traditions" that would have been taking place in the church at the time.

Melbourne Archbishop Peter Comensoli has expressed support for mandatory reporting, but not for breaking the seal of the confessional. CREDIT: PAUL JEFFERS

IN THE NEWS

## Church digs in as Victoria forces disclosure of abuse revealed in confession

BY BENJAMIN PREISS AND DEBBIE CUTHBERTSON  
AUGUST 13, 2019 — 11.30PM

The Catholic Church is set to defy new laws that would punish priests with jail time if they refuse to report sexual abuse revealed during confession.

The Victorian government will on Wednesday introduce legislation aimed at forcing priests to break the seal of confession to report child abuse.

Melbourne Archbishop Peter Comensoli has expressed support for mandatory reporting, but not for breaking the seal of the confessional.

The church says that it supports mandatory reporting and encourages victims to report abuse to police, but will not break the seal of confession – regardless of the legislation.

“I uphold the seal of confession but I uphold mandatory reporting as well,” Archbishop Peter Comensoli said in August last year, when the state government first flagged this legal change.

“The principle of the seal of confession is a different question. It has a different reality to it. The practicalities of winding back the seal of confession I think is something that can’t be easily done.”

“There’s been no change in our position,” a spokesman for the Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne said on Tuesday, adding that it would wait to see the legislation before commenting further.

In March this year Pope Francis said no laws could break the seal of confession, in which all priests must keep secret from everyone what they hear in the confessional.

“The sacramental seal is indispensable and no human power has, nor may it claim, jurisdiction over it,” he said.

Priests who refuse to report sexual abuse disclosed during confession will face up to three years in jail under the new laws.

The laws will apply to religious and spiritual leaders of all denominations and religions, but will not be retrospective.

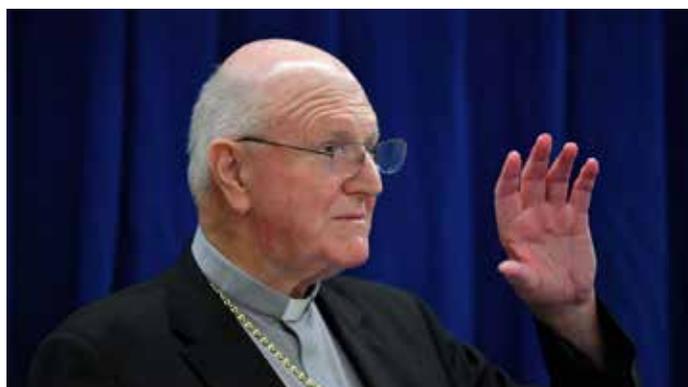
The legislation will need to pass both houses of the Victorian Parliament. But both the Andrews government and the opposition promised to scrap exemptions for confessionals in the lead-up to the Victorian election last year.

Police, teachers, doctors, nurses, school counsellors, childcare and youth justice workers have all been required to report child abuse.

In 2012 priests and spiritual leaders were listed as mandatory reporters in Victoria, but any abuse disclosed to them during confession was exempt. The government says they will no longer receive special treatment.

The bill includes amendments to ensure that, under the failure-to-disclose offence in the Crimes Act, disclosures of abuse during religious confession are not exempt and must be reported to police.

Victoria's move follows a recommendation by the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse that states introduce laws to make it a criminal offence to fail to disclose abuse revealed in the confessional.



Former archbishop Denis Hart said in 2017 he would rather go to jail than report an incidence of child abuse revealed to him during confession. CREDIT: JOE ARMAO

Former archbishop Denis Hart said in 2017 he would rather go to jail than report an incidence of child abuse revealed to him during confession. CREDIT: JOE ARMAO

It comes a fortnight after Tasmania passed similar legislation. In response, the church said the Tasmanian bill would have major implications for religious freedom.

The ACT also recently passed a similar bill, set to take effect from September 1. In response, Canberra Archbishop Christopher Prowse said his priests would not break the seal of confession to report child abuse.

Under an SA law that took effect in October 2018, clergy are legally obliged to report confessions of child sex abuse or face a \$10,000 fine.

Successive Melbourne archbishops have resisted the commission's recommendation on mandatory reporting. Former archbishop Denis Hart said in 2017 he would rather go to jail than report an incidence of child abuse revealed to him during confession.



'You have to report it': Victorian Child Protection Minister Luke Donnellan. CREDIT: PAUL JEFFERS

Victorian Child Protection Minister Luke Donnellan said the reforms would go a long way to ensuring future generations of children were protected from the harm that too many suffered in the past.

"It's pretty simple: if you think a child is being abused, you have to report it," he said. "And we're committed to driving this cultural change to make Victoria safer for our children."

Canon law researcher Kieran Tapsell said it was not only the rules surrounding confession that prevented clergy divulging abuse, but also a secret directive from the Pope.

A confidential instruction from each pontiff, including Pope Francis, since 1922 has directed bishops to treat canonical crimes including sexual abuse of children with absolute secrecy.

Many expected Pope Francis to amend that directive during a bishops' conference in February, but he did not.

## George Pell makes last-ditch bid for freedom, taking his case to the High Court

Disgraced Cardinal George Pell is reportedly set to take his case to the High Court, with there being one final chance for him to clear his name.

Convicted paedophile George Pell will make one final bid for freedom, deciding to take his child sex abuse conviction to the High Court.

According to reports, the disgraced Cardinal has instructed his legal team to push forward with a last-ditch effort to clear his name.

The Sydney Morning Herald cites sources as saying a formal application will be lodged for special leave to appeal to the High Court.

Pell and his legal team have 28 days to file an application to the High Court. The application needs to be granted before the High Court can hear any appeal.

It's likely a hearing to determine whether the case will be heard will take place by the end of the year.

The 78-year-old had his appeal rejected by Victoria's Supreme Court on Wednesday by a majority of two-to-one.

"He will continue to serve his sentence of six years' imprisonment," Chief Justice Anne Ferguson said.

"He will remain eligible to apply for parole after he has served three years and eight months of the sentence."

He was convicted in December last year of sexually abusing two choirboys at St Patrick's Cathedral in Melbourne in 1996.

But the SMH reports that Pell has received legal advice that the one dissenting opinion gives grounds to have the convictions overturned.

Despite the reports, a spokeswoman for Pell told Australian Associated Press that no decision had been made.

The strongly worded dissent of Justice Mark Weinberg expressed the former Commonwealth Director of Public Prosecution's "genuine doubt as to the applicant's guilt".

The jury was required to find Pell guilty "beyond reasonable doubt" and after reviewing the evidence, Justice Weinberg thought there was a "significant possibility" Pell may not have committed the offences.

"My doubt is a doubt which the jury ought also to have had," he wrote.

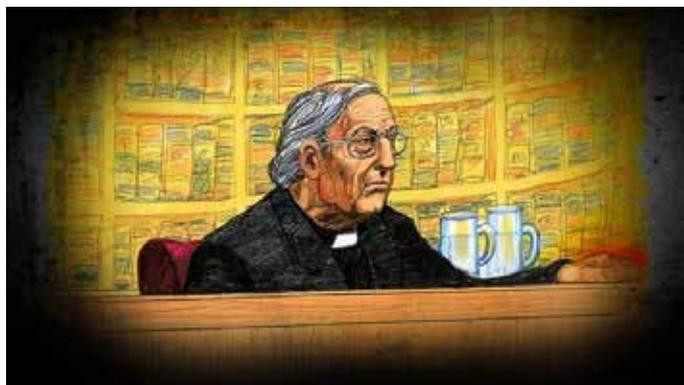
Justice Weinberg suggested there was a significant amount of evidence that cast serious doubt on the complainant's story, in relation to both its credibility and reliability.

He said there were "inconsistencies, and discrepancies, and a number of his answers simply made no sense".

One example of this was the fact that the complainant did not remember there were rehearsals for the choir after mass on the two days that the abuse likely occurred. The rehearsals did not easily fit with the movements of the boys.

Originally the complainant said he couldn't remember how they rejoined the rest of the choir but his memory came to be improved when he gave evidence at the trial.

Justice Weinberg also notes the complainant said Pell had "pulled aside his robe" but after being shown that the alb did not have any openings, he suggested that it may have been pulled up first.



A court sketch of Cardinal George Pell at the Supreme Court of Victoria in Melbourne. Picture: AAPSource:AAP



In this May 2, 2018 file photo, Cardinal George Pell, the most senior Catholic cleric to face sex charges, leaves court in Melbourne. Picture: APSource:AAP

The complainant was also unsure if Pell had said mass that day or was leading mass. He didn't know where his friend (who Pell also attacked) was during the procession out of St Patrick's Cathedral or when exactly they broke away from the rest of the group.

His first specific memory of the first incident of abuse was being in the priests' sacristy where Pell forced the complainant's mouth on to his penis. He also saw Pell force his friend's head towards his groin.

The second incident, which took place in a hallway, was initially said to have occurred while the choir was processing after mass but the complainant later said this may not have been the case. He also said he did not think it took place "in view of anyone" but later accepted there were "some people around in the hallway".

Justice Weinberg said he didn't find the complainant's evidence "so compelling" that he should put aside all the other factors that point to his story being unreliable.

Within hours of the appeal being rejected, Pell's lawyers indicated they were likely to take the matter to the High Court.

However, there is no guarantee the High Court will hear the case at all, as certain legal requirements must be met for that to happen.

## Howard Stern talks childhood trauma, and a trauma psychiatrist talks about its lasting effect.

May 31, 2019 9.12pm AEST

With the awakening in society of the importance of mental health, combined with advances in neuroscience and psychiatry, much needed attention to trauma and childhood trauma is slowly forming.

In a recent interview with Anderson Cooper and in his latest book published May 14, Howard Stern discussed childhood adversity and trauma. The two men also discussed their exposure to their parents' stress and how their reactions as children formed their adult behavior.

As a trauma psychiatrist, I am glad that men with such celebrity are willing to talk about their experiences, because it can help bring awareness to the public and reduce stigma.

### Childhood: Learning about the world and the self

A child's brain is a sponge for learning about how the world works and who they themselves are. We humans have an evolutionary advantage in having the ability to trust the older and learn from them about the world. That leads to cumulative knowledge and protection against adversity, about which only the experienced know. A child absorbs the patterns of perceiving the world, relating to others and to the self by learning from adults.

But when the initial environment is unusually tough and unfriendly, then a child's perception of the world may form around violence, fear, lack of safety and sadness. Brains of adults who experience childhood adversity, or

even poverty, are more prone to detecting danger, at the cost of ignoring the positive or neutral experiences.

Some who experience childhood adversity have to mature faster and become caretakers or provide emotional support for siblings or parents at an age they themselves need to be taken care of. They may end up carrying those patterns of relating to others throughout their adult life.

The child of trauma may also perceive himself or herself as unworthy of love, guilty or bad. The brain of an unknowing child may think: If they do this to me, there should be something wrong with me, I deserve it.

The little world people experience as children forms the way we perceive the real big world, its people and the people we are as adults. This will then form the way the world reacts to us based on our actions.



An unidentified young person participating in therapy at a center for refugees in Detroit. David Dalton/Wayne State University, CC BY-SA

### A world filled with trauma

Childhood trauma is more common than one would think: Up to two-thirds of children experience at least one traumatic event. These include serious medical illness or injury, firsthand experience of violence or sexual abuse or witnessing them, neglect, bullying and the newest addition to the list: mass shootings.

Unfortunately, when it comes to domestic violence and sexual abuse, it is often chronic, repetitive exposure, which can be even more detrimental to the child's mental and physical health and behavior.

Ongoing civil wars and refugee crises also expose millions of children to extremely high levels of trauma, which is often ignored..

### How do children react to trauma?

To understand the child's reaction to trauma, one has to keep in mind their developmental level of emotional and cognitive maturity. Most of the time, confusion is the reaction: The child does not know what is happening or why it is happening.

I hear frequently from my adult patients that when they were molested by a relative as a five-year-old, they did not know what was happening or why a supposedly trusting caregiver was doing it to them. Fear and terror, coupled with a sense of lack of control, are often companions of this confusion.

There is also guilt, as the child may believe they did something wrong to deserve the abuse, and often the perpetrating adults claim they did something wrong to deserve the abuse. Sadly when it comes to sexual abuse,

sometimes when the parents are told about it, they choose to deny or ignore the incident. This makes the feelings of guilt and helplessness worse. When the trauma is happening to parents, such as frequent battering of a mother by an alcoholic father, children are stuck between two people they are supposed to love. They may be angry with the father for violence, or angry at the mother for not being able to protect herself and themselves.

They may try to rise to protect mom from father or from her sadness. They may feel guilty for not being able to save her, or have to raise their siblings when parents fail to do so. They learn the world is a brutal and unsafe place, a place where one is abused and one is violent.



Children who are abused can be helped when adults take seriously their reports of abuse. BestPhotoStudio/Shutterstock.com

### Adulthood scars of childhood trauma

There is a growing body of research suggesting longstanding impact of childhood trauma: not only that such childhood experiences can form the way the person perceives and reacts to the world, but also that there are lifelong academic, occupational, mental and physical health consequences. These children may have lower intellectual and school performance, higher anxiety, depression, substance use and a variety of physical health problems including autoimmune disease.

Adults who endured childhood trauma have a higher chance of developing post-traumatic stress disorder when exposed to new trauma and show higher rates of anxiety, depression, substance use and suicide. Physical health consequences of childhood trauma in adults include but are not limited to obesity, chronic fatigue, cardiovascular disease, autoimmune disease, metabolic syndrome and pain.

Not all who are exposed to childhood adversity are permanently scarred, and a front line in research of childhood adversity is the predictors of risk and resilience. For instance, there are genetic variations which may make the person more or less vulnerable to impact of

trauma. I often see those who were lucky enough to transform their trauma to a meaningful cause, and with the help of a good mentor, therapist, grandparent or positive experiences rise and develop more strength.

This, however, does not mean those who sustain long-term impacts were weaker or tried less. There are a multitude of genetic, neurobiological, family, support, socioeconomic and environmental factors, besides the severity and how chronic the trauma is, that can lead to breaking of the strongest of people when exposed to trauma.

### How to deal with childhood trauma

We as a society can do a lot: reduce poverty; educate and provide less privileged parents with support needed for raising their children (although childhood trauma happens also in privileged homes); take seriously children's report of abuse; remove the source of trauma or remove the child from the traumatic environment; psychotherapy. When necessary, medications can also help.

Fortunately for all of us, recent advances in neuroscience, psychotherapy and psychiatry have provided us with strong tools to prevent the negative impact in the child and reduce a lot of the negative impact in the adults, if we choose to use them.

## BlueKnot Day



### Monday 28th October 2019

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 the sails of the Opera House will be illuminated in blue to mark the occasion, to help raise awareness around the foundation and embody the theme "Untangle the Knot of Complex Trauma".

There will be a number of ways you can take part and show your support on the day.

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

We will also be holding other events throughout the week including an Interfaith Service. Details are currently being finalised and will be published in the next edition of our newsletter.

To find regular updates and for more information on how you can take part and support Blue Knot Day visit <https://www.blueknot.org.au/BlueKnotDay>



**BLUEKNOTDAY**



**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](mailto: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](mailto:trainingandservices@blueknot.org.au) or call (02) 8920 3611 to find out more.

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