

BROADENING HORIZONS

RTO, Training, Debriefing & Counselling

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The Secretary
 Senate Community Affairs References Committee
 Suite S1 59
 Parliament House
 Canberra ACT 2600



30 July, 2003

To: Senate Community Affairs References Committee,

My counselling experiences can provide examples of the extent and impact of the long-term social and economic consequences of child abuse and neglect on individuals, families and Australian society as a whole.

My practice specialises in providing formal support groups, counselling, debriefing and information to people recovering from trauma and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. My clients' distress originates from a wide range of traumas, however I have had the privilege of supporting a very mature lady who has survived a 'Magdalene Sisters' institution. Personally, I have researched the literature about PTSD and then published a plain english book illustrated with my own experiences of recovery from what developed into complex PTSD. This book was written in consultation with our Chief of Psychiatry, Dr Rowan Davidson, and has proved a very useful aid for recovering people to identify aspects of their process and have words to articulate their difficulties, and also to support networks in increasing their insight into 'Traumatic Stress'.

The ripple effect of chronic or complex PTSD has the obvious problems with people's ability to work, maintain stable healthy family relationships, financial difficulties and eventually dependence on the health system. Anger is a major component of chronic PTSD and the consequences of unresolved anger has led to a range of assaults and other offences which has even introduced chronically traumatised people to the Justice system. We have seen the effects on wives and children of the much-studied Vietnam Veterans who exhibited chronic PTSD; where a whole generation exhibited secondary traumatic stress. I am a member of the Australian Society of Traumatic Stress Studies and at international conferences we have been informed of countless examples of second generation problems of families who are chronically traumatised.

As exemplified in my client's case, children who suffered the debilitating effects (numbing their emotions or developing unhelpful coping strategies) of institutionalisation itself or even outright

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| ➤ Manage violent/aggressive persons & incidents | ➤ General stress management |
| ➤ Emotional first aid after critical incidents | ➤ Security / crowd control |
| ➤ Cert. IV in Assessment & workplace training | ➤ Physical self defence |

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abusive actions on top of the neglectful environment, and who are only later in their lives obtaining information and support have multiple layers of trauma to resolve. This is a time-consuming, thus costly process. Whose responsibility is it to bear the cost of this rehabilitation so that the person can live the remainder of their life fully and productively?

I believe that education and supportive rehabilitation is a primary strategy in lessening the drain on the public health and judicial systems because healthy, aware and supported people don't need to depend on others to provide what they could maintain for themselves. Counselling enables recovering survivors of trauma to become wise, self-managing and valuable community members who usually contribute more back to society than those who haven't experienced difficulties. However the investment for the counselling is needed before these benefits can be received back into the community.

The adequacy of existing remedies and support mechanisms has been limited to clients needing to self-fund rehabilitation from actions that were the responsibility of community systems. Often they have only been able to access basic, low cost support and too many have been simply medicated (sedated) or again institutionalised. With the increase in community awareness of the effects of trauma, we have seen many cases of recovering survivors gaining enough knowledge to begin a process gaining appropriate support and who are now invaluable support givers in the community. Their work and adequate professional counselling / therapy needs to be funded appropriately.

Funding should be allotted to a wide range of professionals and not limited to a particular qualification, so that recovering survivors have access to a range of 'healing modalities'. Every individual needs the recovery plan to follow their personal requirements and must not be expected to somehow make themselves fit one model designed to 'fit all'.

We look forward to great outcomes of educational and restorative initiatives addressing a wide range of needs so as to maximise the health and welfare particularly of those people where the community neglected to protect them in their childhood. The institutions that created situations where abuse was able to proliferate need to facilitate reconciliation by funding the healing process of the victims who can be identified.

Yours Sincerely,

Francesc Day

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