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18/7/05

The Committee Secretary  
Senate Committee on Mental Health  
Parliament House  
Canberra 2600

20 JUL 2005

Dear Sir/Madam,

I used to work with a lady who used to be the Administration Manager of a Primary School in the Northern Territory. During the time she was employed in this position she became aware of students with Behavioural and Learning problems as well as students with Disability impairments. Psychologists are allocated to schools in the Northern Territory, these Psychologists travel from school to school to work with students. Before this can happen, it is the job of the Principal or Deputy Principal (usually the Deputy Principal) to arrange a meeting between the Psychologist, Teacher, Parents and Student. After this takes place the student is worked with on an ongoing basis.

I needed this sort of thing as a child, however in those days this sort of help for students wasn't available as an adult I've had to go searching for the help I really needed, this has turned out to be a lifelong quest. When I first started searching for the help I needed as a young adult, I had no chance of finding what I needed.

As a child I wouldn't have been able to discover for myself what I now know about myself. I'm speaking

here about the way I've been functioning psychologically as a person. Which begs the question, would the help which is available to students in schools today have helped me as a child? I'll leave this question unanswered. As an adult the search for the help I needed has been a very long and hard one. I will now go back to where all this searching began and talk about some of the things I've been through to finally get the sort of help I have today and which I needed when my search began as a young adult.

In 1972 I had a really bad panic attack. Panic attacks come in different ways, you don't always get the feeling you are about to have a heart attack. Mine started one day as I was filling the shelves of the grocery section of a department store in Sydney in which I was working at the time. Never having experienced a Panic attack before, I didn't know what hit me, all of a sudden I became confused. This confusion in my mind remained with me for a few months, during this time I had to give up work and see a psychiatrist. He couldn't diagnose anything, all he did was to put me on tablets which made me feel worse. I just had to wait until I recovered from the panic attack when the confusion in my mind disappeared.

Incidentally, I have now come to understand that an anxiety panic attack is a strong emotional reaction to a situation. The situation I found myself in at the time was one in which I felt an increasing sense of loss of control. In the face of this loss of control I felt this horrible sense of impending doom that something awful was going to happen to me, but I couldn't put my finger on what it was. Because I didn't know what

it was I couldn't deal with it

In 1974 I spent nearly a month in Chelmsford hospital in Sydney, 18 days of this was spent under sedation receiving deep sleep therapy. Years later Chelmsford hospital was closed down and a Royal commission was held by the New South Wales Government of the day into the deep sleep therapy and its effect on patients who went through the hospital

During my young adult years of living in New South Wales, all other attempts by me to get help proved to be fruitless. In 1979 I left New South Wales permanently and travelled to London where I lived for three and a half years. During my time in London I searched for some more help, and the help I received only turned out to be a bandaid solution.

Once arriving back in Australia from London in 1982, I've lived in Melbourne, Adelaide and Perth. It's only since arriving in Perth I've managed to finally get the sort of help I really need. My search for this help in Perth has taken me to the Wasley Institute, where I've been counselled and been involved in Personal growth groups. I should point out the Wasley Institute is now at another location in Perth and is only involved in person to person counselling, it no longer runs groups. As well, I've been involved in other Personal growth groups at different locations in Perth.

In the late 1980's I met a then C. E. S. Psychologist and had counselling from him. Thanks to this man he referred me to another Psychologist through my counselling with this other Psychologist I've been making progress. I should point out I've received counselling from this Psychologist since 1991. At his suggestion I'm currently

writing a book about my life as therapy. This is proving to be a very long slow process and it isn't easy. Having said that, when I've finished writing the book to the point where it is considered for publication, I know without a shadow of a doubt what I've written will have been well worthwhile. The process of me writing the book is far more important than the book actually being published.

One thing that has made my search very worthwhile since arriving in Perth is I've been encouraged by other people to do Personal growth work. Also a small number of people are encouraging me to write the book. Having said that, my question is, why was it so hard for me to get the sort of help I really needed in the first place, it shouldn't have been so hard. My search for help has been in four states of Australia, as well as living in London for three and a half years. It's only since arriving in Perth in 1985 I've finally managed to obtain proper help.

The crux of my letter is my search for the sort of help I really needed turned out to be a very long and difficult one. It was also a search I had to do for myself with very little help from anyone living outside of Western Australia. I had to go and get help, no one came to me and pointed me in the right direction so I received proper help. I hope it's not nearly as hard for people to get help in the future, as it has been for me and my search in the past, this search started as a young adult.

Things are changing, more and more people are coming to see the value of someone receiving counselling. What makes me say this. On Perth radio 6PR, the nightline

program has been on the air in the evenings for over twenty one years. When Pastor Graham Mabury took over the hosting of the program, one of the things he wanted to change was people's perceptions about someone needing counselling. This was always destined to be a very long and slow process. Attitudes like, there must be something wrong with you if you need counselling, and you should be able to work out your own problems, attitudes like these needed addressing. Earlier in the year as I was listening to the nightline program he had a Psychologist as a guest in the studio. As a part of him being a guest in the studio people phoned in for some counselling on the air. Naturally, speaking to the Psychologist on the air meant someone couldn't be counselled for too long. Thankfully, the stigma about people receiving counselling these days isn't as widespread as it used to be.

Yours faithfully

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