



Providing Heartstrength
to Adult Survivors of
Childhood Sexual Abuse

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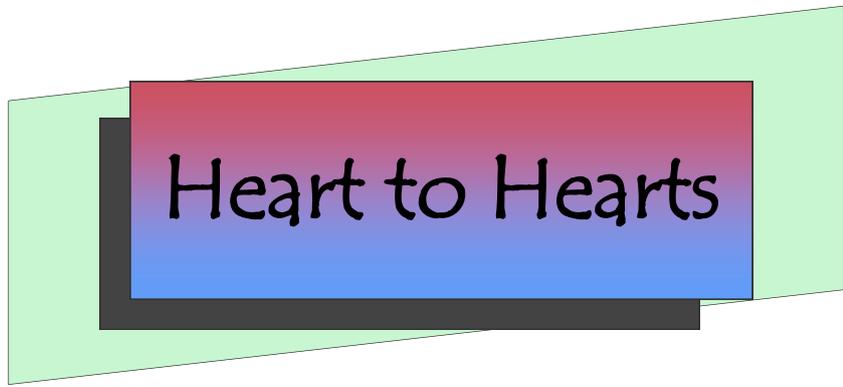
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Issue 46

Winter 2018

A Message from our CEO...

Welcome to our Winter edition. In the last few months the Board of Directors and myself have been working on creating a new strategic plan for 2018-2021 which aims to; create new pathways for sector collaboration, increase our community presence and create new opportunities for funding.

As we continue to seek financial stability. We have upgraded some of our IT systems which have increased efficiency and productivity for our work. We are also very excited as we are working on a new website, which is coming soon. You can follow updates on our Facebook page for the new launch date, as well as news and events.

Congratulations to group 39 'Silver Possums' for completing their 18-week program. *Best wishes from the Team at HFH*

Group 40 is half way to completing the program, which will end in September. Keep going, 'Golden Wombats' you are doing great!

We also welcome new participants to Group 41 as they commence their program in August.

- ♥ It has been cold outside but inside our hearts have been warmed by the ongoing support from members of our community. Please see page 6 for a list of organisations who have helped us in the last few months. A heartfelt thankyou for your dedication and commitment to HFH.

Special mention to: Commonwealth Bank Alstonville branch, as HFH was a lucky recipient of the Centenary Grant presented to us in April. Byron and Beyond Networking for our yearly membership as we continue to enjoy meeting new people and learning new skills from your workshops. To the Lions Clubs of Ballina, Alstonville and Goonellabah-Wollongbar for your continual financial support for the work at HFH.

Seminar 'Eyes Wide Open' for family and friends of survivors is being held on Saturday 4th August, 9am-12.30pm. Cost is \$55 including handbook and light refreshments. Places are limited. Please call to book on 02 6628 8940.

Fundraising event

Please join us for a great day out and delicious food at the 8th Annual Sample Food Festival being held at Bangalow on Saturday 1st September. For more details go to: www.samplefoodevents.com

Courage doesn't mean you don't get afraid. Courage means you don't let fear stop you

Heartfelt House contact details...

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Email: info@heartfelthouse.org.au
Website: www.heartfelthouse.org.au
Monday, Tuesday and Thursday 9am-3pm



A Survivor's Story

Hello, my name is Lisa. I am a survivor of child sexual abuse. To be more specific, over a period of 18 months as a small child I was subject to incest, rape and psychological abuse, in my own home, a place where I should have felt safe.

I have carried this burden my whole life, unable to talk to anyone about it. Never finding the right doctor to discuss this very private and shameful secret and never talking to my family about it. I am now 51 years old and I have had over 40 years of this shame defining me and shaping me. There has been the functional side of me that has allowed me to go on. But the main personality that shaped me was the dark, crushing and crippling part which would now and then rear its ugly head. Whilst I have been a busy person, I have been able to keep this monster at bay, although not a day has passed where I did not wake and wish I did not exist.

Once my children left home last year I was no longer a busy person and I fell apart. Unable to get off my bed, so attacked by my own thoughts of worthlessness. I had never understood how any of these awful things I believed about myself were connected to anything. I knew that I was a victim when I was young but how could that still have any bearing on my life? Thoughts of suicide were always on my mind, fortunately for me I have about 5 people in my life who anchor me to this world, so they were only ever thoughts. Some survivors are not as lucky as me in this respect, they have little or no support.

I knew I had to tackle this head on now as I literally could not just lay like a catatonic person on my bed forever. I found a good GP whom I was able to confide in. She was suspicious when I wouldn't have a pap smear for cancer, finally I told her, don't keep asking me because I don't want anyone doing a pap smear and I don't care if I get cancer, it would be a blameless way out for me. What a horrifying thing to think and to say! But I believed I had no future, I could not visualize one at all.

She quickly found me a good psychologist and my journey began. However, it was after driving past Heartfelt House on the Highway for some time I finally built up the courage to make that phone call that was going to change my life.

Before coming to Heartfelt House, I was not a survivor, I was a victim. I have been a victim for over 40 years. The First Steps, it was hard, it was painful, it was at times unbearable as parts of my psyche were opened up to me for the first time. I was not alone in this process though, there were 5 other wounded souls in that room with me each week. We started off acknowledging the pain we could see mirrored in all our eyes. We ended up celebrating with joy the amazing transformations that we witnessed each week in each other and ourselves. The other women in the group became a support network, and somehow as painful as it was we came back each week because Heartfelt House was now our safe place to be.

Now, after having done the First Steps, at Heartfelt House, I understand how everything, everything I ever believed about myself stems back to my childhood abuse. I now understand that in no way was anything that happened then my fault. The fault lays squarely with the perpetrator.

I understand that to view myself as a victim, still gives him power over me. Thanks to Heartfelt House I can choose to view myself as a survivor. I have choice and power over my thoughts and when the familiar old stories come up in my head I now have the strength, the knowledge and the tools to chase them away and replace them with compassion and love for myself. I am still working through everything. At the moment, I am replacing the old stories with new different positive thoughts. I catch myself daily and then say "no Lisa, its not like that anymore, how about this instead" All in my head of course!

The structure of the classes, the compassion of the facilitators and the support of the other women in the group has been wonderful, sometimes overwhelming as I work through whether I deserve it.

I do deserve it. I am a survivor. I have a future now.

In fact, two weeks after finishing the course I have started up my own business. I never could have done this without the strength and belief in myself that Heartfelt House has restored in me. From deep in my heart, thank you to Heartfelt House. I did not know how to do it myself. You have literally saved my life.

Lisa – a Survivor with a bright future.



Dear Volunteers

Your dedication and earnest, yet subtle support, has allowed me to have somewhere to feel safe and nurtured throughout the program. I have recognised and appreciated the selfless contribution you have made throughout this journey, every step of the way.

You have contributed to making me feel safe, nurtured and, most important enough, for someone to do something for me unconditionally, for one of the few times in my life. Those things have been fundamental in the positive changes that have been evolving in me over the duration of the program.

Along with the program, and with the support of the facilitators, you have directly helped in restoring my hope, trust and faith in others, and values for myself.

What you are doing is making a direct, positive difference in someone's life. It means so much and is so appreciated.

From the heart of survivors...

When I was 55, I remembered the childhood abuse. It was so frightening I had a breakdown and used anti-depressants and wine to hide from the feelings for 20 years. Now at 73, I have stopped those hiding behaviours and in only 18 weeks the course run by Heartfelt House has given me the tools to heal.

Their approaches week by week covering a different topic is so encouraging and structured to allow each participant to grow at their own speed.

**BELIEVE IN
YOURSELF.**

A thank you to the VOLUNTEERS

To all the beautiful people who are Heartfelt House.

Thank-you very deeply for allowing a space for me to heal, grow and develop compassion for myself.

From the beautiful gardens as we walk to the door, the amazing cakes and chocolates and fruit that greet us each week.

The warming candles as we wander through the house.

The crocheted blankets we wrap ourselves in when feeling vulnerable.

The kind and caring facilitators who help us grow.

The people who keep the space clean and fresh.

The silent team of people looking after the administration side of Heartfelt House.

To you all I offer my heartfelt thanks for your contribution to the physical space and the program itself.



Being part of Heartfelt House has been a wonderful warm experience where I could be present in the reality of my childhood with acceptance and understanding and without shame. In large part those feelings of warmth came from all the hidden support.

Thank you for all the background work. The cakes especially went to the heart (via the hips!).

Thanks so much

Education from the Heart

Tips on finding the 'right' counsellor/therapist for you!

We often hear from survivors that finding the right counsellor can take time and may be a scary and confusing process, given the multitude of therapy approaches and interventions available. There is no fail-proof formula for choosing a therapist, but this needn't discourage you. This list is no means exhaustive, but it will give you ideas and encourage you to be thorough and discerning.

How do I know which counsellor is right for me?

When therapist shopping look for therapists who are telling you about their work and their philosophy of working with people (not 'selling' themselves).

Ask if they offer a short initial meeting and if it is free or at a reduced cost.

If you are comfortable to disclose that you are a survivor, ask the therapist if they are trained in working with trauma and what experience they have in working with adult survivors of childhood sexual abuse. Ask about their level of experience and expertise.

Almost all people have an instinctive idea on the gender and/ or age of the person they can confide in and they therefore would prefer to work with. There are no rules here, just preferences.

Trust your intuition, it is important that you are comfortable with the person you choose, their gender, age, their work experience and knowledge, their counselling philosophy and their overall demeanour/personal attitude . If something doesn't feel right, ask questions and clarify any concerns.

Ask friends who are in therapy if they like their therapist. If they do, find out what it is they like about them, it may be helpful to ask your friends to ask their therapists for referral lists.

Ask about their availability. Practical matters like wait time for appointments, days and times they work and location are also important considerations.

The following factors are generally considered to be important aspects of the therapeutic alliance that should be considered by both clients and therapists during the early stages of counselling.

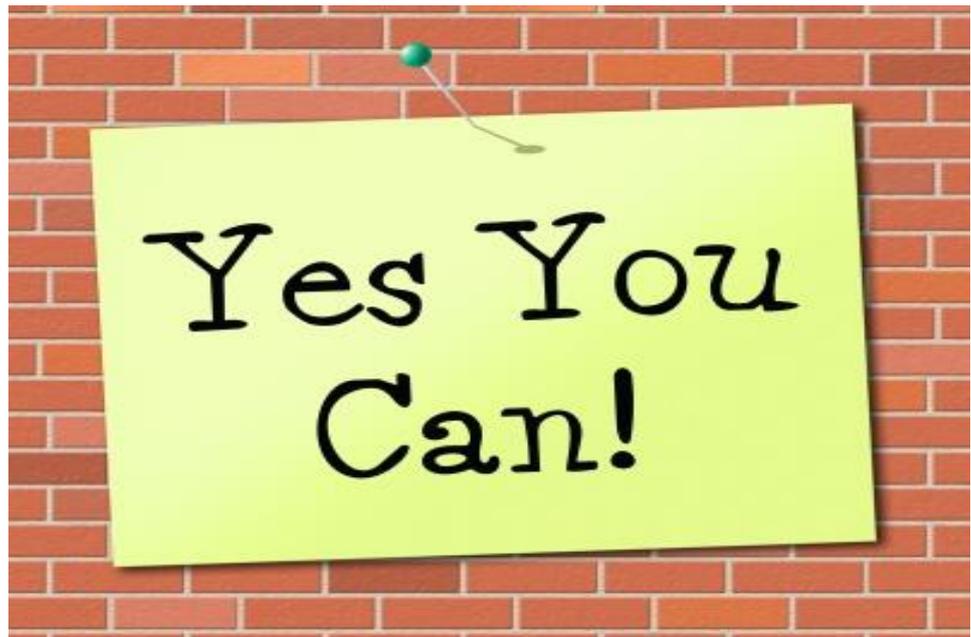
It's important to keep in mind that therapists and counsellors are not your friend, they can be friendly, but their sole purpose is to help you! They are there for therapeutic support only. It would be inappropriate for your therapist to use therapy time for any purpose other than to support and guide you.

When enquiring about the service feel confident to ask about the fee; remember you/your health insurance/ Medicare are paying for the service.

If you have any concerns, raise them with your counsellor when they happen.

A good therapist encourages and models accurate, honest, and timely feedback and communication.

Good therapy aims to affirm the client's basic human dignity , self worth and is based on client's needs.



For more information, please see:

Australian Counselling Association

Find a counsellor :

<https://www.theaca.net.au>

Victims of Crime NSW

How to find an approved counsellor:

https://www.victimsservices.justice.nsw.gov.au/Pages/vss/vs_counselling/vs_counsellor-finding.aspx

Psychotherapy and Counselling Federation of Australia (PACFA)

Find a therapist:

<http://www.pacfa.org.au/find-a-therapist>

Blue Knot Foundation

Provides short term phone counselling support, information, resources, tools and workshops to help survivors and their friends, families, and loved ones live better lives.

Call - 1300 657 380, Monday-Sunday, 9am-5pm AEST/ADST

<https://www.blueknot.org.au/Survivors-Supporters/For-Survivors/Resources-for-Survivors/Finding-Care-and-Support>

Board Report

Behind the scenes the Board of Heartfelt House continues to work tirelessly to seek out new collaborations and possible sources of funding to ensure Kate and her team of facilitators can keep providing the groups and support to survivors that has been occurring for the last 13 years. While we have been blessed with an injection of funds from the Federal Government, these funds don't cover all the work we have been doing or what we want to do moving into the future.

We also need more facilitators and to be able to offer these wonderful women appropriate compensation for the amazing work they do empowering survivors and assisting them to take the first steps to break free from their childhood experiences of abuse.

We have the Annual General Meeting coming up soon too and I would like to extend an invitation out to all the Heartfelt House supporters to come along and see how the Heartfelt House Board works or perhaps consider joining the Board. At the AGM the entire Board resigns and then we elect a new Board from those attending the meeting. Some Board members have been sitting for 13 years now and I can see at times how tired people have become. If you are interested in finding out more about what would be involved in joining the Board of HFH please feel free to contact me on ph: 66202970. Watch out for the date and time of the AGM in the next Newsletter.

Sharon Brodie
 HFH Board Chairperson



Herb Garden

Due to the green thumbs and fingers of our lovely volunteer gardener, Heartfelt House now has a lovely herb garden for participants to come and use. Our gardens are a sanctuary for participants, staff and visitors and we thank this generous person for their tireless effort. It is truly appreciated!

Thank you

- Our volunteer gardener** **Volunteer slice makers for delicious baked treats**
- Lions Club of Ballina** **Lions Club of Goonellabah-Wollongbar & Districts** **Lions Club of Alstonville**
- 100 Hearts Club Members** **In Home Solutions for all things IT** **SNP Security for keeping our house safe**
- Byron and Beyond Networking for the opportunity to meet like-minded locals**
- Commonwealth Bank of Australia Alstonville Branch** **Alstonville Wollongbar Chamber of Commerce**
- The Board of Directors past and present for their time, wisdom and commitment**