



The National Association for
People Abused in Childhood

Registered charity no. 1069802

Spring 2006

SUPPORT LINE UP AND RUNNING!

Message from the founder

Great news, the Support Line is now up and running!

I am kicking myself today, because yesterday NAPAC got its first appearance (in the guise of yours truly) on the Trisha Goddard Show. Kicking myself because they, the programme producers, promised they would give at least a weeks' notice before the show went out (it was recorded weeks' ago) so we could ready ourselves for the onslaught. Well they didn't and it came as a complete shock when the support line phone barely stopped ringing all day. With the promised notice we would have had an opportunity to alert more volunteers. Never mind. We should expect nothing less from the



One of our support line volunteers

'media'. We coped and we hope that the many people who tried and failed to get through will try again in the coming days and weeks when things quieten down a bit.

However, on the positive side I still have to keep pinching myself because day after day, things just seem to get better and better for NAPAC. We are truly blessed! As Jon (our formidable Chair) mentions elsewhere, we have re-launched the info line - now called the 'Support Line' and we have got a fantastic team of volunteers doing an amazing job answering calls and responding to letters and emails.

We even have a few bob in the bank for the first time in our brief history and that's a good thing too.

A quirky thing in our society is that it appears to be easier to raise money once you've already got a bit. It reminds me of banks who won't lend you a penny when you need it but will offer you the world when you don't! But we won't be complacent. A few pounds can soon disappear.

You may have seen in the news that the NSPCC has merged with ChildLine. Such charities surely belong together? Why duplicate resources or fight for the same dwindling pot of cash? More charities should join forces and enjoy the 'economies of scale' it brings.

A Government Minister, no less, reminded me recently that nothing keeps us on our toes like the threat of closure and I hope and pray that NAPAC never reaches the level of complacency so common to some charities. I am pleased and privileged to say that the people involved in NAPAC today are as passionate about our work as we were nine years ago (yes NINE!)

when we started out on this journey.

Currently more than 60 calls are being made to the support line every day. We are working hard to answer them all but that does mean..... more resources needed! However, as grateful as we are to those wonderful people at Lloyds TSB, Allen Lane and the Body Shop Foundation and others who give us money (and who have thankfully stuck with us over the years) nothing is more important or valuable than our trustees and volunteers who give so much of their time and sweat!

I am always reluctant to single out people because of the fear of upsetting someone else (you know what I mean don't you?) but I do want to mention Paul Hurford who has, almost single-handedly transformed our new support line office from a Spartan, bare space to a place that any multi-national would be proud to have as its Headquarters! Thanks Paul. We could not have done it without you....because you did it!

My last message ended 'Happy Christmas'. This message ends with a huge thanks to everyone who has contributed in any way whatsoever to making NAPAC work. As I said when we launched the 'info line' first time round three and a half years ago..it is a huge pity that we need to exist because there is such an obvious need but we are making a positive difference to many peoples' lives and I can't think of anything more important than that. Thank you!

Peter Saunders

Founder of NAPAC



CELEBRATING SURVIVORS' SUCCESS

This is *your* page, please send us your contributions!

Melanie is a survivor of childhood and adulthood abuse, including sexual abuse by a health professional. She says, "my adult children and I are getting to know each other again"

We are living in a materialistic society and this extends to the medical world where the physical/visual seems to be a priority. What is seen, is evidence for belief and value, what is unseen tends to be dismissed.

This mental impasse is especially evident when it involves emotional trauma. The public fear the condition, ignore it or belittle it. Health professionals frequently misdiagnose post-traumatic stress syndrome, downgrading it either to a collection of mysterious symptoms or mental illness such as anxiety or depression.

A degree in psychology is not required to understand traumatic symptoms in the context of the survivor's life story. Common sense is the primary qualification, for example; injury to the body causes pain. This physical pain is natural in response to the cause.

When someone has experienced a traumatic event it follows that they will suffer some traumatic symptoms because that person is traumatised. Mental scars can be fixed in the mind just as the body attempts to re adjust and heal itself, producing bodily scars.

I don't see any problem with the 'cause and effect' reality. Many 'out there' do seem to be disabled in terms of emotional intelligence. It appears, for them, to be more comfortable to adopt a mindset which deletes emotional wounds, rose tinted spectacles at hand to filter out the blurb of 'boring' words.

It's a quick-fix culture: plastic, boxed oven meals, plastic cutlery and 'plastic' people. Some people in a helping role favour quickie-healing sessions for traumatised individuals. Remarks such as 'get on with your life', 'forget it', 'oh dear!' or 'that's in the past now', are at best, very unhelpful, at worst, damaging. The brute fact is that circumstances causing the trauma are past, but the consequences of it often intrude upon the present and future. Certain situations do have long-term effects, which include complex networks with other significant people.

The fact that sufferers do have nightmares and flashbacks shows

that the past does affect future life, often beyond the survivor's control. What needs to be understood is that post-traumatic stress is the Herculean effort of the human mind expressing huge overload of stress-consciousness attempting to cope with the intolerable - to survive and heal.

When traumatised (abused) people are rejected, insulted and patronised on a regular basis, this shock forces them further down the road of isolation and alienation, dreadful feelings which intensify the symptoms. Having these emotions smacks the person straight back to the original stressors causing pain.

The more incidents of abuse, the more triggers there are to fire the re-trauma buttons. The survivor struggles courageously to escape, but cannot, anxiously discovering themselves on a frightening treadmill of repeated re-traumatisation.

The world passes them by in an ugly tangle of varied reactions; ignorance, irritation and shameful lack of compassion. Even these responses can remind people of their abuser(s)

Despite the psychological quagmire, I have discovered that dark clouds sometimes do have a silver lining if I wait and look. A deeply wounded person can experience joyful moments. These, I feel, are the jewels appearing in the night, like a rainbow in a sun-lit shower.

This new discovery has nourished and inspired me, coaching me on survival skills. I can look forward to the next gift of jewels, I can feel the joy of being joyful - the excitement of happiness, a taste of peaceful times and the magic of being alive. The stars are above my head just as they are for all other living things. Our sun still shines behind its cloud barrier.

To compensate for my fragmented past, I have worked at being part of some wonderful experiences to create beautiful memories, not just for me, but to enable me to relate them to my now adult children (they are truly the largest jewels) Some of these experiences include working in the Caribbean, with marine turtles between two favourite 'dimensions' - the night sky and the tropi-

cal sea.

A large tabby and white tom cat, entered my life when I needed him the most. He chose me and I learned a new idea: that I am worthy of love, because this innocent creature showed me love unconditionally. I shall always remember how he purred loudly when I entered the room, the comfort of physical contact and the enduring image of dirty cobwebs decorating all his whiskers after his cellar safari! In the midst of pain, chaos and dispossession this animal decided I was lovable. Something as simple as that was enough to melt my frozen, traumatised heart. The universe could offer something good after all, like fragments of colour piercing blackness.

My body has shot through a tornado, when I sky dived from eleven thousand feet out of a small plane. I felt the full force of nature up there, shuddering with freezing turbulence, gulping like a fish to suck in the raw, icy air.

Last summer, my once abused body felt embraced by the natural world - I went skinny-dipping in a desolate loch. There, I felt pure peace. The only sounds I heard were those of wild geese and fresh water dancing around my skin. This was a powerful time in my life, worlds away from what I once had to endure.

My own traumatic life often feels as if I have been mortally wounded, but I know now that I can also feel joy in all its forms.

I once believed that things like live and joy had become extinct.

Melanie Cunningham

CONTACT DETAILS

Any feedback and articles will be gratefully received. Write to:

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42 Curtain Road, London,
EC2A 3NH

jaynelarnie@napac.org.uk

Tel: 020 8313 9460

NAPAC NOTICE BOARD

NAPAC has made great progress over the last year

This time last year the Trustees set themselves two targets: to get the support line for survivors running again and to find a suitable office to base ourselves. We have achieved both, and more. Our new office is in premises at London Bridge and we are very fortunate to have as our neighbours the Telephone Helplines Association, which means we have access to lots of support and expertise. We are keeping the same postal address at 42 Curtain Road, but the new office is where the support line is based. We have trained a great team of volunteers who have been learning fast and doing a great job. We have started slowly and quietly so we don't get overloaded, but will soon be in a position to have a more public launch. At the moment we operate Monday to Friday 10.30 to 3.00, but still need more volunteers who can come into the office so we can expand the hours.

This has all been possible due to the efforts of a good team of people and an improvement in the amount of donations we have received. There are also signs that the government is taking the issues we work with more seriously. NAPAC has contributed to the Department of Health's major inquiry into best practice in working with victims of abuse (Victims of Violence and Abuse Prevention Programme). Although this consultation has a long time to run, it should eventually lead to more funding for services for survivors and better treatment.

Jon Bird
Chair of NAPAC

NAPAC SUPPORT LINE

0800 085 3330

Mon - Fri 10.30am to 3.00pm

Trustee Stands Down

We at NAPAC are very sorry to accept the resignation of Laura Gordon, one of our most valued trustees. Laura has been working with this charity for several years and her efforts have contributed hugely to the success of NAPAC so far. Fortunately though, Laura will still continue to run and manage our website and we are extremely grateful for that.

Thanks Laura

SURVIVOR'S VOICE

Unmarked Grave

Truth, lies, I can not decide,
I can not recollect what's inside.
Falling, floating I begin to glide,
Across the air and the sea,
Clouds of white envelop me.

Swimming, drowning, it's all the same,
Nothing seems to ease the pain.
Climbing, hanging from this rope of
Doubt, fear and insecurity,
Of how they took my purity.

Blinded by indoctrination,
Always at accusation.
I wore the mask,
That no one would see,
And through this mask, I blinded thee.

I let you believe,
I let you deceive,
I learnt to perceive,
The wrongs that you projected,
To me; and then I recollected.

The smells, the light,
The vivid dreams at night,
Blurred visions within my sight.
Peering down, looking within,
At a fresh flower without sin.

Innocent, Guilty, I'll never know,
I can't remember, I have no proof to show,
It's buried beneath, buried below.
No grave marks it, no designated space,
It's just a thought that has no face.

Poem by Leanne



The Spirit of Things

Arts Project For Survivors

Project Outline

The project will work with adult survivors of childhood trauma, focussing on their relationship with physical items in their lives and what these things mean to them.

Background behind project

Essentially the project is an art project, however it does have social and therapeutic benefits. The idea behind the project originates from my early childhood fascination with American Indian culture and spirituality. As a child I was captivated by their relationship to their surrounding environment and the symbolic meaning they gave to the physical world they lived in.

The value of this project for survivors

The impact of childhood trauma can make a person become dissociative, so that they feel like they do not live in their body or connect to the rest of the world. Speaking as a survivor myself, the experience for me felt like my spirit was being detached from my body and for many years I felt like I lived in an empty shell and felt as if I was an alien on another planet.

Theory of how it works

By sensitively enabling survivors to focus on the physical things around them, a process begins of establishing a psychological connection between emotional and physical needs. There is a connection between emotional and physical needs that is often very disconnected in survivors. For example; 'a place of ones own' or 'a place to call home' are emotive phrases that demonstrate how important having a home is to a persons emotional wellbeing, but a home also serves our physical needs too. Really the body, mind and emotions are all interconnected aspects of a human being and trauma can disrupt this natural flow.

Duration

With a maximum of ten participants, the course will begin in mid -July and be held at NAPAC'S London Bridge premises for two hours , one day a week, for a duration of eight weeks. There will be a small charge.

Rob Jones

Arts/Training and Development Director NAPAC

Any survivors wishing to take part in this project, or who are interested in finding out more about it, please contact Rob Jones:

by email; robjones@napac.org.uk by phone; 020 7378 6122

by post; Rob Jones, NAPAC, 42 Curtain Road, London, EC2A 3NH

Invitation to survivor groups and organisations

This is an open invitation to all survivor groups and organisations, who would like to be included in a new feature called 'SPOTLIGHT' which will be included in our newsletter regularly from the summer issue onwards.

This is an excellent opportunity for organisations to showcase their services, give a little bit of history and generally make themselves more widely known.

If you are interested, please contact Jayne Larnie:

by email; Jaynelarnie@napac.org.uk

by post; Jayne Larnie, NAPAC Newsletter, 42 Curtain Road, London, EC2A 3NH

DISCLAIMER

The views and opinions expressed in this newsletter do not necessarily represent the views and opinions of NAPAC or its committee.

Any correspondence is treated with strict confidentiality, but if we are given information which is considered to disclose current incidences of abuse we will inform the appropriate authorities.

The NAPAC name must not be used without our prior specific consent.

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NAPAC

would like to thank



for printing this newsletter