



North and North West Tasmania Sexual Assault Support Services Inc

WELCOME TO THE JULY 2013 EDITION OF THE LAUREL HOUSE NEWSLETTER

The Laurel House Newsletter is produced and circulated amongst clients, service providers and the community to raise awareness of the services available at Laurel House North and North West.

It is also a venue to give advanced notice of upcoming groups and projects for survivors. There will also be a number of articles about Sexual Assault, stories from survivors, and links to other services for your information.

You can also view this newsletter on our website:
www.laurelhouse.org.au

Throughout 2012 our newsletter focused on belief. This year we will be taking a look at self-care and mindfulness.

About Laurel House

Laurel House offers a wide range of services to all members of the community, including victims of recent rape and sexual assault (adults, children and their families and support people) adult survivors of child sexual abuse (historical sexual abuse) community education to any group, school, or organisation, and professional training to service providers in other agencies. We also offer debriefing and supervision to professionals working with victims/survivors of sexual assault.

Our Organisation offers outreach services to women, men and children within the 63 and 64 telephone regions of Tasmania. These areas currently include Campbell Town, the East Coast, West Tamar, Georgetown, Devonport, Smithton, Wynyard and Queenstown with services to other areas available as the need arises.

Telephone support is available to other rural areas.

About Laurel House continued:

Laurel House Philosophy has always focused on working with Victims and Survivors of Sexual Assault, adults and children, female and male within Best Practice Standards using a Client Focused Approach.

We believe that to work towards the elimination of sexual violence we must work not only with victims and survivors but with the community in challenging values and attitudes that continue to support the sexual offenders within society.

Laurel House chose to expend their funding to include adults and children, female and male as recognition of an egalitarian framework.

We have a Victims/Survivors Rights Policy in place that excludes offenders of violence from receiving an ongoing service. We will refer them to other service providers in the community. We do recognize that some sex offenders may have been victims and there is a set criteria in the Policy that the Service may choose to see those who meet the criteria.

We believe that the feminist analysis and recognition that sexual assault is a gendered crime must take priority in service provision and development within Sexual Assault Support Services.

In the therapeutic context client centred approach is about:

- believing the client, even if the story is delivered in a disjointed or confused way
- not judging the client, or making assumptions about what she/he needs
- being guided by the client and addressing the client's stated priorities
- offering choice to the client, and seeking informed consent for service
- prioritising safety, dignity and respect
- providing sufficient time for the client to respond
- working together to demonstrate the client's own power and resources
- being open, honest and respectful
- involving service users in service design and evaluation.

About Laurel House continued:

Every client's experience of trauma is different and personal. Our ways of working allow for the individual stories to come forth in an environment that is safe and secure.

We believe that working with victims and survivors of rape and sexual assault places us in a privileged position as it is a crime that impacts on the whole of the person including the emotional, psychological, physical and spiritual being.

It is this privilege given to us (Sexual Assault Support Services) by clients that allows us into a unique place that must be honoured and protected for all victims and survivors of the future.

About the Workers

On Call Crisis Workers

Laurel House is always on the lookout for workers to join our On Call Team in both our Launceston and Burnie branches. Laurel House On Call workers are on duty from 5 p.m.—8.30 a.m. Monday-Friday, and offer a 24-hour service over weekends and public holidays.

If you would be interested in joining the Team, or if you have any questions, please contact Jacinta on 6334 2740 or admin@laurelhouse.org.au

Day Team

If you are interested in finding out more about the Laurel House Day Team, please contact Jacinta on 6334 2740 or admin@laurelhouse.org.au

Programmes

Lovebites

Laurel House North and North West have been involved in the co-facilitation of the Lovebites programme in high schools across the State. Lovebites is a collaboration between the Family Violence Counselling and Support Service and Laurel House.

It is a programme for young people aimed at respectful relationships, uncovering and challenging some of the myths associated with family and domestic violence and sexual assault. The programme uses interactive exercises to give young people an understanding of what family, domestic violence and sexual assault are. The programme also helps them understand the idea of consent and gives them an opportunity to express their ideas about what they have learnt and how they feel about family and domestic violence, and sexual assault using creative expression, which may be through art, music, drama etc...

If you feel this programme may be useful at your school, or a school near you, please contact Julie on 6334 2740 or email counsellors@laurelhouse.org.au or Alana on 64319711 or email on alana@laurelhousenw.org.au



Community Education

Community education and professional training is a large component of the services we provide. We can tailor-make a specific programme for your Organization and/or you client group, dependent on your needs.

Our programmes can include:

- ◆ About Laurel House
- ◆ About Rape, Sexual Assault, Sexual Harassment and Child Sexual Assault
- ◆ The impact and the effects of sexual assault
- ◆ The myths of sexual assault
- ◆ How to handle a disclosure of recent rape and/or sexual assault
- ◆ How to handle a disclosure of historical sexual assault
- ◆ Support you in your work/organization

Groups

A self-care group for women was held at Laurel House (North) over 5-weeks facilitated by Rachel and Benita.

We are looking into other groups that may be useful for our Clients in future in both the North and North West regions, and are open to suggestions as to what may be helpful for people. If you have a suggestion, or if you are interested in participating in a group at Laurel House, please feel free to contact us on 6334 2740 or email counsellors@laurelhouse.org.au or 64319711 or email counsellors@laurelhousenw.org.au

Tasty Winter Treat

After Dinner Mint Cheesecake

Ingredients:

- 250g Philadelphia Cream Cheese block, softened
- 1/3 Cup Caster Sugar
- 1/2 tsp Peppermint Essence
- 1/4 Cup Cream
- 60g Dark Chocolate, melted
- 35g Peppermint Crisp Bar, roughly chopped



Method:

Beat together the cream cheese block, sugar and essence using an electric mixer until smooth. Add the cream and beat until well combined.

Pour the melted chocolate over the cream cheese mixture and lightly fold through to create a swirl. Spoon mixture into four serving glasses and refrigerate for one hour.

Serve topped with Peppermint Crisp.



Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse

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Hearings

The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse (the Commission) will hold its first sitting at 10.00 am on Wednesday 3 April 2013 at the County Court of Victoria, 250 William Street, Melbourne.

All Commissioners will be present. The Chair, Justice McClellan AM, will provide information on the work of the Royal Commission including the future conduct of public and private hearings. Senior Counsel assisting will also deliver an opening statement. There will be no evidence taken at this first sitting and there will be no appearances for the purpose of seeking leave to appear.

The sitting will be streamed live to the public via webcast on the website. The County Court has limited capacity for public viewing and interested individuals and organisations are therefore encouraged to view the proceedings via the webcast.

A transcript of the sitting will also be available on the website as soon as possible following the sitting. Further information is available on the [Frequently asked questions](#) page, or via the call centre on 1800 099 340.

The schedule for the following hearings will be confirmed in due course.

www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au

The above is a release published on the website of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, a print of this was also published in the Mercury newspaper on March 25th 2013. As the Royal Commission commences, some services may encounter clients and other professionals who have enquiries about this process, and who may be affected by it.

Should you require assistance in handling this delicate matter, please feel free to contact the aforementioned website or call centre.

Counselling and support can be sought through Laurel House by calling 6334 2740, or emailing counsellors@laurelhouse.org.au or 64319711 or email counsellors@laurelhousenw.org.au

Royal Commission Tasmanian Sexual Assault Support Service

A joint submission has been written by the three Tasmanian Sexual Assault Support Services, (Laurel House North and North West and the Hobart SASS) to the Federal Government for funding to provide face to face and telephone crisis, medium and long term counselling to any survivor who has been a victim of sexual assault by a member of the clergy and/or other institution.

This Service will operate Statewide with specific workers working in the three regions.

Laurel House North and North West and Hobart SASS currently provide these services to any person affected by sexual assault by the clergy and/or in an institution.

If you need or know of someone who needs information, counselling and/or support contact North 6334 2740, North West 6431 9711 or South 6231 1811

Self-Care

Learning to effectively manage stress is the first step to regaining your emotional balance. When you have the ability to quickly relieve stress in the moment, you'll become more resilient, enabling you to successfully navigate life's challenges time and time again. You'll be able to stay focused and remain in control, no matter what life throws at you.

Why learning quick stress relief is essential

Think clearly and creatively

Communicate clearly

Accurately "read" other people

Hear what someone is really saying

Trust others

Attend to your own needs

Those who are aware of their stress and know how to manage it are less likely to get overwhelmed by challenges and strong emotions. As well as being an essential skill in your everyday life, learning quick stress relief will also enable you to quickly bring your nervous system into balance.

How well do you currently manage stress?

To assess your present ability to manage stress, ask yourself the following questions:

When I feel agitated, do I know how to quickly calm myself?

Can I easily let go of my anger?

Am I able to turn to friends, family members, and co-workers to help me calm down and feel better?

When I come home at night, do I walk in feeling alert and relaxed?

Am I seldom distracted or moody?

Am I able to recognize the things that distress or upset other people?

When my energy is low, do I know how to boost it?

Tips for recognizing when you're stressed

Hush the voice that's telling you, "Oh, I'm fine." Notice how your breathing has changed. Are your muscles tense? Awareness of your physical response to stress will help regulate the tension when it occurs.

When you're tired, your eyes feel heavy and you might rest your head on your hand. When you're happy, you laugh easily. And when you are stressed, your body lets you know that too. Try to get in the habit of paying attention to your body's clues.

Observe your muscles and insides. Are your muscles tight/sore? Is your stomach tight or sore? Are your hands clenched?

Observe your breath. Is your breath shallow? Place one hand on your belly, the other on your chest. Watch your hands rise and fall with each breath. Notice when you breathe fully or when you "forget" to breathe.

Internally, we all respond to stress the same: our blood pressure rises, our heart pumps faster, and our muscles constrict. When stressed, our bodies work hard and drain our immune system.

Externally however, people tend to respond to stress in three different ways: some become angry and agitated, others space out or withdraw, and others freeze up.

The best way to quickly relieve stress often relates to your specific stress response—how you react externally when stressed.

Overexcited stress response – If you tend to become angry, agitated, or keyed up under stress, you will respond best to stress relief activities that quiet you down.

Under-excited stress response – If you tend to become depressed, withdrawn, or spaced out under stress, you will respond best to stress relief activities that are stimulating and that energize your nervous system.

Frozen stress response – If you tend to freeze, your challenge is to identify stress relief activities that provide both safety and stimulation to help you “reboot” your system.

Are you making yourself stress?

Stress doesn't always come from our external environment. Often, stress is self-generated. This can happen when we worry about things that are out of our control, dwell on the negatives, criticize ourselves, imagine the worst, or hold ourselves and others to unrealistic standards, or take on too many responsibilities. Internal stress is one of the most important kinds of stress to recognize and manage.

Quick stress relief at home

Entertaining. Prevent pre-party jitters by playing lively music. Light candles. The flicker and scent will stimulate your senses. Wear clothes that make you feel relaxed and confident instead of stiff and uncomfortable.

Kitchen. Cool the kitchen commotion by breathing in the scent of every ingredient you use—even if you're just opening cans. Delight in the delicate texture of an eggshell. Appreciate the weight of an onion.

Children and relationships. Prevent losing your cool during a spousal spat by breathing and squeezing the tips of your thumb and forefinger together. When your toddler has a tantrum, rub lotion into your hands and then breathe in the scent.

Sleep. Too stressed to snooze? Try using a white noise machine for background sound or a humidifier with a diffuser for a light scent in the air.

Creating a sanctuary. If clutter is upsetting, take 10 minutes each day to tidy and organize. Paint the walls with a fresh coat of your favourite calming colour. Display photos and images that make you feel happy. Throw open the curtains and let in natural light whenever possible.

Quick stress relief at work

Meetings. During stressful sessions, stay connected to your breath. Massage the tips of your fingers. Wiggle your toes. Sip coffee.

On the phone. Inhale something energizing, like lemon, ginger, peppermint or coffee beans. While talking, stand up or pace back and forth to burn off excess energy. Conduct phone business outside when possible.

On the computer. Work standing up. Do knee-bends in 10-minute intervals. Wrap a soft scarf around your neck. Suck on a peppermint.

Lunch breaks. Take a walk around the block or in the parking lot. Listen to soothing music while eating. Have a quick chat with someone you love.

Your workspace. Place family photos on your desk and display images and mementos that remind you of your life outside the office.

Autobiography in Five Chapters

1) I walk down the street.

There is a deep hole in the sidewalk

I fall in.

I am lost...I am hopeless.

It isn't my fault.

It takes forever to find a way out.

2) I walk down the same street.

There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.

I pretend I don't see it.

I fall in again.

I can't believe I'm in the same place.

But it isn't my fault.

It still takes a long time to get out.

3) I walk down the same street.

There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.

I see it is there.

I still fall in...it's a habit

My eyes are open

I know where I am

It *is* my fault.

I get out immediately.

4) I walk down the street.

There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.

I walk around it.

5) I walk down another street.

Taken from *The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying*, Sogyal Rinpoche, 2002, p. 32

Useful Websites and Contact Numbers

Children

Bravehearts Inc. www.bravehearts.org.au
Australian Childhood Foundation www.childhood.org.au
Kids Help Line www.kidshelpline.com.au

Attempted Suicide and/or Self harm

Safe in Oz Pty Ltd. www.safeinoz.com.au
Time Out Programme www.timeout.org.au Mobile: 0407 102 140
Beyond Blue www.ybblue.com.au

Crisis Counselling

Laurel House (North) 6334 2740 or after hours 0409 800 394
Laurel House North West 6431 9711 (24/7) www.laurelhouse.org.au
Sexual Assault Support Service Hobart Telephone 6231 1811
Lifeline www.lifeline.org.au 131 114
Samaritans Tas Launceston 6331 3355 Rest of Tasmania 1300 364 566
24-hour Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Support—1800 Respect (1800 737 732)
Eating Disorders/Body Image—Tasmanian Eating Disorders Support Service—0439 189 886

Laurel House North

PO Box 1062, Launceston 7250

Phone weekdays 8:30am – 5pm
(03) 6334 2740
After Hours Crisis Line
0409 800 394
Fax: (03) 6334 4234

Email: counsellors@laurelhouse.org.au

Website: www.laurelhouse.org.au

Laurel House North West

PO Box 499, Burnie

Phone weekdays 9.00am – 5pm
(03) 6431 9711
After Hours Crisis Line
(03) 6431 9711
Fax: (03) 6431 8710

Email: counsellors@laurelhouse.org.au

Website: www.laurelhouse.org.au

Would you like to contribute to the Laurel House newsletter?

Laurel House is looking for people to contribute stories, poems and artwork to the newsletter to share with survivors of sexual assault, family members and service providers. Items can be published anonymously if requested.

If you would like to contribute something to the newsletter please phone 6334 2740, or send your ideas to:

counsellors@laurelhouse.org.au or PO Box 1062 Launceston, 7250. All items will be carefully considered and published in upcoming newsletters.