

# FOUNDATIONS FOR MEN

## A GROUP PROGRAM MANUAL FOR WORKING WITH MEN SEXUALLY ABUSED IN CHILDHOOD



### PARTICIPANT RESOURCES & WORKBOOK

AUSTRALIAN EDITION 2016

Participant Name:

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Facilitators' Names & Contact Information:

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## Welcome

On behalf of both the developers of this program and the group facilitators, we welcome you to *Foundations*.

*Foundations* is a group program specifically designed to support and enhance the well-being of men experienced sexual abuse in childhood.

We recognise that there are multiple challenges that can make it difficult for men to access support and attend a group program. Just making it through the door can be an achievement in and of itself.

We know that child sexual abuse and sexual assault can have a profound impact on men's lives and relationships. It can lead to overwhelming difficulties; feelings of shame, guilt, and anger; suicidal thoughts; depression; anxiety; flashbacks; nightmares; eating issues; relationship and sexual difficulties; plus physical health problems and further victimisation. We also know that men who have been sexually abused can, with support, live rich and full lives, develop mutually supportive relationships, and make positive contributions within our communities.

In your time with us, we encourage you to prioritise your safety and well-being, to participate and speak up, ask questions, experiment a little, and apply the learning to your life. This is your time to be generous to yourself, to be 'self-ish'—and to make the program work for you.

We welcome your feedback and support.

Sincerely, .....Group Facilitators

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As the developers of the *Foundations* program, we applaud your efforts to address the impact of child sexual abuse, and to build a fulfilling life.

*Foundations* draws upon research, practice knowledge, and the experience of **Living Well** (Australia) and **Men and Healing** (Canada) in providing individual counselling and group support to men sexually abused in childhood. Both of our agencies have worked with thousands of men over the years, and the knowledge, understanding, and experience we have gained has been brought together in partnership to produce *Foundations*. However, the work is not done. Just as we request feedback from group facilitators, we also seek feedback from participants. No matter where you live, we would like to hear from you. Please contact us on [info@livingwell.org.au](mailto:info@livingwell.org.au)

We wish you strength and courage to guide you along the way.

Sincerely

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**Gary Foster BSW PhD**, Manager, Living Well, Brisbane, Australia

**Rick Goodwin, MSW RSW**, Executive Director, Men and Healing, Ottawa, Canada

## Resources to support recovery and well-being

### On the web:

[www.livingwell.org.au](http://www.livingwell.org.au) is the web address of Living Well, Australia. It includes lots of pertinent information for survivors and their loved ones, along with details of available counselling support, apps, and more.

**Get the app:** The Living Well app is specifically designed to assist men who were sexually abused in childhood. The app provides practical resources and suggestions that men who have been sexually abused can make use of. The information and resources draw upon research evidence and practice knowledge, in order to offer suggestions that can enhance well-being and help better manage difficulties. The app is designed to be useful for partners, family members, friends, and health care professionals—for anyone looking to enhance their understanding and personal well-being. <http://www.livingwell.org.au/get-support/living-well-app/>

**Living well: A guide for men:** This 60 page book has been written to provide men with some practical information and support about dealing with sexual abuse and its effects. We have tried to keep it manageable, both in terms of its size and level of detail. Most of all, we hope that it offers some useful ideas about taking care of yourself. <http://www.livingwell.org.au/get-support/living-well-services/living-well-a-guide-for-men/>

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[www.1in6.org](http://www.1in6.org) is the site address of our American partner agency, 1in6 Inc. It has great information on issues, news of public awareness campaigns, research, and resources.

### **Bristlecone: Portraits and Biographies of Male Survivors of Childhood Sexual Abuse**

Bristlecone is an excellent go-to place to find motivating portrayals of survivors of sexual abuse who are thriving: <https://1in6.org/men/bristlecone/>

**1BlueString:** The first international awareness campaign concerning male sexual trauma and recovery! Check out the campaign, the videos, and the cool merchandise: <https://1bluestring.org/>

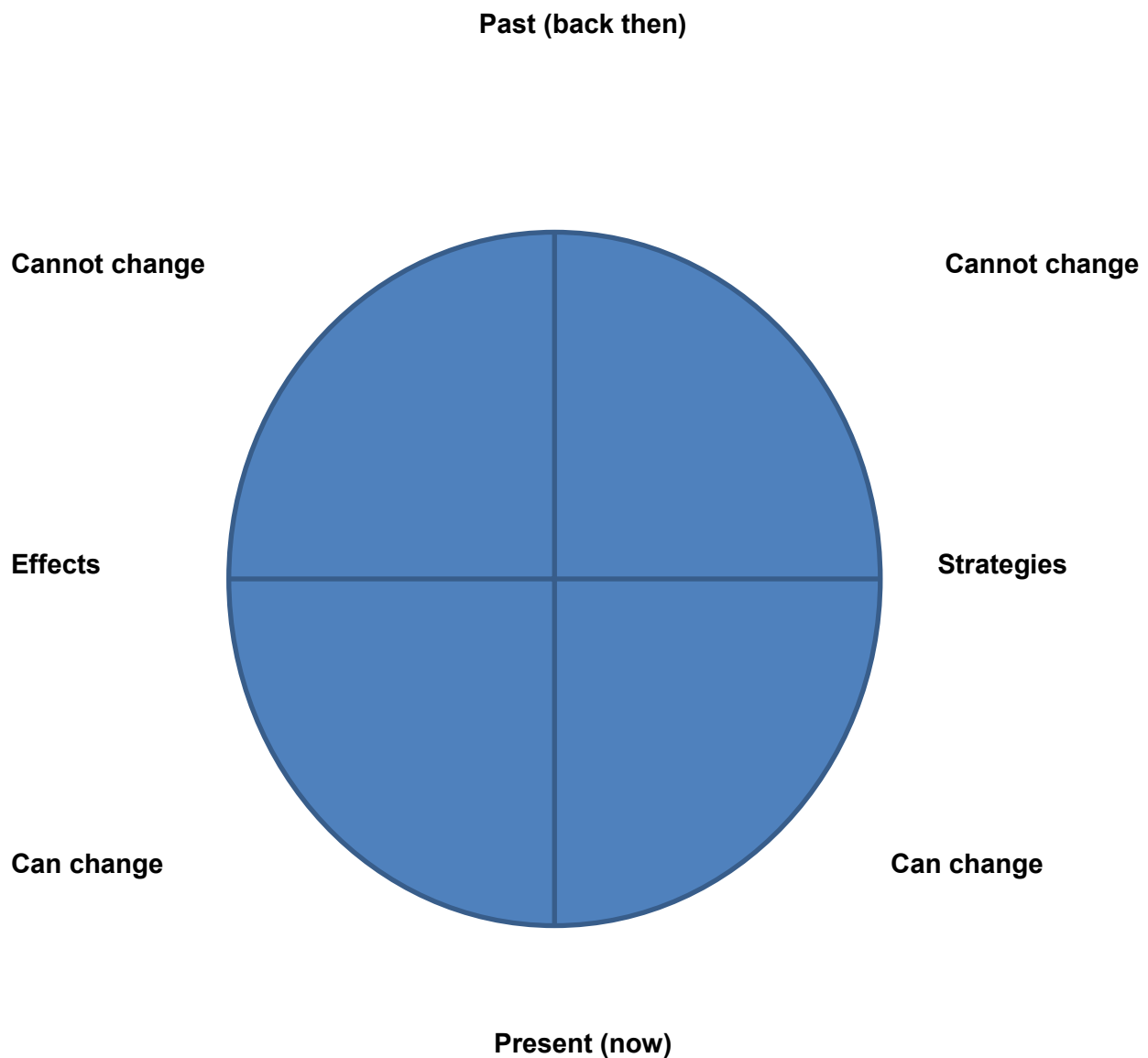
## ***Foundations* session outline:**

### **Session themes**

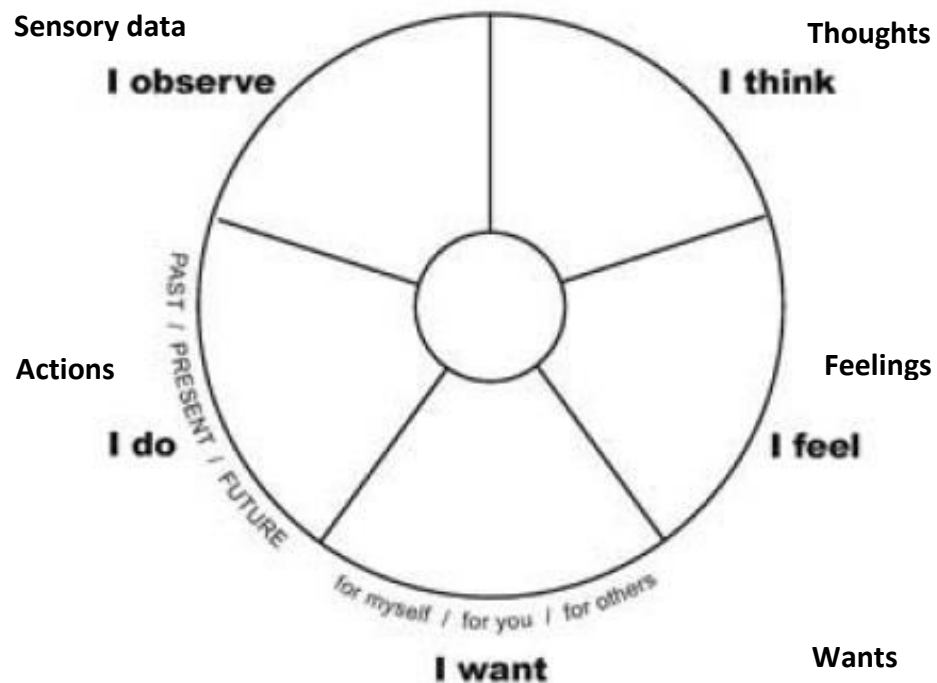
1. Introduction to *Foundations*: Group guidelines - Hopes and aspirations
2. Self care: Common effects and strategies to enhance safety and stabilisation
3. Challenges men face: Barriers to disclosure
4. Re-viewing the past: Silence and secrecy - Self blame, guilt, and shame
5. Mid-group review: Emotionally-engaged living
6. Developing healthy relationships: Trust, intimacy, sex
7. Justice/injustice, revenge, telling, and getting on
8. Consolidating learning & building a valued life

## Past – Present matrix

The Past – Present matrix is designed to assist men in documenting and differentiating between the past and present; between the things that cannot be changed (the past effects of sexual abuse and the strategies that were used to cope/survive), and those that can (now and into the future).



## Awareness wheel



**Sensory data** – Observations, descriptions, examples, facts/figures.

**Thoughts** – Assumptions, beliefs, interpretations, expectations, evaluations, opinions.

**Feelings** – Emotions (happy, frustrated, disappointed, sad, angry, excited).

**Wants** – Aspirations, dreams, hopes & goals, intentions, longings.

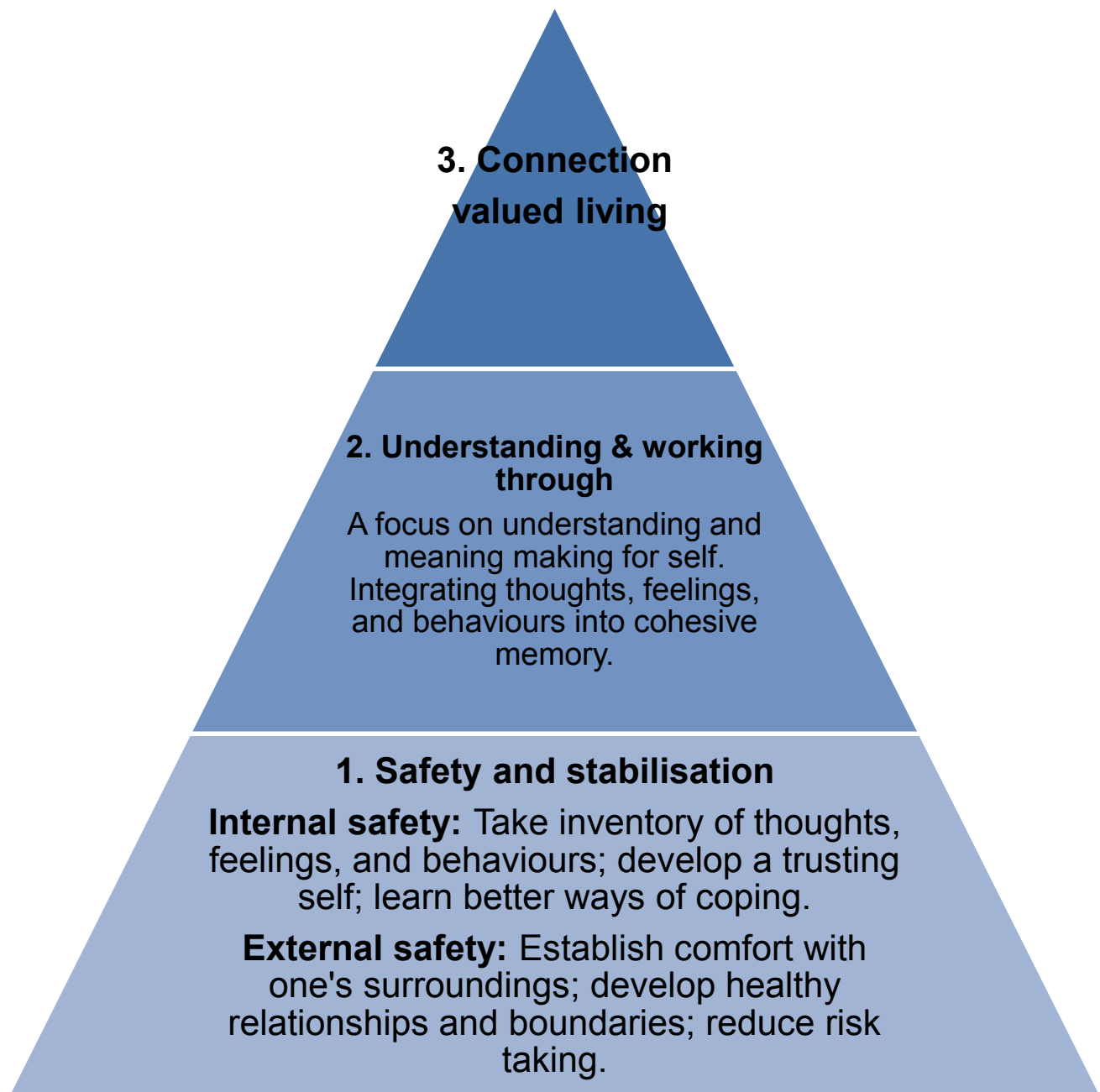
**Actions** – Behaviour, statements, activities, accomplishments (Past & Present).  
 – Plans, proposals, promises (Future).

## Proposed group guidelines

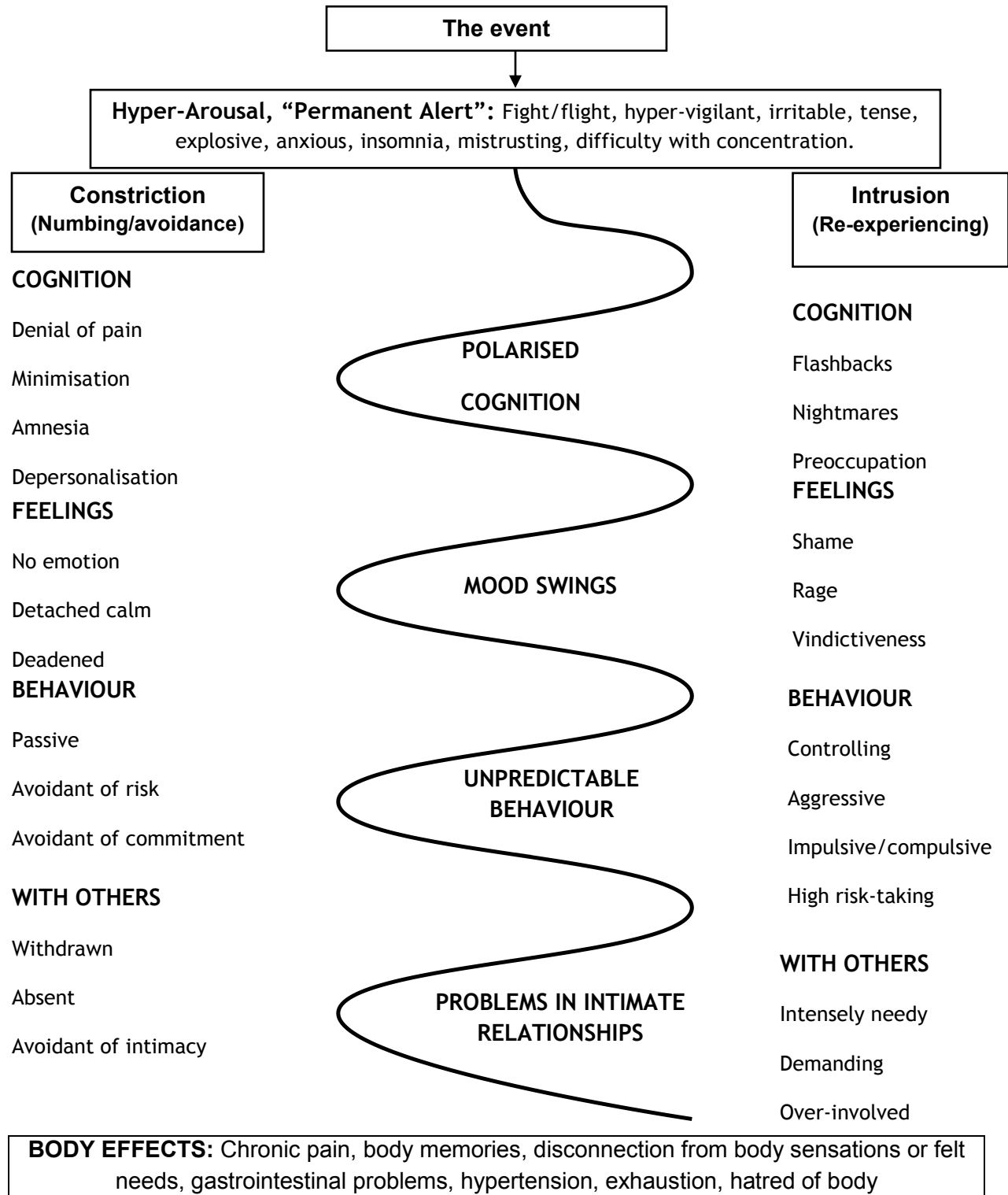
To be discussed and agreed upon by group participants:

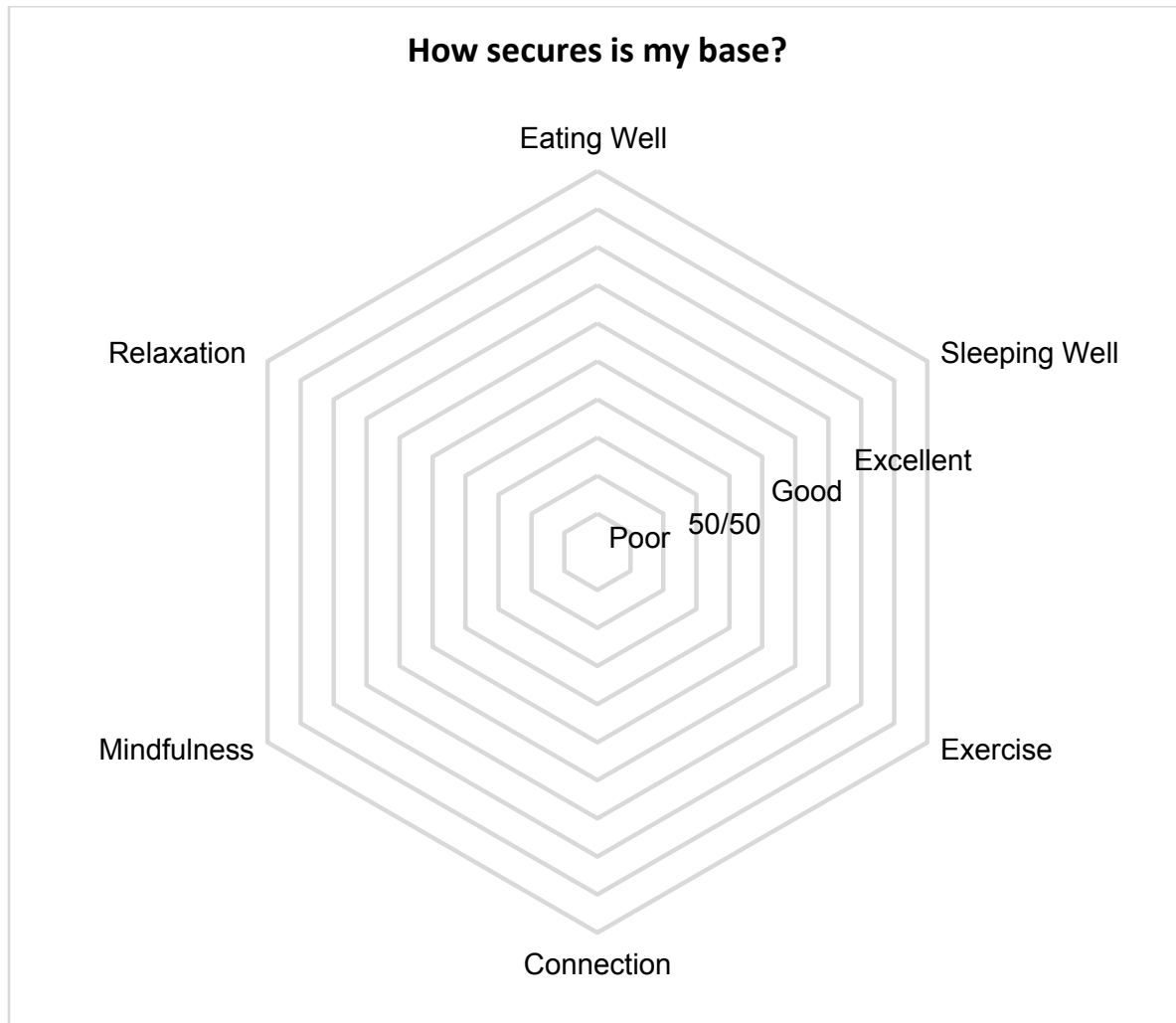
- The group will start and finish on time. We make contact if we are running late or are unable to attend.
- We will be sober and able to participate when we attend group sessions.
- We will switch off our mobile phones. If it is necessary to leave a phone on, we will let group members know.
- We respect people's privacy.
- We recognise there are limits to confidentiality, and that facilitators have a responsibility to ensure people are safe.
- It's ok to disagree - we respect difference.
- We will not use personal insults, sarcasm, or put downs.
- There is no such thing as a silly question.
- Everyone has the right to equal participation, and the right to 'pass'.
- Engaged listening is a valid contribution to the group; so is challenging yourself to say something that is difficult.
- We will not physically touch other group members unless there is express permission (whether this is a handshake, a pat on the back, or a hug).
- There is no expectation or pressure on group members to talk about abusive experiences. We will be sensitive to the impact on group members, and avoid excessive detail.
- It's ok to take a break.
- We will limit communication with other group members outside of group during our participation in the program.
- We will discuss any difficulties adhering to the group guidelines within the group.

## Pathways to well-being



## The aftermath of trauma





## Understanding flashbacks, dissociation, flooding, & numbing

### Flashbacks:

*'I was travelling along okay and then "BANG", from nowhere, I was straight back there. It spun me out. I had no idea what was happening.'*

A flashback, or involuntary recurrent memory, is a psychological phenomenon in which a person has a sudden, usually powerful, vivid, and 'new' re-experiencing of a past experience, or elements of a past experience. These experiences can be happy, sad, exciting, or any other emotion. The term is used when the memory is recalled involuntarily, and/or when it is so intense that the person 'relives' the experience, unable to fully recognise it as memory, and not something that is happening in 'real time':

- When they occur, the survivor is experiencing the past as if it were happening today.
- As it happens, it is as if the survivor forgets that the he has an 'adult' self that is available for comfort, protection, and grounding.
- The extreme feelings and body sensations are frightening because they are disconnected to the present, and often happen unexpectedly.
- Flashbacks are sometimes thought to occur because the survivor may be at a stage to be ready to remember the experience and integrate it with his regular memory.

Flashbacks are often triggered through the senses:

- Visual images: Seeing something that resembles the original abuse (e.g., faces, places).
- Auditory sensations: Sounds that remind the survivor of the abuse (e.g., breathing, hearing someone's anger).
- Emotional memories: Re-experiencing intrusive or constrictive feelings from the past (e.g., fear of someone in authority, rage).
- Body memories: Physical sensations resembling past experiences (e.g., gagging, suffocating).
- Other sensory memories: Smells or tastes (e.g., alcohol, body odour).

### Dissociation:

Dissociation describes a wide range of experiences, from a mild detachment from immediate surroundings, to a more severe detachment from physical and emotional reality. The major characteristic of dissociation involves a detachment from reality, rather than a loss of reality (as it happens in psychosis).

Dissociation can be used as a coping mechanism in seeking to master, minimise, or tolerate stress—including boredom or internal conflict. It can also involve common events, such as daydreaming while driving, a sense that self or the world is unreal, loss of memory, and forgetting identity or assuming a new self. Dissociation can be triggered by trauma, but may be preceded only by stress, substance abuse, or no identifiable trigger at all.

Dissociation is often characterised by:

- Elements of a memory drop out.
- Disconnectedness between awareness of present and past.
- Disconnectedness between thoughts and feelings.
- Experiencing being outside present time and space.
- Experiencing being outside one's own body.

**Numbing:**

Numbing occurs when a person avoids feelings from the present, in particular feelings that may have been present when the traumatic experience occurred. Numbing reflects a constrictive reaction, as depicted in *The Hangover of Trauma*. Feelings can be numbed, body sensations may be absent, and cognitive awareness of these shifts in perception may be quite limited.

**Flooding:**

Flooding occurs when a person is overwhelmed by the feelings that are associated with an unprocessed memory, or that have been avoided for a period of time. Flooding reflects an intrusive reaction, as depicted in *The Hangover of Trauma*. The more one is in a flooded state, the more one is distant from the 'here and now' consciousness.

## How to get grounded

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Grounding—the interruption of the flashback, dissociation, flooding, or numbing—is a process of changing these altered states of consciousness through self-awareness and self-compassion.

As difficult as it may be to be self-aware in one of these states, self-compassion requires one to be observant of this state, and to practice necessary techniques to help return to a more normal states of awareness. The practice of grounding has already occurred in the program to date, in the ability to become conscious of one's own breathing. The basics are the same:

- Keep your eyes open (closed eyes will reinforce dissociation).
- Practice conscious breathing.
- Scan the room.
- Keep the lights on (to stay in touch with the present).
- Focus on the *present*, not the past or future.
- Remind yourself that the worst is over.
- Be gentle with yourself.

Grounding work can be practiced by participants any time, any place, and anywhere. Remind the men that since most grounding work is invisible to others, no one has to know that they are practicing it.

The best way to augment one's grounding practice is incorporating a combination of cognitive and physical techniques:

### Grounding by meditative breathing

- Notice your body sensations such as tension, breathing, or pulse.
- Practice diaphragmatic or square breathing (as we have been practicing).
- Practice progressive relaxation techniques (as we have been practicing as well).

### Physical grounding:

- Distract yourself with a practical task (such as a grocery list, crossword puzzle, reading, or housework).
- Run cool or warm water over your hands.
- Touch various objects around you.
- Dig your heels into the floor or stamp your feet.
- Notice your body sensations such as tension, breathing, or pulse.
- Go for a walk, stretch your body, or other light exercise.
- Eat something, describing the flavours.

### Mental grounding

- Remind yourself who you are, your age. Describe your surroundings.
- Say a safety statement (out loud if you can): 'My name is \_\_\_\_\_, I am safe right now. I am in the present, not the past. I am located at \_\_\_\_\_ and the date is \_\_\_\_\_'.
- Count to 10, say the alphabet, slowly, and/or describe where you are and who you are with.
- Visualise people you care about, and a place where you feel safe.
- If applicable, make eye contact with a trusting person.

Statements like 'This feeling will pass' may also help. Treating yourself to something healthy (e.g. a warm bath, a nice meal), and playing soothing music also may help during this transition. Don't be surprised if you feel physically or emotionally exhausted afterwards—again, practice gentleness with yourself.

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## Grounding exercises

It is useful to have a selection of grounding exercises that you can draw upon to keep your mind and body connected and working together, particularly for those times when you are becoming overwhelmed with distressing memories, thoughts, and feelings.

People who have experienced childhood sexual abuse, or adult sexual assault, can sometimes be confronted by flashbacks or intense memories of what was done, to the point that they feel as if they are back there, re-living the abuse all over again.

### **Grounding exercises are a way for you to firmly anchor yourself in the present.**

The following grounding exercises are about using our senses (see, hear, smell, taste, touch) to build our mind and body connection in the present. In working through the grounding exercises suggested here, you might find one or two that work for you—remembering only to use the exercises that you feel comfortable with.

- Remind yourself of who you are now. Say your name. Say your age now. Say where you are now. Say what you have done today. Say what you will do next.
- Take ten breaths, focus your attention on each breath on the way in and the way out. Say the number of the breath to yourself as you exhale.
- Splash water on your face.
- Sip a cool drink of water.
- Hold a cold can/bottle of soft drink in your hands. Feel the coldness, and the wetness on the outside. Note the bubbles and tastes as you drink.
- As you wake during the night, remind yourself who you are and where you are. Tell yourself who you are and where you are. What age are you now? Look around the room. Notice familiar objects and name them. Feel the bed you are lying on, the warmth or coldness of the air, and notice any sounds you hear.
- Feel the clothes on your body, whether your arms and legs are covered or not, and the sensation of your clothes as you move in them.
- If you are with other people, and you feel comfortable with them, concentrate closely on what they are saying and doing, and remind yourself why you are with them.
- If you are sitting, feel the chair under you, and the weight of your body and legs pressing down onto it.
- If you are lying down, feel the contact between your head, your body, and your legs as they touch the surface you are lying on. Starting from your head, notice how each part feels, all the way down to your feet, on the soft or hard surface.
- Stop and listen. Notice and name what you can hear, nearby and in the distance.
- Hold a mug of tea in both hands and feel its warmth. Don't rush drinking it—take small sips, and take your time tasting each mouthful.
- Look around you, notice what is in front of you and to each side. Name first large objects, and then smaller ones.
- Get up, walk around, and take your time to notice each step as you take one, then another.
- Stamp your feet. Notice the sensation and sound as you connect with the ground.

- Clap and rub your hands together, hear the noise, and feel the sensation in your hands and arms.
- Wear an elastic band on your wrist (not tight) and flick it gently, so that you feel it spring back on your wrist.
- If you can, step outside. Notice the temperature of the air, and how much it is different or similar to where you have just come from.

## **Developing emotional literacy and an emotionally engaged life**

Development of a working level of emotional literacy, whereby someone is emotionally aware and has tools to handle a wide range of emotions, is useful for everyone. Developing a working level of emotional literacy is particularly important for men, in that they are likely to confront a range of sometimes confusing and intense emotions. It is useful to note:

- An emotion is our physiological response to a stimuli, event or thought. Essentially, it is invisible.
- What we label emotions influences how we respond to them.
- Some emotions are not easily identified.
- Emotions are not discrete—sometimes you can feel a range of emotions at the same time.
- Sometimes you can feel a range of ‘competing’ emotions at the same time: for example, if you are about to do a bungee jump, you might be feeling both intense fear and incredible excitement (to the extent that you might feel completely overwhelmed and start to think you are going to die).
- Going in search of what he is ‘really feeling’, or identifying the ‘core feeling’, can limit rather than expand options.
- Emotions are not facts!
- There are no right or wrong emotions. No feelings are negative, just difficult.
- People’s responses to emotions are different and can change. What is difficult for one man may be ok for another, and what is difficult in one context may not be in another.
- ‘Good’, ‘okay’, or ‘bad’ are not emotional states—they are judgements or evaluations of feeling states.

Males and females are born with an equal capacity to experience and express a wide range of emotions. However, in our culture, men and women are typically taught and learn to recognise, understand, relate to, express, and seek to manage emotions differently. These gendered ways of relating and responding to emotions can produce particular challenges for men who have experienced childhood sexual abuse.

## Men and emotions

'In Western culture, men are taught to be the tough ones: They're not to cry, they're supposed to have the answers, be the providers, and above all it's not okay to show emotion...'

(Participant 274, Easton, Saltzman & Willis, 2013).

One of the fundamental components of our society's idea of masculinity is in men's ability to be strong, in control, and emotionally contained. This concept of men and emotions is often grounded in the development of boys from an early age, and is strongly cemented by adulthood. These dominant ideas about masculinity can have significant impacts on the way in which men express and experience emotions, including in relation to childhood sexual abuse.

Gender expectations shape both men and women's lives. The differences between genders and emotions start early on in development, some of which include:

- Expression of emotions is often associated with being seen as weak, cowardly, or overemotional.
- The suppression of emotion is strongly associated with 'being a man', and with masculinity.
- Both men and women face limits on their expression of emotions, but in different ways.
- Learning what are considered acceptable emotions for men and women to have and express begins in early childhood, and is shaped throughout adolescence and into adult life.
- Women generally acknowledge and express more directly certain feelings, such as fear or sadness, but are taught to dampen or avoid others, such as anger (Briere & Scott, 2006).
- Men are taught to be in control, to limit and hide emotions (particularly emotions related to vulnerability), and learn to externalise or to act on the environment as a means to manage and reduce emotional pain or distress (Briere & Scott, 2006).
- The limitations imposed on emotional expression and understanding often leave men with an inner turmoil that they feel they are unable to relate to, describe, or express.
- Boys learn to repress certain emotions, to avoid the stigma of appearing weak and 'feminine'.
- The expectation that men should be in control of their emotions means that, when intense emotions do appear, this can add to men's feelings of distress, uncertainty, disempowerment, sense of being out of control, and failure as a man.
- Men's efforts to live up to the stoic men's code can result in men suppressing, denying, avoiding, ignoring, or numbing from emotions (resulting in negative mental health outcomes). It can produce a pressure cooker effect, where the more men try to control and keep a lid on emotions, the more they feel out of control.
- The gender expectations around emotions shape men's understanding of self. If men are struggling with emotions, this can lead them to judging themselves, and seeing themselves as a failure and 'less of a man' for not being able to contain and manage emotions.

## Feelings word list

abandoned	despairing	horrible	rejected
afraid	desperate	hurt	relieved
affectionate	diminished	ignored	reluctant
agony	discontented	imposed-upon	remorseful
ambivalent	distraught	impressed	restless
amused	disturbed	incensed	resentful
angry	down	indifferent	righteous
annoyed	eager	infatuated	sad
anxious	ecstatic	infuriated	satisfied
apathetic	edgy	insecure	scared
ashamed	empty	inspired	self-conscious
awed	embarrassed	intimidated	shamed
bashful	enchanted	irritated	shocked
betrayed	enraged	isolated	silly
bitter	envious	jealous	sorrowful
blissful	exasperated	jittery	startled
blue	excited	joyous	stunned
bold	excluded	jumpy	spiteful
bored	exhausted	lonely	sure
brave	exuberant	low	tempted
burdened	fascinated	mad	terrified
calm	fearful	melancholic	tender
capable	flustered	miserable	tense
cautious	foolish	nauseated	tentative
cheated	frightened	nervous	threatened
cheerful	frustrated	offended	thwarted
childish	furious	ornery	tired
combative	glad	outraged	trapped
concerned	gloomy	overwhelmed	troubled
confused	gratified	pained	uneasy
contemptuous	grieved	panicked	unsettled
contented	guilty	persecuted	upset
contrite	happy	petrified	unhappy
crushed	hateful	pleased	uptight
defeated	helpless	pressured	vulnerable
delighted	homesick	proud	wary
depressed	honored	rage	weary
desirous	hopeful	refreshed	worried

## Become aware of the signs that anger is around

It is useful to develop an awareness of the signs that you are feeling anger. Everyone is different. Your body is like a thermometer, and will typically exhibit signs that anger is around (this is why it is useful to maintain an observing awareness of what your body is feeling, and what thoughts are around).

- **Signs that anger is around can be found physically in your body:** Tightness in the chest and shoulders, increased heart rate or blood pressure, clenching teeth or fists, sweating, pounding in the head, shaking, even a sense of dizziness.
- **Signs that anger is around can be found in your thoughts:** Sense of injustice—'it's unfair,' sense of righteousness—'it's not right,' 'they don't know what they are talking about,' thoughts of blame—'it's your fault,' jumbled or confused thoughts—'I want them to go away,' 'leave me alone,' 'if only,' discounting thoughts—'what do they know,' depersonalising thoughts—name calling, swearing in your head.
- **Signs that anger is around can be found in your voice and how you speak:** Change in tone of voice, becoming short, raising your voice, becoming more directive in what you are saying, becoming personal rather than staying on topic, using sarcasm, swearing, calling people names, starting sentences with 'you' or 'if you don't'.
- **Signs that anger is around can be found in your behaviour,** standing up, starting to pace, moving towards, removing, or isolating yourself, pushing things out of the way.

**Note:** The challenge for us all is to develop awareness that anger is around prior to it translating into an action through verbal or physical aggression.

### What are your hot spots?

It is useful to have an awareness of the types of situations, comments, and behaviours that stimulate anger in your life. We all have our hot spots. For you it might be about the way certain people act or talk. Anger might come around if you experience being discounted or ignored, or when people treat children badly. It might appear in relation to particular places or style, or if you witness someone standing over or pressuring someone.

- What are your signs that anger is around?
- Where do you feel anger in your body?
- What thoughts are around?
- What do you find yourself saying?
- What do you do?
- What are your hot spots?

## Responses to anger

Just as it is important to have a radar for the signs of anger in your life, it is equally important for all of us to have ways of managing anger. The goal is to keep you on track and make sure anger does not overwhelm you. This next section will offer some practical ideas.

### Time out

Sometimes you just need to take time out to remove yourself from stressful and escalating situations, especially if other people are also struggling with anger, or feeling overwhelmed or unsafe. In taking time out, the idea is not to avoid having an important conversation—it is to make sure you are in a safe, helpful, and respectful place to have that conversation.

Typically, the degree of anger you are experiencing will influence the amount of time you need to return to a good space, and what the most appropriate strategy is for becoming calmer. The higher the levels of anger you are experiencing, then the longer the time out, and the more physically active you want to become. Some people find going for a long walk, run, or bike ride helpful. Some people find just getting outside, going to a park or walking around the block, is enough.

When you are away from the situation, actively work to calm yourself and get back on track. You might listen to relaxing or distracting music, talk to a trusted friend, have a tea or coffee, read, or even watch some television. Drinking alcohol when angry is not going to be helpful.

**Remember:** If you're taking time out from a charged situation, it is important to let other people know you are taking a break, to give them an indicator of when you'll be back, and your intention to resolve any difficulties in a respectful way.

### Remember to breathe

If you notice yourself becoming angry, take time to breathe. Insufficient air in your lungs will impact on your ability to process thoughts and make informed decisions. Slow your breathing, and follow breath travelling all the way down into your lungs. Consciously taking control of your breathing, and reducing the amount you breathe into your chest, lowers blood pressure and provides a better perspective to experience intense thoughts and feelings. You can check whether you are breathing with your diaphragm by placing a hand on your chest and on your stomach—you should aim to have only the hand on your stomach move.

### Note to self

When anger is around, a reminder to yourself about what is important for you can be helpful in keeping you on track. Make a note on your phone, or on a piece of paper that you keep in your wallet, detailing a few pointers about how you want to treat people and the kind of person you want to be seen as. The next time you are in a situation where you experience anger, take the time to read this note to yourself, and remember why you wrote these down in the first place.

### Become an observer of anger

If we think of anger and a collection of thoughts and feelings, one way to take control is to try and unhook yourself from these expressions of anger by becoming a curious observer. Try to notice whether the thought is in the form of a voice, or of an image in your mind. If the most

obvious thing about anger is the feeling of tension, or a sensation in your body, then see if you can describe it—its size, mass, weight, colour, form—as if you are curious scientist studying something. The trick is to observe anger as it appears in the present, without setting up a struggle with anger where you become frustrated at being angry. This observing approach to anger will reduce the possibility of becoming aggressive, finding yourself stewing over and over something, and becoming overwhelmed to the point where anger seems to take hold of you. Note that becoming an observer of anger takes some practice, and becomes easier to do when you develop an observing approach to other emotions.

**Note the way that anger is a product of the interplay between thoughts, feelings, and actions**

On a day where you notice anger is around, take time out to record what happened in the lead up to feeling anger. Pay extra attention to any thoughts, even if they don't immediately seem relevant to the event. Note how those thoughts might have influenced your emotions and actions. Mapping out these thoughts, feelings, and how you chose to act can be helpful for you to see what was going on, and how some of your expectations or beliefs can influence feelings of anger, and either escalate or de-escalate the feelings of tension, frustration, or anger in different situations. People are often surprised to learn that anger doesn't just explode out of nowhere.

Developing a more comprehensive understanding of how thoughts, feelings, and actions work to influence anger will help you to identify your personal triggers for anger. Some people find it useful to reflect on the different ways that their parents or those close to them express anger, and how this has influenced or shaped their own experience.

## Unhelpful patterns of thinking

Our brain generates thousands of thoughts each day. Some thoughts are really useful, absolute gold, while others are unhelpful and best left to one side. If you can see these thoughts for what they are—thoughts—then it can allow you to get some distance from troubling thoughts, and to spend more time with thoughts that are the most useful and supportive of your life.

Every now and again we can all get into unhelpful patterns of thinking. When someone has experienced significant trauma, or had a series of setbacks, unhelpful patterns of thinking can become ‘locked in’, almost as an automatic response in unfamiliar or challenging situations.

Listed below are some unhelpful patterns of thinking to watch out for, plus ways to disengage and get you back on track. By naming these thought patterns for what they are, you can step back from them and make a decision whether to put more energy into them—or not.

### Stewing or ruminating

Stewing or ruminating is where you find yourself running things repetitively over and over in your mind, like a tape loop, without any fresh input or action being taken. Typically, stewing or ruminating leads to problems growing in size and appearing even more difficult to deal with.

### Catastrophising and over generalising

Catastrophising and over-generalising is where you take a single event, or limited piece of information, and see it as a global pattern (usually a negative one). If you hear yourself using words like ‘always’ or ‘never’, these are hints that you might be catastrophising or over generalising (e.g. ‘I’m always stuffing things up’, ‘I never get a fair go’).

### All or nothing thinking

All or nothing thinking, or black or white thinking, is where things are either all good OR all bad. It’s either one extreme or the other; there are no grey areas.

### Shoulding or musting

Shoulding and musting is where you focus on how you perceive things ‘should’ or ‘must’ be, rather than how it is. Shoulding and musting can pressure you to do things one particular way or the ‘right way’. These might be pressures regarding yourself, or regarding other people in your life.

### Totalising or labelling

Totalising thinking takes a single mistake, problem, or shortcoming, and gets you to see yourself—your identity—entirely through that lens. (e.g. ‘I spilled my drink, I’m such a loser’). Common labels include ‘loser’, ‘idiot’, etc. Sometimes this pattern of thinking has you labelling others.

**Mind reading**

This is when you 'know' what someone else is thinking, even though you have no idea what they are thinking. It often takes the form of an assumption that another person is making a negative judgement about you.

**Discounting the positive**

You reject positive experiences by insisting that they 'don't count'. For example, if you have a positive interaction with someone, you write it off as a one-off, or attribute it solely to the other person's actions and not seeing your own part. Discounting the positives takes the joy out of life, and makes you feel inadequate and unrewarded.

**Forecasting**

When you predict that something will turn out badly, or you will stuff things up, without there being any evidence. Forecasting can get in the way of taking action to make things better.

**Funnelling**

Funnelling is when you interpret every difficulty as a result of the abuse you experienced. For example, if you feel stressed about something at work, funnelling puts this down to some personal failure resulting from the abuse, rather than identifying that there might actually be things that would cause most people to feel stressed.

**Emotional reasoning**

You assume that your negative emotions necessarily reflect the way things really are. 'I feel guilty—I must be a rotten person.' Or, 'I feel angry—this proves that I'm being treated unfairly.' Or, 'I feel so inferior—this means I'm a second rate person.' Or, 'I feel hopeless—things must really be hopeless.'

**Mis-attribution of blame and responsibility**

Over-attribution of responsibility is when you hold yourself personally responsible for an event that isn't entirely under your control. Personalisation leads to guilt, shame, and feelings of inadequacy. Men who have been sexually abused often struggle with feeling responsible for things they are not.

Some people do the opposite. They blame other people or their circumstances for their problems, and they overlook ways they might be contributing to the problem. Blaming others often goes hand in hand with feeling powerless.

## Apply some problem solving skills

**Call it for what it is:** If you find yourself getting caught up in these patterns of thinking, try to name the pattern. It might be one in the list above, or you may discover some other unhelpful patterns (which you can come up with your own name for).

**Ask yourself:** 'Is this getting me anywhere?' If not, that's a strong indication that it's time to try a different approach.

**Get out of your head:** Take a walk, call a friend, or engage in some other activity to distract yourself, refocus, and loosen the hold of unhelpful thoughts.

**Breathe deeply:** Worrying doesn't only occupy the brain, it also impacts on the body. Our heart rate speeds up, and muscles tighten. Engage in deep breathing or a few yoga poses to eliminate that physical stress.

**Step away from the thoughts:** You could try a mindfulness exercise, or another strategy where you visualise yourself watching the unhelpful thoughts go past without getting caught up in them.

**Define, don't dwell:** Much of our worry is based soundly in how we feel: we're upset, we're angry, we're hurting. Instead of focusing on these feelings, try to describe and define the actual problem, and then accept it for what it is. From there, you can either solve it, or vow to move beyond it.

## Problem solving

We all face difficult decisions and problems in our daily lives. Some problems are quite small and easy to resolve, whilst others can require some significant effort, and may take time to work through and sort out. Whether the problem is small, medium, or large, it is helpful to have a basic plan for working things out and deciding on a course of action.

The below six steps focus on identifying the particular problem, and considering and evaluating the options, in order to reach a decision to be acted upon and learnt from. These steps provide a framework for problem solving that can be used by individuals, couples, or groups.

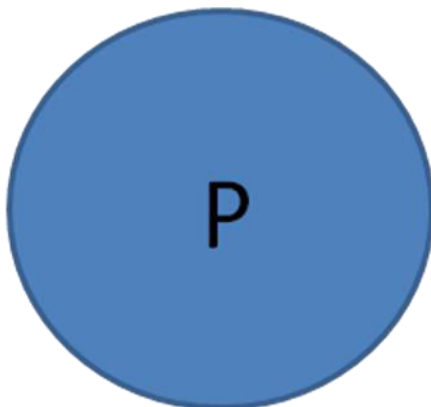
The next time you have a problem that you want to work upon, get a piece of paper or create a document, and then work your way through the headings, making a record of the different options and steps.

### Basic problem solving in six steps:

1. Identify: What is the problem? What is it that you want to change or sort out?
2. What are the options or solutions as you see it? Consult with others in relation to the identified problem and the possible solutions.
3. What are benefits or consequences of each option?
4. Choose an option: This is not about this being right or wrong, it is about choosing the best available option for this particular problem and giving it a try.
5. Put it into action: This is where the rubber hits the road, where you can make it happen.
6. Review: It is always worth taking time to review results. What have you learned? What if a similar problem presented itself? Would you do the same thing, or are there other alternatives?

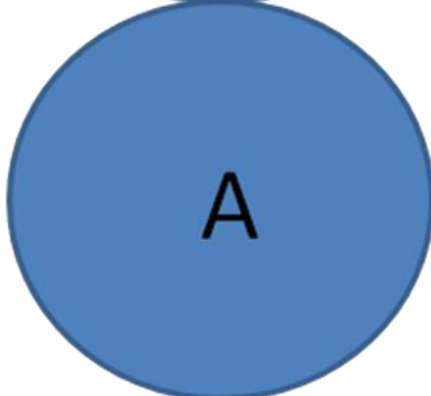
**Note:** Keeping a log of how you handled particular problems, and the learning in relation to what worked and what you might do differently next time, will enhance your options, choices, and sense of control over your life.

## What are ego states?



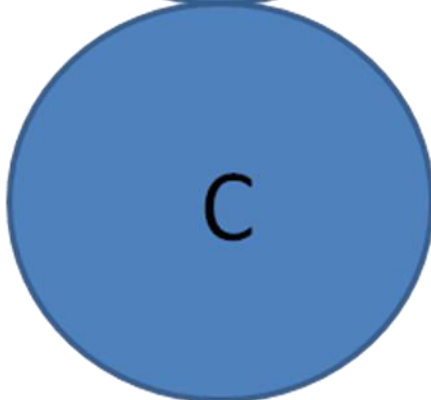
### PARENT EGO STATE

Behaviours, thoughts, and feelings copied from parents, parental figures or primary care givers.



### ADULT EGO STATE

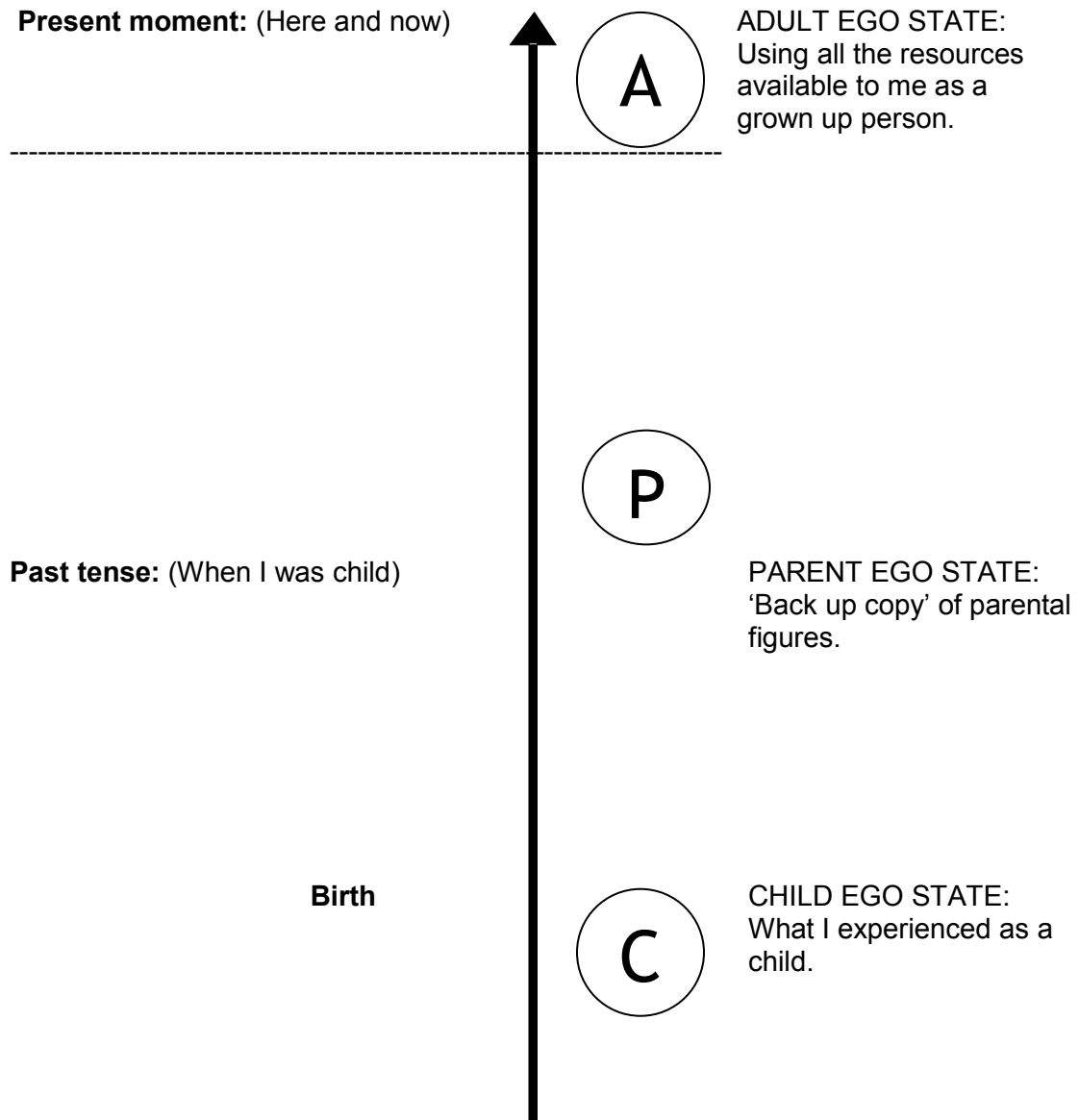
Behaviours, thoughts, and feelings which are direct responses to the here and now.



### CHILD EGO STATE

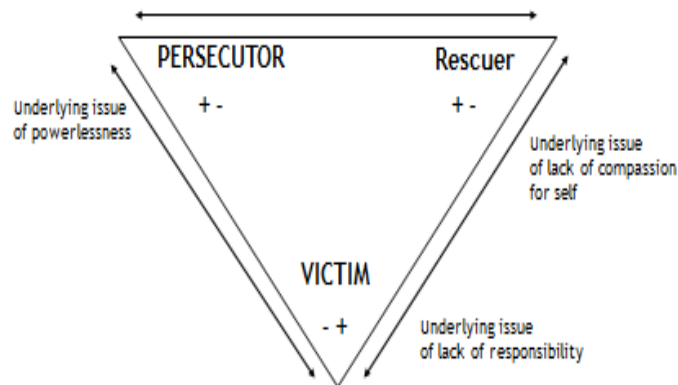
Behaviours, thoughts, and feelings replayed from childhood.

## How ego states are fixed in time



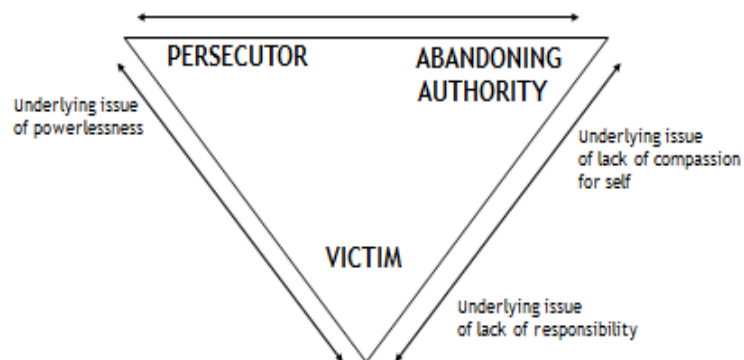
## The Drama Triangle

Unconscious, repetitive sequence of transactions, perceptions and interactions with self and the environment

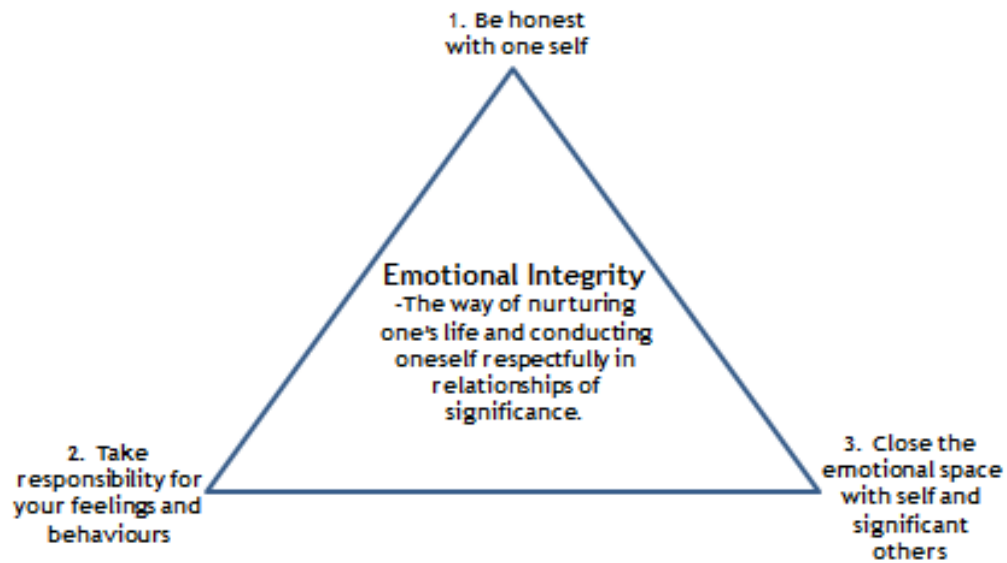


## The Trauma Triangle

INTRAPSYCHIC ROLES OF TRAUMA SURVIVORS  
Unconscious, repetitive perceptions and interactions within the self and also with the environment

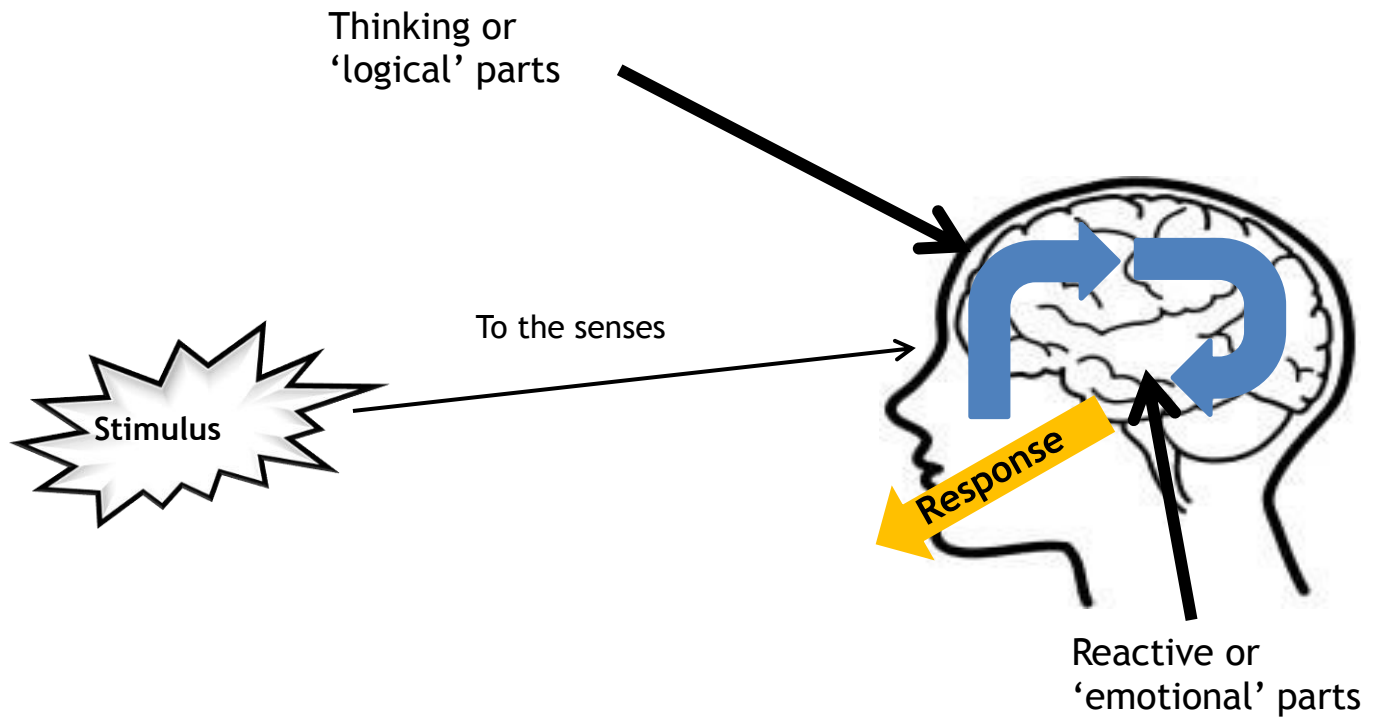


# Emotional Integrity

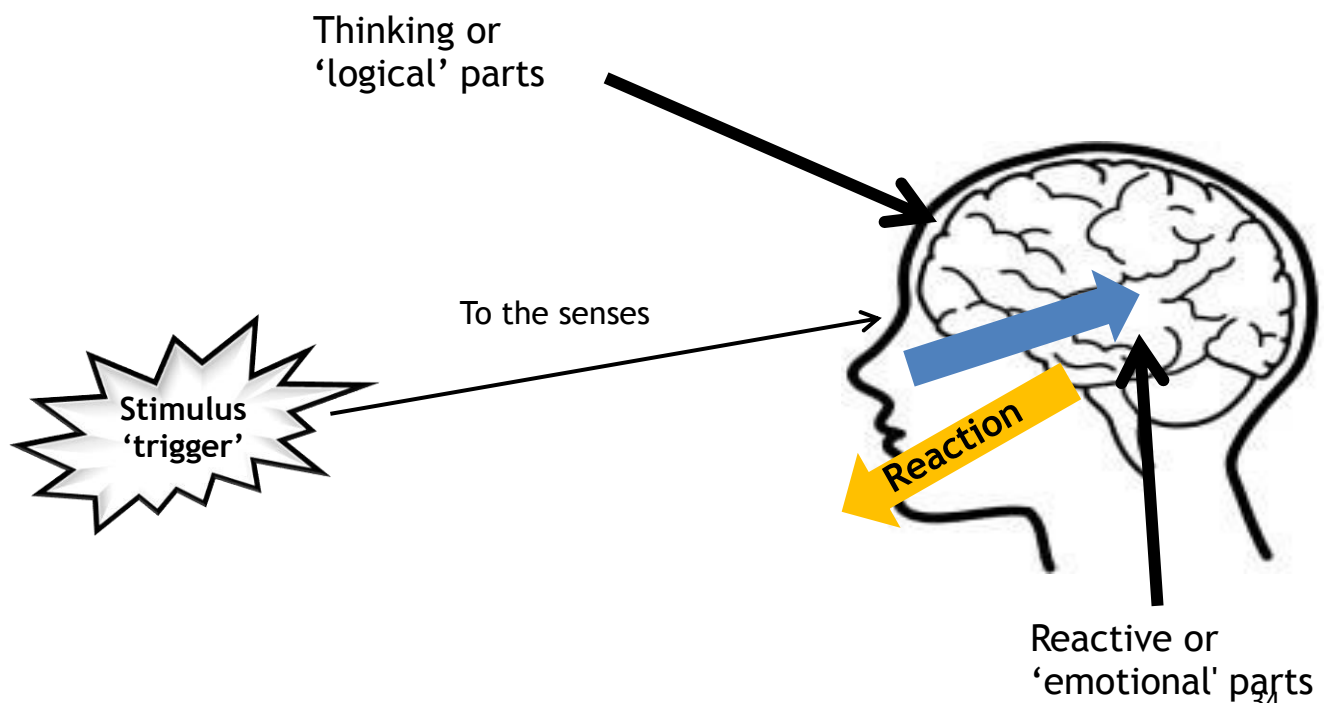


## Emotional hijacking

### Non-traumatised brain



### Traumatised brain



## About relationships

- What do we find easy in relationships?
- What makes us feel good, supported, and safe?
- What do we find is difficult in relationships?
- What puts us in a bad way or makes us feel unsupported or unsafe?

**Easy:**

**Difficult:**

## Attachment styles



Thoughts of partner

Thoughts of  
self

<b><u>Pre-occupied</u></b> Preoccupied with relationships	<b><u>Secure</u></b> Comfortable with intimacy and autonomy
<b><u>Fearful</u></b> Fearful of intimacy Socially avoidant	<b><u>Dismissive</u></b> Dismissive of intimacy Strongly independent



## **Circles of trust**

**Draw four concentric circles. Label the four from smallest to largest:**

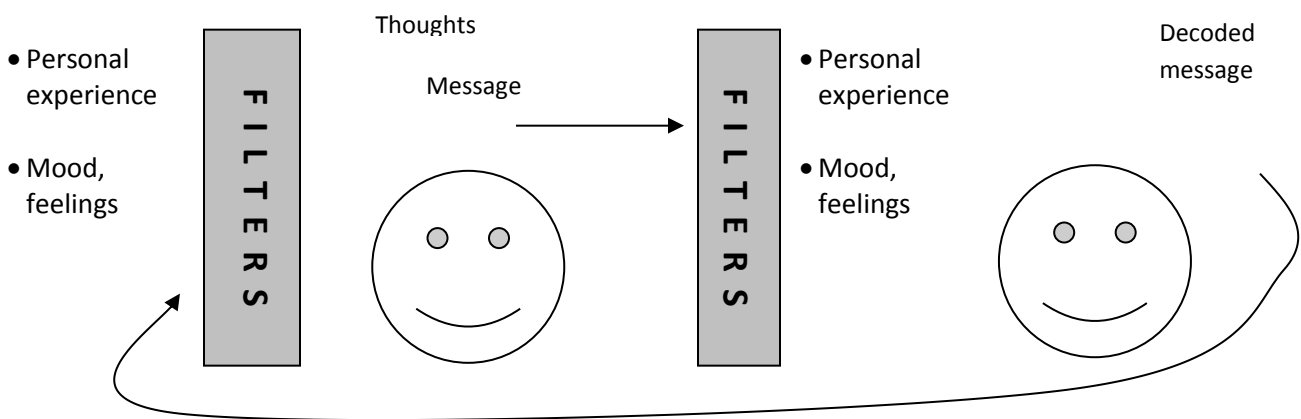
- **Me**
- **Trustworthy**
- **Potentially**
- **Don't trust**

## Communication skills

Communicating effectively is not an easy task. There are many pitfalls to effective communication that require skills to overcome.

Did you realise that some estimates suggest that 93% of messages are received through non-verbal channels (body position, facial expression, tone, etc.)

In sending a message, thoughts or ideas are translated into words that in turn must be decoded (understood) by the listener.



How a message is sent or received is influenced by each person's personal experiences, how they are feeling at the time, and what they may be expecting of the situation. These influences act as a filter, and there is a lot of room for confusion in transmitting and receiving a message. The more each person is aware of themselves, and the more there is a shared understanding between people, the easier communication flows.

One of the most important skills in effective communication is that of listening. Hearing and listening are very different. Hearing is a perception by the ear. Listening is attending closely so as to understand.

It is difficult to really listen. Most of us listen only partially to the other person. We make assumptions about others' communications, which can lead to confusion. Listening requires concentration. We have to listen wholeheartedly to perceive the various communication levels, and the different feelings and needs being expressed.

## Signs of listening

### Signs of a good listener:

1. Says 'yes' to me: an open, accepting posture of heart.
2. Is warm to me, is supportive.
3. Listens to the silences, the growth gaps.
4. Doesn't presume to have the full truth.
5. Senses what I am feeling.
6. Steps inside my situation, walks in my shoes.
7. Reflects my thoughts and feelings.
8. Receives me as I am, I do not feel judged.
9. Allows me to stumble over my words.
10. Puts aside their own concerns and needs for a while.

### Signs of a poor listener:

1. Interrupts my flow of speech or thinking.
2. Changes the subject.
3. Thinks of their reply while I am still speaking.
4. Gives advice rather than sharing in a search for answers.
5. Generalises by telling me that I am the same as everyone else.
6. Jumps to conclusions and makes interpretations.
7. Tries to 'fix' my problem.
8. Moves mentally and emotionally outside my situation.
9. Moves their hands, feet, or bodily position a lot.
10. Says, 'The same thing happened to me'.
11. Feels that they have to fill pauses or silences.
12. Avoids my questions.

When I am listened to, extraordinary things happen: I come alive. Growth occurs. Walls disintegrate. I feel valued. I can feel and accept my differences and uniqueness. The healing process begins.

## Guilt and shame

Guilt and shame are emotions that men who have been sexually abused can often confront. Guilt and shame are sometimes used interchangeably, and both can appear in relation to the same act, though they are slightly different in their experience and impact on sense of self. The similarities can be seen in the standard definitions:

**Guilt:** *a feeling of responsibility or remorse for committing some offense or crime, or doing something wrong or silly, etc.*

**Shame:** *a mentally painful feeling that comes from doing something wrong, dishonorable, improper, or silly, etc.*

The difference is that, whereas guilt is a judgement identifying responsibility in relation to engagement in a particular 'act', shame is a judgement in relation to the person and how we feel about them or ourselves. Shame is an inward feeling that says, 'I am damaged goods', 'This is what I am', 'I am bad', 'I am shameful'. This is in contrast to guilt, which says, 'I/you've done something wrong or bad'.

An additional tricky aspect of guilt and shame is that they can appear in relation to being involved a particular act, even though the person did not intend to commit the offence, or for harm to occur. For men who have been sexually abused by men, there is also that added difficulty that sexual contact between males has a history in our culture of being identified as 'shameful' in and of itself.

Guilt is something that can be easier to manage and deal with than shame, in that it relates to a specific act. Guilt can be a constructive feeling if it leads to someone taking responsibility, and taking steps to amend or address a damage done, but can be unproductive if the burden is taken on and isn't warranted. The feeling of shame, however, can be more debilitating, as it involves more intense feelings of pain, embarrassment, humiliation, and worthlessness, which can be both acute/momentary and chronic/generalised ('I am a loser').

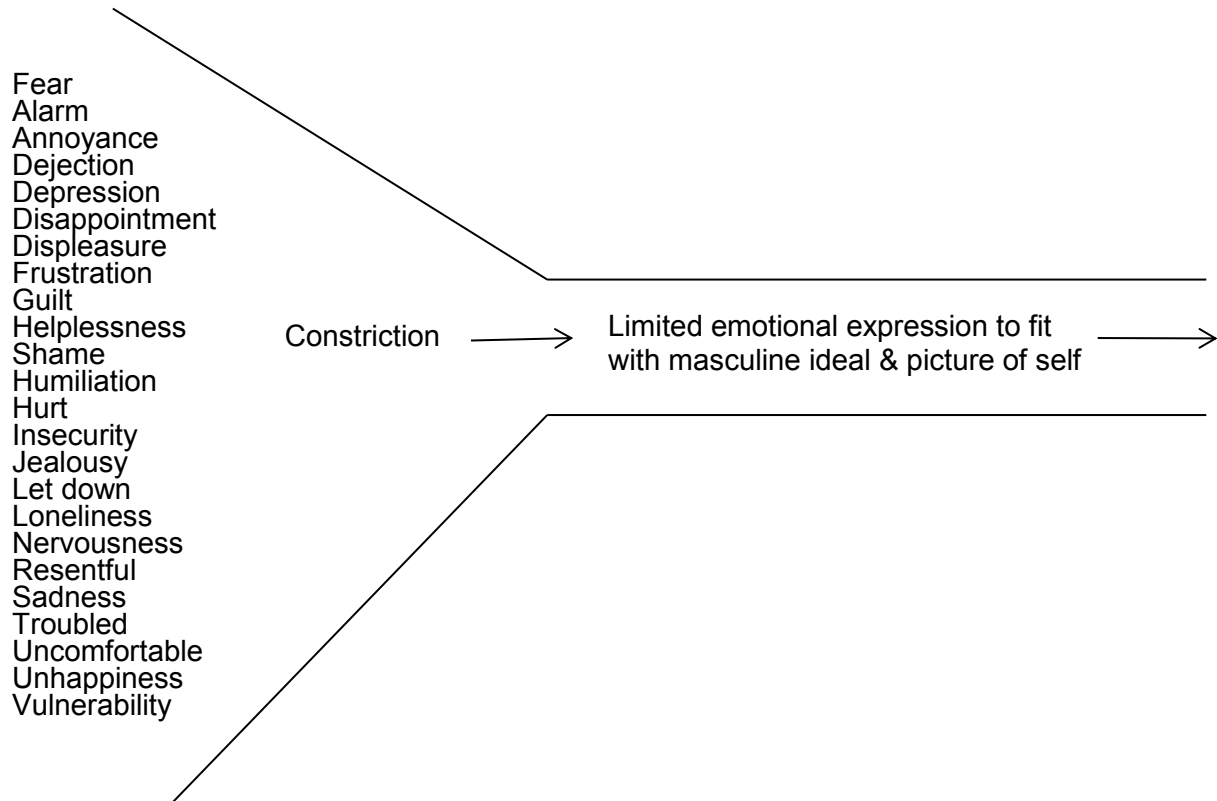
### Points about shame:

- Shame is developed in early childhood (by age 3-5).
- Shame can exist before a child is verbal (thus hard to articulate).
- It is more intense and arousing—a 'bigger feeling' than guilt.
- Shame suggests something wrong with me (vs. something I have done wrong).
- Shame provokes hiding (vs. making amends or reparations).

### Feelings and reactions to shame:

1. Rage and/or aggression (internalised/externalised).
2. Alcohol and drug use/abuse.
3. Problematic sexual behaviours.

## Limited emotional funnel



## **Myths about male sexual victimisation**

- 1) Males cannot be sexually abused or victimised.
- 2) If a male has 'allowed' the abuse, then he is a sissy or weakling.
- 3) Boys/youth can always say no to abuse if violence is not used. If they didn't, then they must have wanted the abuse to occur.
- 4) If a male becomes sexually aroused, then he is an equal participant in the abuse.
- 5) Most sexual abuse of males is perpetrated by homosexual men.
- 6) Sexual abuse turns a boy/youth gay.
- 7) Sexually abused boys/youth inevitably become sexually abusive men.
- 8) Males are less traumatised by sexual victimisation than are females.
- 9) Perpetration by females is rare.
- 10) Perpetration by a female is less harmful than by males. In fact, if the perpetrator is female, then the straight boy/youth got 'lucky'. He is fortunate to have been initiated into heterosexual activity. A gay boy/youth is 'lucky' if he has been initiated into homosexual activity by an older male.

## Alcohol & drug use and abuse

There is a well-documented link between addictive behaviour and a history of trauma/abuse.

### Why?

- Trauma can lead to substance abuse.
- Substance abuse can lead to trauma.
- Trauma and substance abuse may have occurred together.
- Both can be connected in a 'downward spiral' or cycle.
- Recovery from one generally needs to address the recovery of the other.

### Common themes:

**Secrecy** is central theme to both trauma and addiction. Secrecy can be influenced by shame, and a wish to keep problems a secret (e.g. what was done, impacts, ways of coping, addiction).

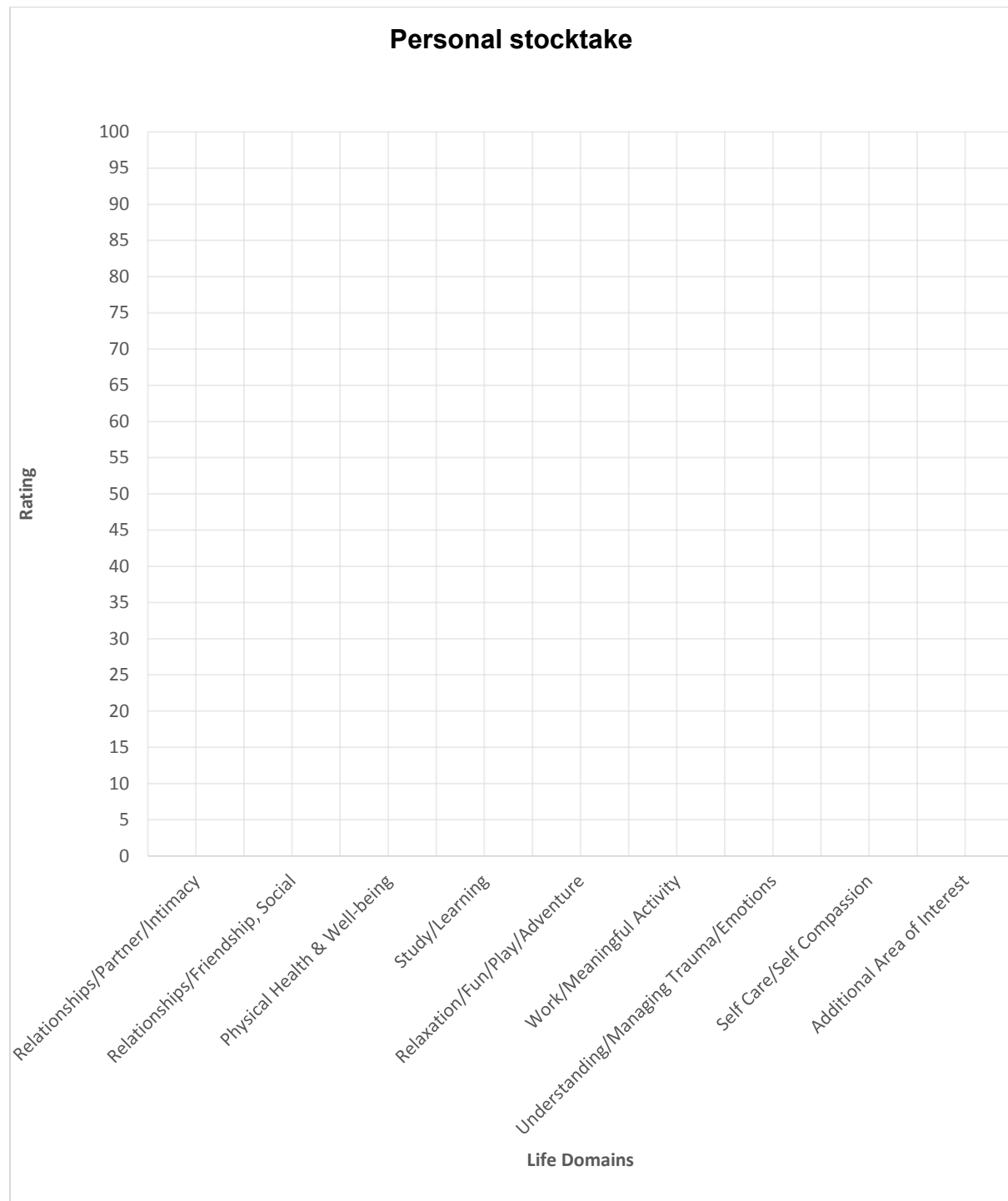
**Shame** is an emotion that many survivors identify struggling with. By itself, shame is rarely expressed, and the individual spends significant energy trying to bury or avoid it. Alcohol and drug use can act as a way to numb feelings of shame.

**Powerlessness** or **loss of control** is another central theme for both trauma and addiction. With respect to sexual abuse, an event occurred that you did not choose and did not want. Alcohol and drug misuse can lead to a sense of loss of choice and control.

### Aren't other behaviours addictive?

Yes. Many people believe that other behaviours can be addictive as well: sex, gambling, 'porn' (sexually explicit materials), and money are all examples of this. Professionals often refer to these behaviours as 'dysregulated' when they become problematic for the individual and/or his loved ones.

While none of these other behaviours involve taking substances to change our mood or brain chemistry, all habitual, repetitive, or compulsive behaviours create bio-chemical changes in our brain.



This chart is designed to support a personal stocktake in relation to different domains of life. It is a tool that can be used on a monthly basis to keep track of how you are travelling according to you. Participants are invited to place a mark for each of the domains, and to join these together with a single line for each stocktake. The scoring is personal, and will understandably fluctuate over time. There is no suggestion that anyone can score 100% in all domains at any time.

## Personal stocktake

The identified domains have been selected for their contribution to overall personal well-being.

- Relationships/partner/intimacy
- Relationships/friendship/social connections
- Physical health and well-being
- Study & learning
- Relaxation/fun/play/adventure
- Work/meaningful activity
- Understanding/managing trauma/emotions
- Self care/self compassion
- Additional area of interest

The domains related to 'Understanding/managing trauma/emotions' and 'Self care/self compassion' are included in recognition that these are particular challenges that confront men who have been sexually abused or sexually assaulted, and that they demand attention. An 'Additional area of interest' is included on the chart in recognition that everyone is unique, and each individual may wish to keep track of how they are travelling in relation to a domain of life they have identified as a priority for them (be it parenting, learning a new language, daily mindfulness, spirituality, sexuality etc.)

This personal stocktake is not meant to replace validated tools like the 'Well-Being Self Assessment' (Warwick and Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale) available on the Living Well app. It is a personalised tool for you to keep track of how you are travelling according to you. The scoring of different domains in a chart format is useful in that it provides a visual snapshot that quickly identifies any areas that will benefit from additional attention in the coming days, weeks, and months.

## Values based living and goals

Name (optional):

Date:

VALUE:

VALUE:

GOALS:

GOALS:

Long term:

Long term:

Medium:

Medium:

Short term:

Short term:

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VALUE:

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VALUE:

GOALS:

GOALS:

Long term:

Long term:

Medium:

Medium:

Short term:

Short term:

## SMART planning worksheet

Introduce the idea of goal settings that are SMART

<b>S</b>	<b>PECIFIC IGNIFICANT IMPLE</b>	What do I want to accomplish? Why do I want to achieve this goal? Who is involved in this goal? Where? Identify a location. How? Identify requirements and constraints.
<b>M</b>	<b>EASURABLE OTIVATIONAL ANAGEABLE EANINGFUL</b>	How much? How many? How will I know when it's accomplished?
<b>A</b>	<b>CHIEVABLE CTIONABLE TTAINABLE CTION-FOUSED</b>	How can the goal be achieved?
<b>R</b>	<b>ELEVANT ESULT-BASED EALISTIC</b>	Does it seem worthwhile? Is this the right time? Does this match my efforts and needs? Am I the right person?
<b>T</b>	<b>IMEFRAME IME-SPECIFIC ANGIBLE</b>	When? What can I do six months from now? What can I do six weeks from now? What can I do today?

<b>Planning SMART life goals and committed action</b>			
	<b>#1: Physical health &amp; well-being</b>	<b>#2: Study/learning</b>	<b>#3: Relaxation/fun/play/adventure</b>
<b>Specific</b> – significant, simple What do I want to accomplish? Why do I want to achieve this goal? Who is involved in this goal? Where? Identify a location. How? Identify requirements and constraints.			
<b>Measurable</b> – motivational, manageable, meaningful. How much? How many? How will I know when it's accomplished?			
<b>Achievable</b> – actionable, attainable, action-focused How can the goal be achieved?			
<b>Relevant</b> – result-based, realistic Does it seem worthwhile? Is this the right time? Does this match my efforts and needs? Am I the right person?			
<b>Time-framed</b> – time specific, tangible When? What can I do six months from now? What can I do six weeks from now? What can I do today?			

<b>Planning SMART life goals and committed action</b>			
	<b>#4: Relationships/partner/ intimacy</b>	<b>#5: Relationships/ friendship, social</b>	<b>#6: Work/ meaningful activity</b>
<b>Specific</b> – significant, simple What do I want to accomplish? Why do I want to achieve this goal? Who is involved in this goal? Where? Identify a location. How? Identify requirements and constraints.			
<b>Measurable</b> – motivational, manageable, meaningful How much? How many? How will I know when it's accomplished?			
<b>Achievable</b> – actionable, attainable, action-focused How can the goal be achieved?			
<b>Relevant</b> – result- based, realistic Does it seem worthwhile? Is this the right time? Does this match my efforts and needs? Am I the right person?			
<b>Time-framed</b> – time specific, tangible When? What can I do six months from now? What can I do six weeks from now? What can I do today?			

<b>Planning SMART Life Goals and Committed Action</b>			
	<b>#7: Understanding/ managing trauma/ emotions</b>	<b>#8: Self care/self compassion</b>	<b>#9:</b>
<b>Specific</b> – significant, simple What do I want to accomplish? Why do I want to achieve this goal? Who is involved in this goal? Where? Identify a location. How? Identify requirements and constraints.			
<b>Measurable</b> – motivational, manageable, meaningful How much? How many? How will I know when it's accomplished?			
<b>Achievable</b> – actionable, attainable, action-focused How can the goal be achieved?			
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<b>Time-framed</b> – time specific, tangible When? What can I do six months from now? What can I do six weeks from now? What can I do today?			

## **Additional resources for graduates of *Foundations***

### **Resources for individual counselling:**

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### **Resources for couple counselling:**

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### **Resources for group counselling for abuse recovery:**

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### **Specific resources for other issues:**

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### **Resources for body-oriented work (yoga, massage, etc.):**

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