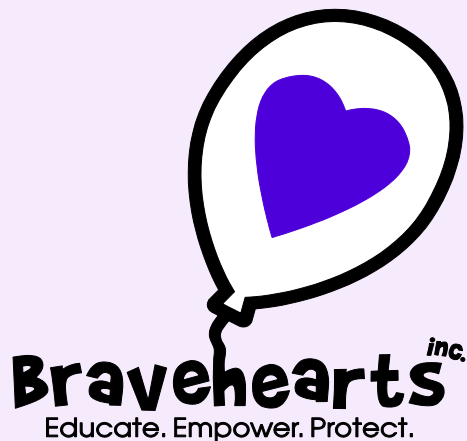


Child Sexual Assault: Addressing the mental health impacts on our children and young people



Presented by:

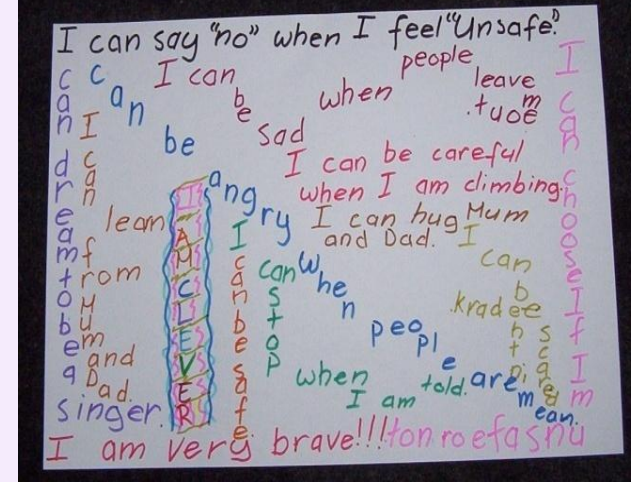
Hetty Johnston
Founder and Executive Director

Bravehearts Inc



Who is Bravehearts?

- ♥ Founded in 1997 after disclosure of child sexual assault.
- ♥ Gold Coast-based, national charity (branches in Qld, NSW, Tas, Vic).
- ♥ The charity aims to forge a 'movement for change' in how child sexual assault is dealt with by the criminal justice sector, government and the community at large.



Our programs

Counselling, advocacy and support

Recognised nationally as the lead agency specialising in all facets of child sexual assault. All of our therapists are psychologists, counsellors or social workers who have received specific training.



- ♥ Specialist counselling for children and young people who have or are at risk of child sexual assault, along with support for non-offending family members.
- ♥ Counselling support for adult survivors of child sexual assault.
- ♥ Counselling support for young people with problematic and/or abusive sexual behaviours.
- ♥ Professional advocacy and support.
- ♥ Training programs for therapists.

Ditto's Keep Safe Adventure: Personal Safety Program

CD-Rom...Live Show...Activity Books...DVD...Music CD...Teacher Resources

Overall Program Objectives

- ♥ Development of resilience skills and protective factors.
- ♥ Educate parents, teachers, child care workers on how to respond positively to a sexual assault disclosure.
- ♥ Empower children to disclose information on any unsafe situation.

Individual Learning Objectives

Ditto's three rules

1. We all have the right to feel safe with people.
2. Its okay to say 'no' if you feel unsafe or unsure.
3. Nothing is so yucky that you can't tell someone about it.



Non-direct Services

- ♥ Research and lobbying
- ♥ Bravehearts On-line
- ♥ Information publications
- ♥ Training workshops
- ♥ White Balloon Campaign
- ♥ Sexual Assault Disclosure Scheme



Child Sexual Assault – The facts



Child Sexual Assault: Victims

- Research
 - Girls are two to three times as likely to be sexually assaulted than boys (Johnston & Saenz, 2007)
 - Average age: 8.47 years (65% 10 years of age or younger) (Lang, Rouget & van Santen, 2004)
- Bravehearts client data
 - 72% female, 28% male
 - Average age at time of reported sexual assault: 6.59 years

Child Sexual Assault: Offenders

- Research
 - Males are more likely to offend; 6% of reported offenders are female (Childwise, 2006)
 - Average age 36yrs (Hanson, Gordon, Harris, Marques, Murphy, Quinsey & Seto 2002). Between 40-90% of offenders of intrafamilial offences are children or adolescents (Grant, Indermaur, Thornton, Stevens, Chamarette & Haise 2009)
- Bravehearts client data
 - 96.5% male, 3.5% female
 - Average age: 30.57 (range 3-91yrs). 27.4% under 16yrs (9.1% under 12yrs)

Child Sexual Assault: Victim-Offender Relationship

- Research
 - An estimated 70-90% of offenders are known to the child/young person (National Child Protection Clearinghouse, 2005)
- Bravehearts client data
 - 37.2% - parent or step-parent
 - 28.8% - person known to the child/family
 - 20.2% - other relative
 - 11.0% - sibling
 - 2.8% - stranger or someone met on the internet

Child Sexual Assault: Offences

- Research

- Between 5 and 10% of girls and up to 5% of boys are exposed to penetrative sexual abuse (Gilbert, Spatz-Widom, Browne, Fergusson, Webb & Janson, 2009).
- Up to three times this number are exposed to any type of sexual abuse (Gilbert, Spatz-Widom, Browne, Fergusson, Webb & Janson, 2009).

- Bravehearts client data

Of known offences:

- 53.2% - predominately fondling/touching
- 27.3% - attempted/actual rape or sodomy
- 17.6% - oral sex
- 1.9% - non-contact offences

Impact of Child Sexual Assault on Mental Health



Child Sexual Assault: Impact

- Children and adolescents who have been sexually assault can suffer a range of psychological and behavioural problems, from mild to severe, in both the short and long term. For example:
 - More than 80% of sexually assault children are reported to have post traumatic symptoms (Briere & Elliot, 1994)
 - Rates for childhood mental disorders, personality disorders, anxiety disorders and major affective disorders were higher among csa victims than the general population (Spataro, Mullen, Burgess, Wells & Moss, 2004)
 - Young people who had experienced csa had a suicide rate 10.7 to 13.0 times the national Australian rate (Plunkett, Shrimpton & Parkinson, 2001)
 - CSA victims are at an increased risk for suicide (relative risk = 18.09)and accidental fatal overdoses (relative risk = 49.22) (Cutajar, Mullen, Ogloff, Thomas, Wells & Spataro, 2010)

Child Sexual Assault: Impact

- Bravehearts client data
 - Aggressive behaviours - 42.7%
 - Nightmares - 37.8%
 - Fearful/avoidant - 32.8%
 - Problematic sexualised behaviours - 29.0%
 - Suicidal ideation- 15.8%
 - Bedwetting - 15.1%
 - Self-harming behaviours - 11.3%

Child Sexual Assault: Impact

- The impacts of child sexual assault can have wider implications:
 - Academic performance
 - Socialising & friendships
 - Bullying (both being vulnerable to and acting out)
 - Low self-esteem and sense of self (shame, negative thoughts, self-blame)
 - Body image issues (obesity, anorexia, bulimia)
 - Juvenile delinquency
- Long term impacts can continue on into adulthood:
 - Adult mental health issues (long term psychiatric problems: PTSD, depression)
 - Violent behaviour
 - Criminal behaviour
 - Suicide
 - Relationship problems
 - Vulnerability to interpersonal violence
 - Poor parenting skills
 - Alcohol and substance misuse And the list goes on

Specialised Response



The Therapeutic Response

- Must take into consideration the grooming process
- Must be sensitive to the attachment, trust and dependency that characterises these relationships and the subsequent confusion, guilt and shame often felt by the victim

Bravehearts Counselling Framework

- Holistic approach to healing from trauma
- Purely therapeutic, not forensic
 - Reasoning is two-fold. Discussing details of alleged assault:
 - has the potential to ‘contaminate’ evidence of current or future investigations.
 - has the potential to re-traumatise children, and therefore can be unethical.
- Client-centred.
- Strengths-based perspective.

-
- Due to the unique nature of child sexual assault, a unique therapeutic response is required.
 - Research emphasises the importance of understanding the dynamics of child sexual assault (offender-victim relationship, grooming techniques) and how these impact the victim.
 - Results of informed practice are better outcomes for victims and their families in the short and long-term .

Bravehearts Therapeutic Resources

- Specialised advice and support for therapists
- Specialised 2 day training program
- “The Bravehearts Toolbox for Practitioner Working with Child Sexual Assault” (McKillop, Ronken & Vidler, 2011)

To be released in December:

<http://www.aapbooks.com/>





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