

Speak Out

Issue 4 December 1990
Newsletter of the Survivors's Network (Sussex)



INSIDE

Surviving Christmas
Breaking the family abuse cycle
Male partners speak out
A year of networking
PLUS more poetry, artwork, info



Management Committee

SECRETARY by Kelle

As secretary I have to take the minutes of the Management Committee meetings, typed and circulate them to the M C members keeping green copies of everything I do. I take the apologies and write letters to thank people for their support and help with mailouts eg; for the Awareness day. I have to keep an up to date list of members, and contact all the trainers and trainees for our training sessions. I think that it is important that I attend as many Forum meetings as possible. I have also brought and arranged the Library System (10 Books!), and collected jumble, although this is not part of the job!

EDUCATION OFFICER by Mitch

To be the Education Officer I have needed to participate in talks on sexual abuse to groups, workers with survivors and any other relevant parties. To produce leaflets, booklets, pamphlets on the Network and on relevant matters concerning survivors, to keep college welfare departments and counselling services up to date regarding the Network and to work alongside the publicity officer to inform the wider public of the Network. You need to have a basic knowledge of the constitution and to advise people in all matters which may arise from it.

NEWS LETTER EDITOR by Louise

SPEAK OUT is the name of the bi-monthly news letter put out by the Survivors Network. It is run on the policy of giving women who were abused as children a chance to express themselves in a public way. There have been four issues, which survivors filled with their own articles, letters poetry, artwork and anything that helps them express the feeling of surviving the trauma of sexual abuse. As editor, I collect all the contributions sort-edit the writing design all the logos, take the finished product to the printers (finding the cheapest ones in town!) and collate the 16 pages and staple them in place. Then comes the easy bit - handing them out to survivors desperate for news about the Survivors Network!.

TREASURER by Sam

The treasure is responsible for all the Network's money, paying bills, banking any money we receive and keeping the books. The books need to be kept up to date all the time and you need to know how much money we have in the bank at all times. Also to make sure there is some cash in the petty cash at all times and get receipts for money paid out. The treasure also has to try and keep spending down as much as possible and make sure the money required is available in the bank so no cheques



Christmas Bells with another ring

As Christmas approaches, many survivors of child sexual abuse relive the hypocrisy and trama of the season when families get together. In this special report, one survivor tells how Christmas feels...

CHRISTMAS — that fun, festive time of year with goodwill to all men (what about women).

When families get together, exchange presents and celebrate the family feast.

When children look forward to Santa Claus coming down the chimney and delivering presents only to the 'good' children.

I ponder with sadness and relief that I am no longer in that pretend happy family situation. That just because it's Christmas, doesn't mean the abuse suddenly stops. Quite the opposite — it's the normal routine as usual.

For me as child, Christmas wasn't really celebrated. Sure, there was more drink in the house, if that was possible, but we ate the same food.

The rows, the beatings and the abuse still continued. The only other changes was that my father was at home more and I didn't go to school.

So Christmas to me is not an important event and I'm quite happy not to celebrate it, although my friends find this attitude hard to believe. This is part of the reason why I'm writing this.

Some friends say I'm boring and where's my sense of fun. Others say I'm wierd and if that's the case there are lots of us weirdos out there.

Just because I do not celebrate does not mean that I am boring or weird, but because it is what I have chosen to do.

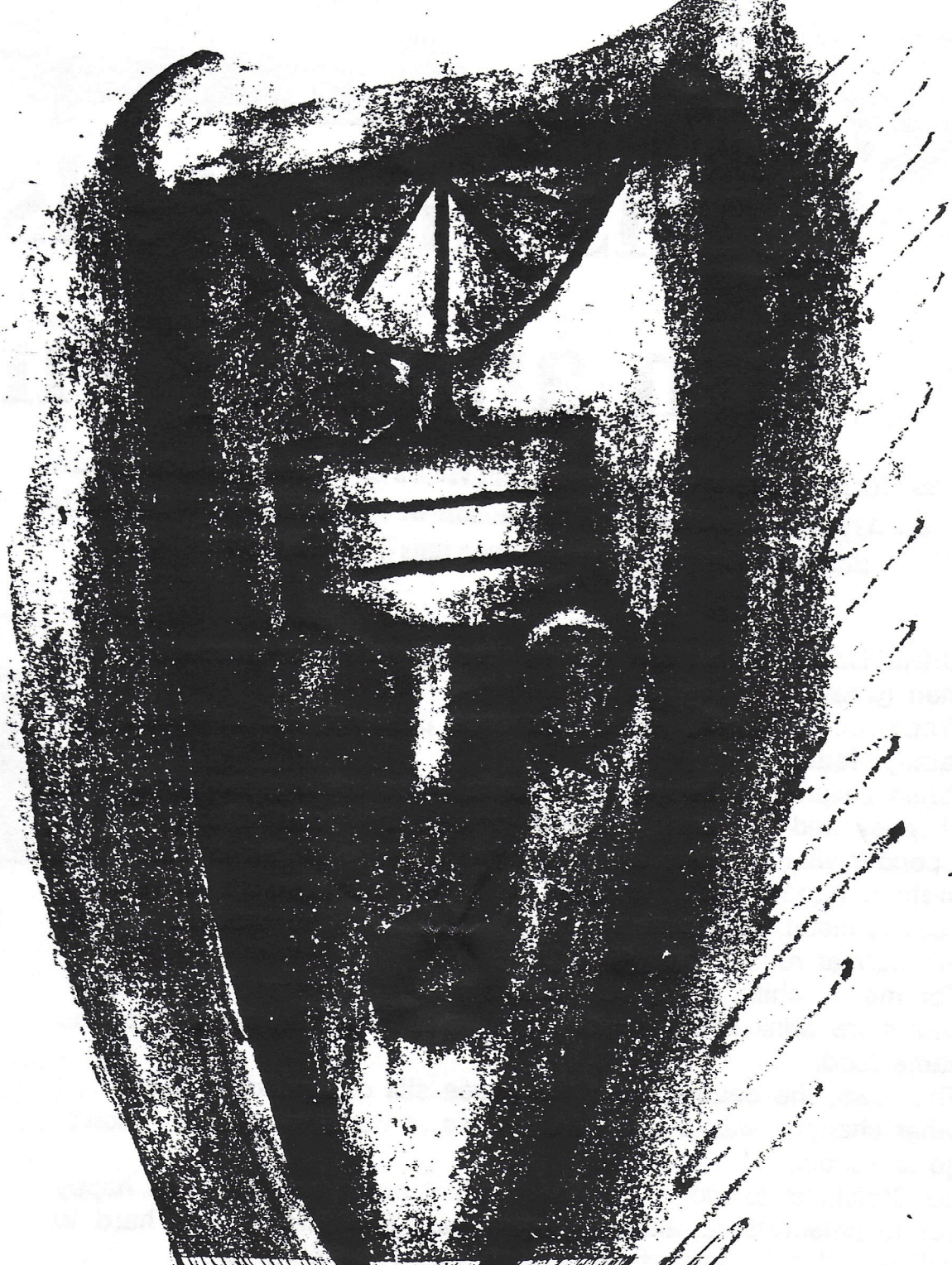
I would imagine that there are lots of survivors out there who feel the same way I do. So I would like to say to any of my friends — sit back and think for a moment and answer this. Would you go back to the family home for Christmas with your abuser there?

I ask you to stop making fun of people who don't celebrate Christmas. It's not always because we are anti-Christ. It may be because of what it recalls for us.

I would like to end on this note. If around the 24th of December you should find yourself wishing on a star, there will probably be thousands of other survivors doing exactly the same thing.

For all who don't and for all who do, I wish you all happiness and freedom.





Off-centre

A free and confidential service offering counselling for sexually abused young people (13-25)
081 985 8566/9864016

Distressline

For parents and carers of sexually abused children. Emotional support, legal and medical information
071 267 9260 11am-3pm

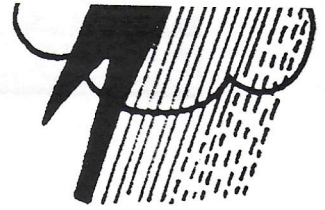
Women+Girls Network

A confidential counselling and information service for women and girls who have experienced any form of male violence
071 978 8887 Wednesdays 11-3

SCOSAC

Standing Committee on Sexually Abused Children

Offers consultancy to workers in voluntary and statutory sectors, organises meetings, publishes a newsletter etc
081 960 6376



'Tis the season...

The other side of Christmas

THIS TIME OF YEAR

Oh Jesus!
Christmas is a time for families.

I have none. And the
one I had I hated.

Christmas is a time for Christian
celebrations.

But I am an atheist

Christmas is a time for turkeys and
mince pies.

I am a vegetarian.

Christmas is a time for buying presents.

I have no money and I
hate the hypocrisy.

Christmas is a time for frivolity,
parties and having fun.

I am a serious
agoraphobic. Fun is
dangerous.

Christmas is a time of forgiving.

Never.

But Christmas can make me think who I want as my 'family'. I
know I have good 'sisters' and 'mothers' who nurture me.

I have rituals that are not religious, but the candles I light
have meaning.

I can give presents without cost. I can be loving and give time
at least to friends.

I may not leave the house for noisy parties, but maybe we can
have a drink together at my place and enjoy the colour and
creativity around at Christmas?

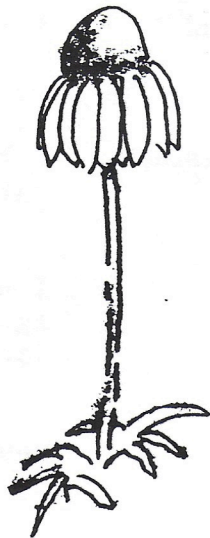
I can never forgive my abusers, but I can forgive myself for
all the awful things I do. And maybe in the New Year I won't be
so hard on myself?

poetry...poetry...poetry...poetry...

fuck ME
Humilator
Spoiler
Abuser
User
Hypricate
Angel of Death
Dance for Me
So I
Your master aprentice
May greive
One last time
Tears for the dying
and, You
May cry Judus tears
To fall apart
And rip
my soul
Least I should Survive
You



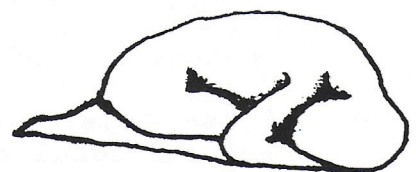
IF ONLY....



IF ONLY ABUSE WAS A NIGHTMARE,
A NASTY, NASTY DREAM,
I COULD WAKE NOT FEELING DIRTY,
NOT FEELING UNCLEAN..

IF ONLY ABUSE WAS A NIGHTMARE,
IT'D BE OVER WHEN I OPENED MY EYES,
BUT INSTEAD MY EYES ARE OPEN
AND THE DREAM GOES ON....

A - IS FOR ABUSE ; IT HAPPENED TO ME,
B - IS FOR MY BROTHER ; HE DID IT TO ME,
U - IS FOR UNDERSTANDING ; WHY IT WENT ON,
S - IS FOR SAFETY, SUPPORT ; FROM FRIENDS WHO I CAN RELY ON,
E - IS FOR ENLIGHTENMENT ; FOR THE DAY I'LL FEEL FREE.



Let's hear it for the boys...

The Survivors' Network now has a support group for male partners of women who were sexually abused as children.

THE aim of this group is to hopefully make known to people some of the difficulties facing partners of women who have been sexually abused in their childhood.

There are, of course, women partners as well as men and many of the issues will be the same for them, but I am a man and qualify only to speak from my point of view.

I understand there will be some women reading this who for their own reasons do not have a kindly attitude toward men and I ask them to look to their better nature and have some compassion for the men who want to be good partners.

I have found that to maintain and nurture a loving relationship with someone who suffered child sex abuse and now has a pattern in their lives which expects them to be unsuccessful in close intimate situations to be an awesome task, even though the abuse had been disclosed to me.

Disclosure alone does not bring forth knowledge of all manifestations the effect abuse has. When I was told, I was not even aware that I could get books on the subject, let alone there being a Survivors' Network.

Some partners are not told for various reasons. The situation can be very confusing. For example, being told that I am wanted, yet almost always turned away emotionally and physically, brought about barriers on both sides when all we wanted was each other's love.

This led to fear and hurt and sometimes aggression. So it is not surprising that many of these types of relationships do not last, which as I see it is what the pattern expects. The survivor may not be aware of this, the partner probably certainly isn't.

I, however, have worked towards a good partnership against all odds. Maybe with might have seemed like a vain hope. And at times I have felt like or threatened to leave, my partner felt betrayed, even though I had no support.

I have found myself taking on difficult problems and without the right kind of knowledge, many of these were dealt with badly — once again barriers arise.

We tried marriage guidance, this helped a little but really it is the abused and the effects which need proper therapy and/or counselling.

We tried being apart for a time. Still this does not tackle the real issue, although it can help during times of great stress or anger.

What would be 'normal' situations sometimes become ridiculous in our partnership, with so much misunderstanding and fear.

If there is true love holding this together, then it is worth pursuing, for there are opportunities through crisis. One needs to look to oneself more.

If I don't let the fear and pain scare me off, I become more 'connected' with myself, and if the partnership continues as an ongoing commitment, then that too will be greater for it.

Thankfully, there is help for survivors and there is now a partners' group.

We are all working to survive in this. We could all learn so much.

My heart goes out to you women — have courage, draw from your inner selves and work it through.

To partners, I would like to say the same. But remember, your loved one's problem is her own. You can only be there for her, in the wings, so to speak.

Things may get worse for a time. When therapy or realisation starts, the survivor may need to be alone to deal with it.

If you have the love and are true to yourself, then you will be a great support and a better person. This is not a win or lose situation — this is life.

This article is part of my view and should not be taken to reflect the view of the partners' group, although I have their blessings.

For more information about the partners' group, contact the Survivors' Network.

Thank you.

Good wishes,

A partner.

P.S. Don't forget to enjoy the good times.

From the chair

CHAIRPERSON'S JOB DESCRIPTION

To referee fights during heated debates about policy
Foster good relationships between workers.

Enforce diplomacy and democracy at meetings

Write articles for the newsletter ten minutes before
the copy deadline (using own word processor)

Negotiate for office space, for equipment and to
borrow furniture

To 'acquire goods' and sell jumble

To co-ordinate training sessions, matching workers
and volunteers

To develop policy documents for discussion

To sign cheques (and persuade the treasurer to give
over some of the funds)

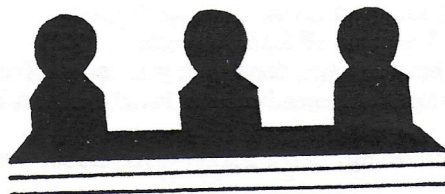
To receive embarrassing gifts (an elephant's foot?)

To conjure therapists out of thin air with no
funding.

To write and deliver papers about the Network and
advertise the service particularly to request funds

To be responsible for decisions made in Committee and
relay information to the statutory authorities when
necessary.

To chair meetings. (The least important task so far).





*****THANK YOU THANK YOU THANK YOU THANK YOU*****

Thanks to Sarah Elliott, Amanda Dean and Kaye Loadsman for their Art work and to everyone who has contributed to this newsletter.

To the Woman's committee for the £200 grant and all the support that they have offered us.

Many, Many thanks to all 'non-survivors' for your invaluable support over the last year, for listening and believing..

A big thank you to Louise Pemble who ran a stall at the Brighthouse Centre on Saturday 8th December and raised £65. Thank you to Jane, Louise and Maqs for helping on the day and to every one who donated clothes, bric-a-brac, cakes etc.

The jumble has raised £100 which has gone towards our library. Keep that Jumble coming!!

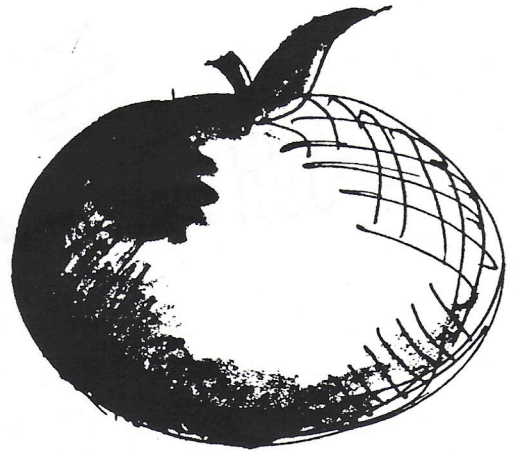
Thanks to the counsellor who will be staffing the phonenumber over the Christmas period and to all the phonenumber staff who have been so determined to keep the line open over the last year.

Thank you, Thank you Carole Shaw, without whom the Network would never have survived.

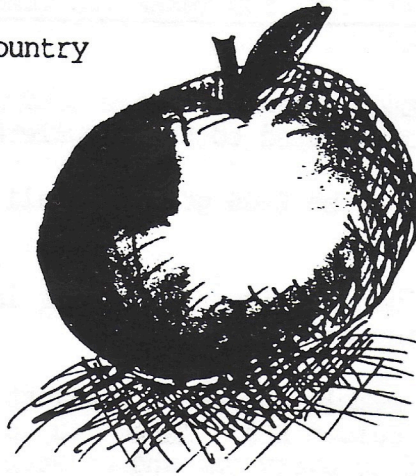
And finally thanks to everyone for their hard work and especially all partners and friends of survivors for supporting us.

*****Happy Christmas and see you all in the new year.*****

What would you like Mary?
 A box of Milktray
 its got coffee creams
 and flowers
 now stay here and play
 Cyril and I are just friends
 in the bar, in bed
 just a few hours
 just for today
 that's right, your so pretty
 my sweetness O.K.



What would you like Mary?
 a room above me
 with a friend we both know
 how about a house in the country
 do yourself some good
 take up my offer
 help a young woman
 who needs your assistance
 now don't be ungrateful
 don't give me resistance

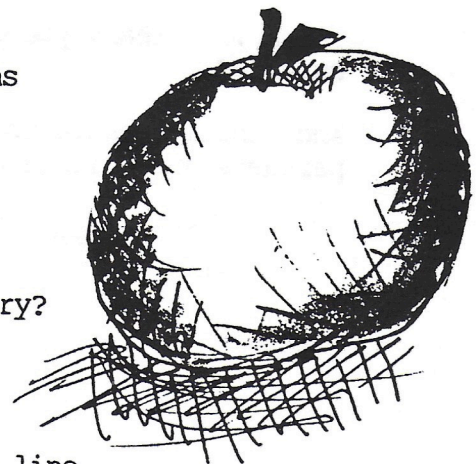


What would you like Mary?
 he lost that line
 she could see it in his eyes
 feel it in his hands
 there were other plans
 babies are too new
 to have words
 her mouth kept shut
 he pressed sweating fingers
 tight around the neck
 pushed open legs and mouth
 filled them
 with heart exploding
 no room for breath

What would you like Mary?
 a drink and a chat
 its so pleasant here
 its so charming
 its so precious
 do you remember that
 wonderful little doll of yours
 it had such a winning smile
 why did you give it away
 what's that your drinking
 sorry what did you say?

What would you like Mary?
 a job with quick cash
 you'll love this one darling
 one mature
 actor
 requires
 yellow canary
 caged
 occasionally whistles
 willing to know
 his every part
 what's happened to this metre?
 with you darling I know
 It will be sweeter

There was inequality in the
 crying scream,
 biting jerks
 he forced thorny crowns
 upon their brows
 guilt and pain
 which was who's
 or was it
 who's was which

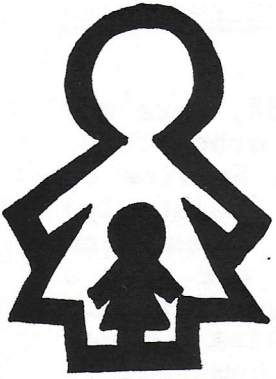


What would you like Mary?
 this room's a bit cold
 I had cabbage for tea tonight
 she was angry with me tonight
 your going out later tonight
 what was I saying?
 oh yes goodbye
 see you tonight

What would you like Mary?
 don't stand
 we're all sitting
 your're tired!
 your're hungry!
 no you're spoiling the line
 don't ruin a good time
 we all just want you to
 join in the rhyme
 no, no, people only sing your lullabies
 when your a baby.

Louise Stoker

Grandad loves you, but...



A mother who was sexually abused as child tells her father why he will not be allowed to repeat the pattern with his grand-daughter

WHAT I have to say in this letter concerns all the family. You can go along with it, keeping to grand rules, or you can dismiss it, it's up to you.

Believe me when I say I have to write this because I am a parent and I love my daughter, Alice, very much, as I know you do.

But she has come to the age now for abuse. It comes in many forms — sexual, mental, obsessional, paranoia, possessiveness and violent. For her safety, she has to be with me at all times — she must never be alone with you. If you think back you will know why.

This does not mean that you cannot love her, or sit her on your lap. It just means caution.

You see, Dad, once you are an abuser, you always have that problem. If you don't believe you have a problem, I can prove it. Invading your own daughter's body by touching parts of it, wherever it may be, and talking dirty, is not your right. It's an invasion of privacy. For a boyfriend or husband, it's OK with permission, but not a father.

Please do not put that shit onto anyone else and most of all not onto Alice. If you ever touch her you will never see us again — and she will know the difference between the right touch and the wrong touch, believe me.

You did it to me and you said you loved me. I'm still healing my mind and still fighting you with other things you put on me.

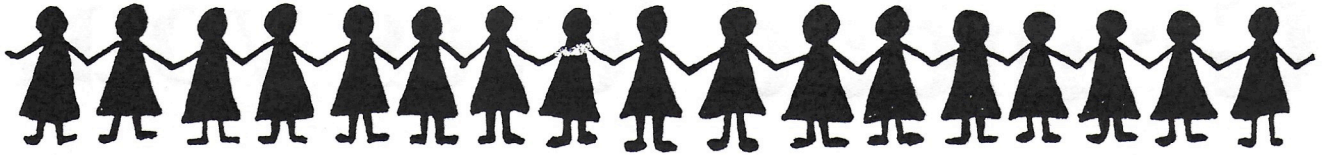
So all I ask is that she must be with me at all times.

This is not revenge, please believe me. I love you with all my heart and all I wanted from you was the same. I have never hated you and I never want Alice to.

If you cannot understand what I am saying to you, or if you're very angry with me, please talk to me about it.

If you do understand, NOTHING more has to be said. If you want to banish me from the family for telling the truth and for the love for my daughter, it is your loss and your fatal mistake.

With love from your daughter,



HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE SURVIVORS' NETWORK MARCH - DECEMBER '90
Carole Shaw, Chairperson

After the demise of the Incest Crisis Line in Sussex in 1988, there was no provision for adult survivors of childhood sexual abuse other than to join the queues for therapy within the National Health Service or to seek private counselling. The Statutory Authorities (belatedly) acknowledged the need for counselling and support for women, and P.A.C.T., together with Social Services and others, tried for over a year to resuscitate the idea. For many reasons this was unsuccessful, and eventually Threshold was approached as the obvious link to co-ordinate further attempts, and to gauge the needs of women themselves.

Sarah Jack from rape Crisis, and I as a therapist with the Clermont Child Protection Unit, were approached by Sue Davis from Threshold to set up the first Forum for women survivors. We had to observe a strict timetable to qualify for a grant from Social services: call a public meeting before the end of March, appoint a Steering Group, appoint a paid worker and discover what survivors wanted.

At the first meeting thirty women became involved - mainly by word of mouth - and filled in a questionnaire targetting their needs.

They wanted:

a telephone helpline

support groups

one to one therapy

regular meetings with other survivors

social activities

a safe house

connections with other groups locally and nationally

education and training

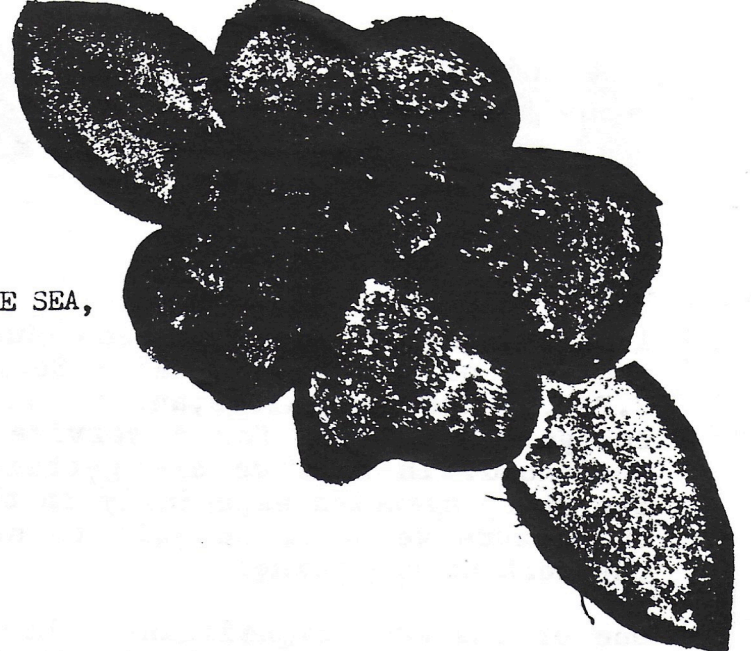
a newsletter

A Steering group was appointed to try to implement some of these requests and to find a fundraiser/development worker. This group met weekly until June when a Management Committee was elected, a Constitution adopted, and a worker appointed. The Chairperson, treasurer, secretary, Newsletter editor, education and training officers, publicity and resources workers, with other co-opted members have met regularly since June, (with some hiccups), to carry the work forward. In an incredibly short space of time we have achieved all those things first suggested, apart from the Safe House which is obviously a much grander undertaking. Where goodwill and enthusiasm have been needed we have met the demands and more.

We have a telephone helpline (566555) staffed by trained volunteers; three self-help groups, a Newsletter, Speak Out, which is the voice of Survivors; a pack for Professionals to inform them about the Network; a support group for male partners of abused women; an office for workers, and a resource area for Survivors to borrow books, read articles etc; supervision for workers and so on. We are working with other groups in the community to raise awareness of the issues and to assess further need. There are a number of other projects in the pipeline and we are looking forward to an active 1991.

THE WAVES , OH HOW THE WAVES NEARLY DROWN ME,
I MUST BE STRONG AND STAY ABOVE THE LEVEL OF THE SEA,
WHICH WOULD , IF I LET IT , DROWN ME,
AND PULL ME DEEP INTO THE OCEAN,
COMING UP OCCASIONALLY , GASPING FOR BREATH.

OH TO BE ON THE SHORE , SAFE,
LOOKING OUT TOWARDS THE SEA , PEACEFUL,
THE ONLY CONTACT WITH WATER WOULD BE THE SPRAY,
WHICH TOUCHES ME GENTLY AND FROM A DISTANCE,
AND REVITALISES MY WHOLE BODY AND MIND.

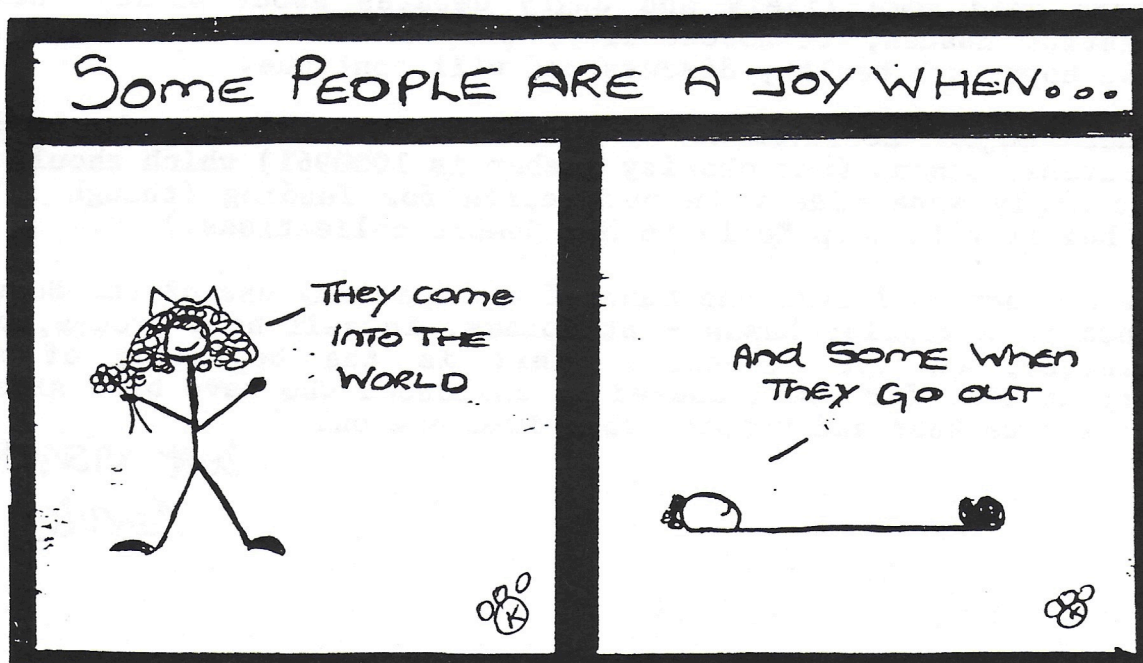


To drink cannot wipe away
the thoughts the memories,
Nor does it stop the nightmares
the flashbacks,
To put a lid back on the can of
worms,
Will only in years to come,
Make the lid swell and come off,
For the healing process has began,
There is no turning back,
Only to flow through each cave -
tunnel,
Until one day,
You wake to sunlight,
Then you know the journey was
worth it,
The pain the hurt you encountered
on that trip.

Night

Tonight I thought of lakes and rivers,
Of the countryside in the winter,
Of beautiful hills covered in snow,
And suddenly from nowhere,
Painful memories jump out,
Startling me from sleep,
Into the dark bare night,
Into the reality of loneliness.

MW





Development

There have been many bonuses during our development including the goodwill of 'professionals' - Social Workers, Health Visitors, G.P.s, C.P.N.s, and therapists, and so on, who have been very supportive and recognise the need for a service for women who have been abused in childhood. In fact we are getting more and more referrals from the Statutory agencies especially in the mental health field. Hopefully in the future we shall be able to negotiate some funding in return for the work we are doing!

One of the most significant achievements of the Network, (and one of the costliest at about £1,000 per year so far) , has been the telephone helpline. Since June we have operated three sessions each week receiving about one hundred calls in spite of a change of number in September. Almost half our calls are from women seeking information - local and national groups, legal and medical advice and so on,- and the rest are for counselling, often in times of crisis. Women have been referred on to us from Samaritans and the Accident and Emergency unit at the hospital, but usually the women find out about us by word of mouth. There is a training programme underway for more volunteers to help staff the line, and we should like to recruit other women in the near future. Ideally we should like to staff the line twenty four hours a day - or at least in the uncomfortable 'small hours' (midnight to 5am) when it seems that survivors need particular support.

The big event which deserves special attention is the Awareness Day held in October at the Brighthelm Centre, which did not make any money but promoted the work of the Network actively for the first time. The exhibitions, the poetry readings, the video and discussion groups, as well as the live entertainment, all underlined the needs of women surviving childhood sexual abuse and hopefully led to an understanding of the issues by a wider public. We certainly made a lot of new friends!

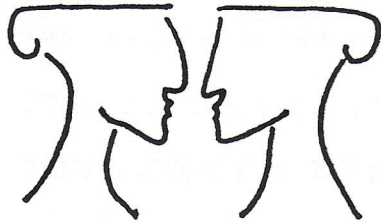
Some women who came to that day are now involved in the Forums or self-help groups, and some men who came along and asked for support are now engaged in a Partners' Group which meets weekly. This group was not something we had anticipated at the beginning, but there have been many new ideas generated which none of us had thought of before. We have held some lively and angry debates about policy decisions, separatist issues, transsexuality, perpetrator-survivors and so on, and we hope such healthy discussions will continue.

Another major achievement is that we have just been granted charitable status (our charity number is 1000961) which should enable us to apply more widely in our search for funding (though I am not sure how it will help Kelle in her jumble collections.)

There are now well over one hundred women making use of the Survivors' Network on a regular basis - at Forums, in self-help groups, via the Newsletter, on the telephone. This is the beginning of a very important time for women abused in childhood who have been silent too long: let us hear and support them from now on.

best wishes
Carole

Help!



SURVIVORS NETWORK

CHARITY NUMBER 1000961

Over one hundred women have contacted the Survivors' Network during the period March to December 1990 via the Telephone helpline (566555), the self-help groups, the monthly forums, or the newsletter.

The need for Women Survivors of childhood sexual abuse to have support, therapy and a voice at last, is undisputed. Indeed the statutory agencies who refer many women to our service, acknowledge that the need is ever increasing and that women deserve to be heard.

Currently the Survivors' Network is operating on a shoestring with the goodwill of many volunteers. In order to make the Network available to more women we need funding over a long period. So far we have initiated a telephone helpline, self-help groups, a partners' group, training for volunteers, a resources area, and a bi-monthly newsletter. We have had a small grant from Social Services and the Women's Committee have promised £200 but if we are to survive the next financial year we need several thousand pounds.

Please support us with a regular donation of a pound a month!

Standing order

to: THE SURVIVORS' NETWORK
BOX188, BRIGHTON BN1 7JW

I wish to contribute to the funds of the Survivors' Network. I undertake to pay the sum of £ each month/year, and have completed the Bankers Order Form below.

NAME:

ADDRESS:

Bankers Order Form

The Manager.....Bank Plc

.....

.....

Please pay The National Westminster Bank, Castle Square Branch, 8, Pavilion Buildings Brighton, for the credit of the Survivors' Network (Account Number 53646835) the sum of £ per month/year, making the first payment on (date)

.....

and subsequent payments on the same day of each month/year until further notice, debiting my current account number.....

name.....

address.....

.....

signed.....

Thank you!

SURVIVORS NETWORK (SUSSEX)

APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP

NAME.....

ADDRESS.....

.....

.....

TELEPHONE.....

OCCUPATION.....

I should like to apply for membership of the Survivors' Network, and receive information about meetings and projects. I enclose a cheque for £15 (payable to the Survivors' Network).

(£5 unwaged)

signed.....



Is there anyone out there?

FOR WOMEN WHO WERE SEXUALLY ABUSED IN CHILDHOOD

TELEPHONE HELPLINE: 0273 566555

Wednesday 7-9.30 pm
Friday 7-9.30 pm
Sunday 4-7 pm
24 hour answerphone

The Survivors' Network
P.O.Box
188
Brighton
BN1 7JW