




It Takes a Village ... !
Aboriginal Community Healing Approaches

Australian Childhood Foundation
Trust Love Betrayal: Therapeutic interventions that work
in the face of relational and complex trauma
Melbourne Convention Centre 29th July - 3rd August 2018

Judy Atkinson PhD,
Professor Emeritus,
Patron, We Al-li.






Acknowledging the Ancestors, Elders, Peoples of Dja Dja Wurrung, Taungurung and Wurundjeri peoples of the great Kulin Nation, Greetings from Bundjalung Peoples and Country.


Who am I? Own who we are. Grow their legacy

- Jiman
 - Eliza Shields
- Bundjalung
 - Henry Williams
- I am formed by who they were and are.
- Also mother of 4
- Barbing - Grandmother of 7
- Barbing - Great-grandmother of 2





Some Trees Need More Water than Others (Uncle Harry Walker Bundjalung Elder)



First Three Months. "Behaviour is Language"

Generational Trauma in Families - Carers

Unskilled workforce - system failure - focus on punishment

**Began to Sow Seeds - watering the roots
BUT - SUCCESS CAN LOOK LIKE FAILURE**

Build on what works - for all children - all else follows .

We are the products of our childhoods. The health and creativity of a community is renewed each generation through its children
(Bruce Perry M.D. PhD)



Listening and Learning Together hearing through different ears



- Ngangikurungkurr - *dadirri* - listening in contemplative - reciprocal relationships
- Pitjantjatjara - *kulini* (listening), *Kulila* (you listen now) or *pulgkara kulin tjugku* (really (deep) listening, and wanting to listen).
- Bundjalung - *gan'na* hearing, listening, feeling, thinking, understanding.
- Gunmbayngirr - *junga-ngarraanga miinggi* - hearing, listening, learning, feeling, thinking, understanding, knowing from the heart.

The Oldest Living Culture: Massacre Sites not Individual PTSD but Historic - Collective Trauma

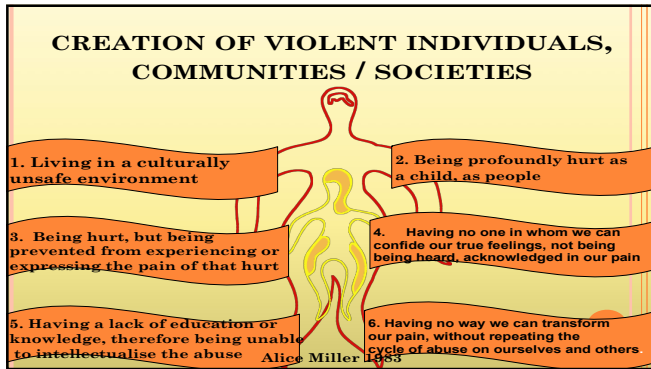


World Wide Colonisations “Symptom as History”



Story of Dolly

- Subjugation of Indigenous peoples:
Physical Violence - Structural Violence
- Psycho-Social dominance
- The creation of culturally unsafe learning and living environments.
- Understanding the trauma story:
• Historic, Social, Cultural, Collective, Complex, Developmental Trauma.



Colonisation Continues Trauma is historical - collective - communal

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in Care. Since the apology in 2008, the number of Aboriginal children in care has risen by 68%.
- In 2014/15 there are 15,000 Aboriginal children in care.
- 1-4 year olds are 11 times more likely to be removed.
- Aboriginal children make up 5.5 % of children aged 0-17 but are 35% of children in OOHC.
- 100% of the youth in the NT detention centre are Aboriginal.
- Youth Suicides > linked to family and sexual violence.
- Substances >> youth acting out >>
- Colonisation continues. It's failure is clear. Current approaches are not working

When We Ignore Generational Trauma (Merida Blanco, in Peter Levine, Waking the Tiger)

- 1st generation. colonised – males killed – imprisoned – females sexually misused
- 2nd generation. Men turn to alcohol or drugs as their cultural and spiritual identity is damaged – self worth eroded.
- 3rd generation. Spousal Assault – Societal trauma
- 4th generation. Abuse moves from spousal assault to child abuse or both.
- 5th generation. Cycle repeats as trauma begets violence begets trauma.
- The grown children of the conquerors live in fear of the grown children of the conquered. Talking Revolution across History



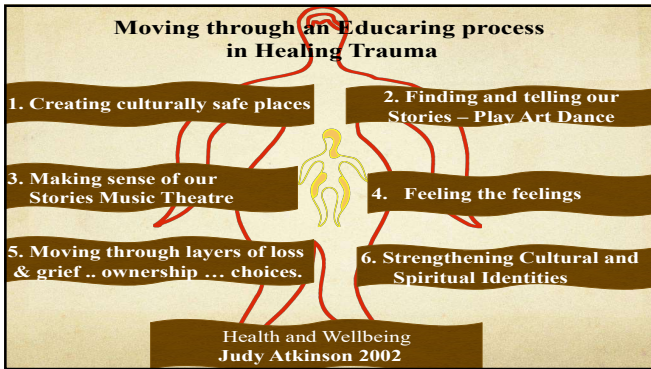
In the first three months: - Brad -

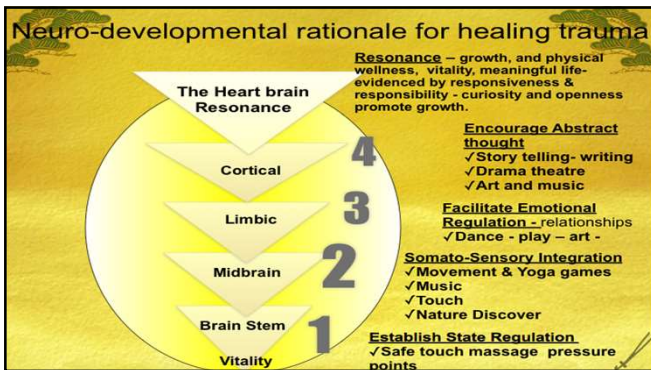
- Diagnosis : emerging psychosis with mood depressive content, some paranoia (he thinks the world is unsafe)
- Suicide ideation
- Chronic Compound Grief
- Chronic Compound Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

A Model for Healing
Trauma Specific responses to their needs

STORY
HEROS

ART
MUSIC
DANCE
THEATRE
BODY WORK
NATURE
DISCOVERY







What happened when we applied these principles in the school?

Grandparents cried

Children never missed a day

Look, I can read now

Empathy

Literacy and Numeracy Improved 150% 300%

Parents regularly visited the School

What the Teachers said

£ "We have the freedom to teach in the way that the children need".

"They are so excited about learning".

"They are not angry any more"

What the children said

£ I like music because I can feel the beat through my body.

£ I like dance because I can tell different stories.

£ I like body work because I feel calm and relaxed.

£ I like theatre because I can be growly different characters.

£ I like art because I can't make mistakes.

£ I like the nature discovery because I can learn things when I am outside.

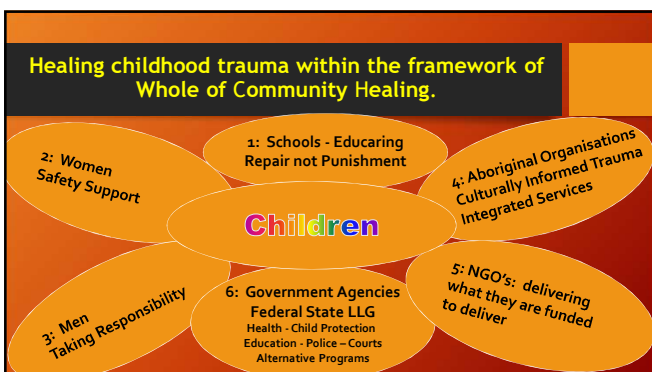
But Success Can Feel Like - Look Like Failure



What are the Stories under the Stories.
And are we willing to face the truth in those Stories
ALL OF US. ARE WE WILLING TO FACE THE TRUTH?

We are still reaping the results of historic systemic failure

- As the children felt safe at the school, and the school got to know the Stories behind their behavior, and they got to know the parents or carers (generally grandparents), they began to see the truth that is often denied. Parents can't parent in the way children need if they themselves have had Adverse Childhood Experiences, have their own unhealed Stories. AND history is STORY ... HIS -STORY.
- Reflect back to 1974. Where were you in that year? What was happening in your life. In this town and across NSW, the Dept. of Education had a legal clause that any principle could refuse to enroll any Aboriginal child in their school. In 1974 ... a principle decided to enroll 6 Aboriginal students, ... but ... ' We Smell Racism Aunt'.



“AUNTY MARGIE - I LOVE YOU - I MISSED YOU”

“All you can do is Love them”

1. Children and youth: need Trauma Specific Services
2. Women: Safety and Support
3. Men are taking responsibility
4. Aboriginal Organisations must become trauma informed
5. NGO's have to start to deliver to the most vulnerable
6. Government Agencies - Federal State and Local
 - Early Childhood, Health, Child Protection, Education, Police, Courts, alternatives to - JJ Prison

Defining Community : Safety Hope Resolution

• A group in which free conversation can take place. Community is where I can share my innermost thoughts, bring out the depths of my own feelings, and know they will be understood. ... Communication makes community and is the possibility of human beings living together for their mutual psychological, physical and spiritual nourishment (May 1976: 246-7).

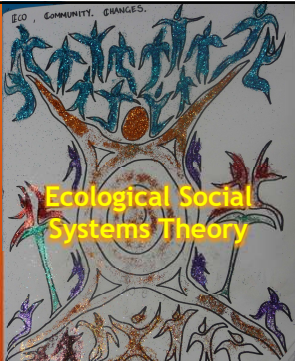
Community of Care is the name given to groups of people who live together in small communities, and who care for each other. More particularly those people who live in small communities know who is struggling and who is feeling pain, and decide to do something to support them.

Ecological Social Systems Theory

Skilling Communities Of Practice

Two conditions of a community of practice are crucial in the construction of meaning: shared experience over time, and a commitment to shared understanding and service.

Growing Communities Of Care



Communities of Care - Communities of Practice
whole of community healing to protect children from harm

- Work together
- Begin earlier
- Think Developmentally
- Support parents and schools to 'Educare'
- Implement the principles and practice of Child Rights, Human Rights, Indigenous Rights
- Make adequate resources available
- Work from a sound knowledge base
- Create a culture of non violence

Place based Community learning for Sustainability

- Community learning - sharing stories in reflective discussion and practice,
- Learning through dialogue (yarning)
- Discussing 'what we know' from our lived experiences, against what others know - the practice of living and learning together against text book theory
- Art - individual and collective,
- Music - Dance, Theatre,
- Ceremonies - emotional release,
- Traditional - healing - body work - massage - movement - mindfulness.

"to know this country as a place that teaches us to
listen - to ourselves and to each other"
To learn - to be human - Together



"You said, 'They're harmless dreamers
and they're loved by the people.'
'What,' I ask you, 'is harmless about a dreamer, and what,'
I ask you, 'is harmless about the love of the people?'
Revolution only needs good dreamers who remember their dreams
Tennessee Williams
There is always a dream dreaming us
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