



Bravehearts^{inc.}
Educate. Empower. Protect.

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Our Counselling Program



As an organisation Bravehearts provides an holistic approach to healing. Our service operates from a framework that encompasses counselling, support work, advocacy, and a referral and information service.

Bravehearts has a history of providing professional support and counselling to all survivors of child sexual assault with an emphasis on ensuring the needs of child survivors are met.

Bravehearts' therapists provide a holistic approach and are all experienced in the area of child sexual assault; supported by dedicated and experienced professionals who are able to provide support, advice and advocacy to clients.

This is a client-centred process aimed at ensuring that the rights of the client and their participation in the process is upheld.

Bravehearts' counsellors are required to have tertiary qualifications in Psychology or Social Work or other counselling fields and are members of their respective professional associations. They abide by the Code of Professional Conduct of their respective associations (eg. PACFA, AASW, ACA and/or APS).

Bravehearts has developed a "Counsellor's Toolbox" which provides for a clearly defined, semi-structured, consistent therapeutic program.

Our Counselling Framework

At Bravehearts we work from a 'person-centred, strengths-perspective', which is influenced by expressive processes and techniques, such as play therapy, Gestalt therapy, and cognitive-behavioural therapy.

The basis of our counselling model includes:

- ♥ A model that does not require that children/young people disclose or discuss the sexual assault/s they have experienced. This is because it may prove traumatic for the child/young person and it is not necessary for healing to occur. Additionally, questioning the child may impede any potential investigation.
- ♥ Our primary role is therapeutic and not forensic assessment.
- ♥ We provide opportunities for children/young people and their non-offending family members to work through the traumatic event and the trauma symptoms that have resulted as a consequence of the sexual assault perpetrated against them.
- ♥ We provide support in a non-

judgmental, confidential, safe and supportive environment.

- ♥ In our counselling model we utilise techniques from a range of different therapeutic models to address different issues and suit different clients needs.
- ♥ We help children/young people/adults identify for themselves who are safe and unsafe people. We help them identify their right to feel safe with people and what to do when they are feeling unsafe.
- ♥ Counsellors will work alongside other agencies working with the client / client's family as identified. This may involve collaborative case management, including interagency meetings.

We work from this style of intervention due to the violation of boundaries that occurs when a child is sexually assaulted. The child needs to reconnect with their body and their feelings, and needs to be empowered. This model of therapy is strongly supported in literature on child sexual assault and counselling approaches.

In addition to providing therapy, Bravehearts' counsellors:

- provide phone counselling, for both clients and their families and in response to other enquiries.
- provide substantial support for our clients and their families, and provide parent or sibling counselling as identified or requested.
- work alongside other agencies working with the client / client's family as identified. This may involve collaborative case management, including interagency meetings.
- may testify in court.
- can prepare reports for court and provide files if subpoenaed.