

BALLARAT CASA

**The Ballarat
Centre Against Sexual
Assault**

A disclaimer...

Philosophical Statement

- **Ballarat CASA takes a socio political perspective based in feminist and human rights philosophies**
- **Sexual assault occurs along a continuum of violent behaviour**
- **Sexual assault is both a consequence and reinforcer of the power disparity between people**
 - **The impact of sexual assault on the lives of victim/survivors is multi-faceted and complex.**
- **The impact of sexual assault can be compounded by factors relating to the stratification of society by gender, culture, race, ethnicity, age, sexuality, religion, ability and socio-economic class**
- **Sexual assault is a crime against the individual and society. It is not only a private problem**

Sexual assault can be described as an act of a sexual nature that is unwanted or intimidating ranging from sexual harassment, coerced sexual activity, rape or incest...

- ❏ **Being made to look at, or pose for, pornographic photos;**
- ❏ **Being masturbated or forced to masturbate the offender;**
- ❏ **Voyeurism;**
- ❏ **Exhibitionism;**
- ❏ **Verbal harassment/innuendo;**
- ❏ **Oral/genital contact**
- ❏ **Penetration of the victim's vagina, mouth and /or anus with a penis or object**

SEXUAL ASSAULT IS NOT REALLY ABOUT SEX – IT IS ABOUT POWER AND VIOLENCE AND THE ABUSE OF POWER. IT HAPPENS WHEN ONE PERSON USES SEX AS THE TOOL TO GAIN POWER OVER ANOTHER.

Some facts about child sexual abuse:

- **1 in 3 women & 1 in 6 men are survivors of childhood sexual abuse (Fergusson & Mullen, 1999)**
- **Childhood sexual abuse is perpetrated predominately by adult males from all walks of life. This includes heterosexual men, abusing both boys and girls, their own children and other people's children.**
- **Most child abuse is carried out by 'trusted adults' known to the child and in the home of the child.**

Sexual assault & mental health:

- **Abuse in childhood appears to be one of the main factors that lead a person to seek psychiatric help as an adult” (Herman 2001:122)**
- **70% of non-psychotic women seeking emergency psychiatric assistance, when questioned acknowledged a history of sexual abuse in childhood... experiencing more suicidal ideation, suicide attempts, self-mutilations, drug abuse, sexual problems, diagnosis of personality disorders & more psychiatric diagnoses than non-abused patients. (Briere & Zaidi, 1989)**
- **Women who have experienced violence, whether in childhood or adult life, have increased rates of depression & anxiety, stress related symptoms, pain syndromes, phobias, chemical dependency, substance use, suicidality, somatic & medical symptoms, negative health behaviours, poor subjective health and health service utilisation ` (World Health Organisation 2002:101)**

**Some of the short term and
long term effects of sexual
assault....**

While each victim/survivor has an individual response to sexual assault there are some effects (short term and long term) which can be described as common :

☞ **Feelings of powerlessness & loss of control**

☞ **Depression**

☞ **Fear**

☞ **Panic attacks**

☞ **Hostility**

☞ **Anger**

☞ **Suicidal ideation**

☞ **Eating disorders**

☞ **Addictions**

☞ **Dissociation**

☞ **Feeling numb**

☞ **Denial**

☞ **Disturbed sleep**

☞ **Flashbacks**

☞ **Guilt**

☞ **Embarrassment / shame**

☞ **Loss of confidence**

☞ **Low self esteem**

☞ **Mood changes**

☞ **Self harming**

COGNITIVE

- **Intrusive thoughts/memories**
- **Nightmares/bad dreams**
- **Suicidal thoughts**
- **Low self esteem**
- **Flashbacks**
- **Problems with trust**
- **Acceptance of belief system of perpetrator i.e. "it's all my fault"**
- **Confusion**
- **Dissociative disturbances/Perceptual disturbances**
- **Underachievement, in education & occupation**
- **Loss of faith**

BEHAVIOURAL

- **Isolation and alienation**
- **Bad reactions to medical procedures**
- **Eating disorders**
- **Substance abuse**
- **Parenting problems**
- **Pronounced startle response**
- **Compulsive & obsessive problems**
- **Abuse of self**
- **Aggressive behaviour**
- **Promiscuity**
- **More likely to be a user of psychiatric services**
- **More frequent use of medical services**

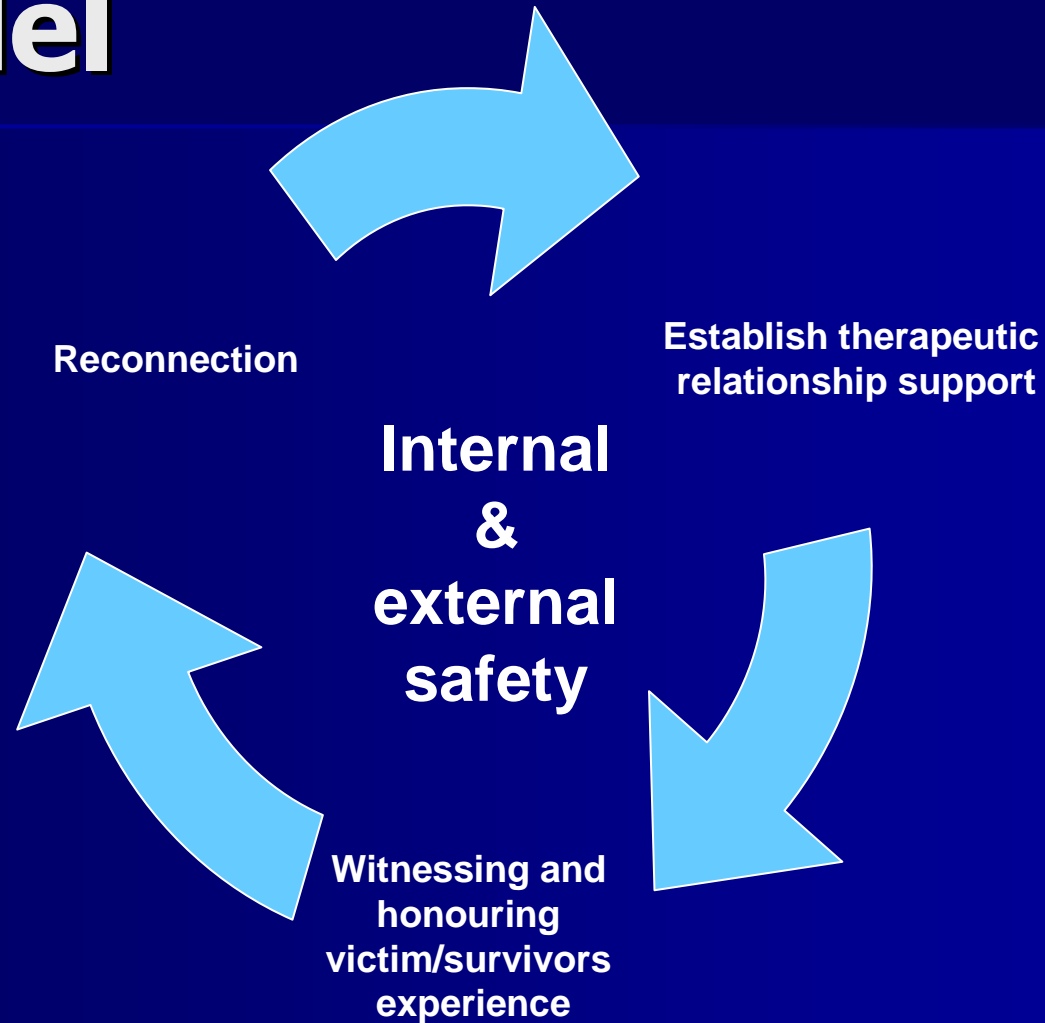
EMOTIONAL

- **Reactions –**
- **Depression**
- **Anxiety**
- **Guilt or fear during sexual contact**

INTERPERSONAL

- **Re-victimisation**
- **Problems with touch and intimacy**
- **Difficulty sustaining positive experiences**
- **General fear of men/women**
- **Interpersonal difficulties**
- **Fear of authority**

Sexual assault trauma model












JUDITH HERMAN'S 3 stage model of trauma recovery

- Establish safety
- Control of body
- Control of environment

Responding to disclosures-

- **helpful responses;**

-  **Believe the person**
-  **Provide safety and privacy**
-  **Listen with empathy, respect, sensitivity and a non judgemental attitude.**
-  **Believing the perpetrator is always responsible**
-  **Ensure the person is in control of what's happening.**
-  **Allow the person to talk at their own pace.**
-  **Validate the experience as significant.**
-  **Provide information & encourage the person to accept help & support.**
-  **Allow the person to make his or her own choices and have them respected**

What does *CASA* provide?

 **Free and Confidential service**

 **Duty System**

Counselling and Advocacy assistance

- **For recent and past
victim/survivors of
sexual assault**

Services for children and young people

- **Counselling service for children and young people who have disclosed sexual assault**
- **There must be protection before counselling.**
- **Child centred, family focused**

Services for children and young people

- Specialist consultation is provided for problem sexual behaviours (under 10) or sexually abusive behaviours (10-14years) .
- Therapeutic treatment

Other Services

- Groupwork
- Community and Professional education
- Secondary Consultation

Referral Process

- Anyone can refer to CASA
- Referrals are accepted by phone and are taken by the Duty Worker.
- A duty worker is on duty every afternoon between 1 and 5pm.
- CASA aims to work with adults and children in crisis as soon as possible after the trauma.

**BALLARAT CENTRE AGAINST SEXUAL
ASSAULT
24 HOURS CRISIS CARE SERVICE**

Some useful websites for information about sexual assault:

- **Ballarat CASA – casa@bhs.org.au**
- **South East CASA – www.secasa.com.au**
- **Australian Centre for the study of sexual assault – www.aifs.gov.au/acssa**
- **Domestic Violence resource centre - www.dvirc.org.au**
- **David Baldwin's Trauma Information – www.traum-pages.com**