

SOLUTION FOCUSED RECOVERY FOR ADULT SURVIVORS OF CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

7. VICTIM – SURVIVOR – THRIVER (THE AUTHENTIC SELF) THE 3 STAGES

VICTIM

- First stage of healing. First it is important for SU to face the reality of the bad or unfortunate thing that happened
- You can then acknowledge the negative feelings and emotions that might be around (grief, anger, sadness, disappointment, frustration, despair, hopelessness, helplessness, etc.)
- Allow yourself to experience these feelings & emotions: and express them safely
- This is a vital part of healing + a valuable part of this stage
- It is also important to recognise that what happened **was not your fault**, so you can let go of self blame and shame. (In the small number of cases where it was your fault, it is important for you to attribute only the correct proportion of blame to yourself. Then, it is important for you to consider in what ways constructively, you may make amends for what occurred)
- Find the courage to tell someone else what happened to you; this breaks down the isolation
- As soon as the victim stage has been acknowledged and understood, you can move into the next stage – Survivor

SURVIVOR

- This begins when you understand you have lived beyond the traumatic or highly stressful experience/s that occurred
- This stage reinforces the fact that it happened in the past
- Then questions may be asked: “How did I survive it?”; “How did I do it?”; and, “What strengths and resources did I use?”
- Acknowledgment of survivorhood involves:
 - Developing an inventory of positive personality characteristics
 - Identifying and appreciating the internal strengths (knowledge, courage, spirituality and other positive aspects of self which have got you this far.
 - Identifying external resources: mates, counsellor/therapist, minister, supportive family members, community support, etc. – at the time of the incident/s and afterwards
- At this stage, you will regain ability to function in everyday life: work, family time, household chores, time with mates, hobbies, community activities, etc.
- **Once you have acknowledged you’ve survived – skills, strengths, qualities & resources – that have got you to survival and eventual wellbeing – move on – to thriving - move on to live life to the full/live as purposeful and meaningful life as possible**

THRIVER - LIVING LIFE TO THE FULL

- This allows you more freedom than the earlier stages
- It allows you to experience a more compelling present and to contemplate a realistic and achievable future that is more vivid and fulfilling than your past
- It is now possible to enjoy life to the fullest, within any physical limitations you may have
- It is worthwhile to explore possibilities and dreams for the future you may be having right now
- It is now possible for you to express yourself in the most personally rewarding and creative ways available to you
- In this stage, your current experiences and relationships – may evoke increasingly a sense of immediacy, wonder and enhanced potential for future growth
- (Handout developed from ideas outlined by Yvonne Dolan in her book, *Beyond Survival: Living Well is the Best Revenge*. BT Press 2000)

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