



# Trauma-focused Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (TACT)

A Group Program for Survivors of Sexual Assault



## INFORMATION FOR COUNSELLORS/PRACTITIONERS

Next Information Session: Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> August 2017 **Geelong**

Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> August 2017 **Colac**

Potential participants and referrers are invited to attend.

No need to book for the Information Session,

**but we do encourage potential participants for the program to attend**

No cost for the Information Session or the TACT Program.

Counsellor/practitioner endorsement required for acceptance into the program

### WHO IS THE PROGRAM FOR?

The program is suitable for females impacted by family violence and/ or sexual assault who are 18 years or older, experiencing post-traumatic stress symptoms and:

- Have accessed counselling and can access a counsellor if necessary during the program.
- Have sufficient self-regulation skills and external supports to safely engage in a structured program in a group setting.
- Can commit to attending all 10 sessions of the program (except in the case of unforeseen circumstances).

### PROGRAM AIMS

- To deliver a structured therapeutic intervention in a group setting for women affected by family violence and / or sexual assault suffering from post-traumatic stress symptoms.
- To integrate the ACT model with trauma theory and practice.
- For the program to be holistic and based on the impact of trauma on the whole self (mind, body, spirit, affect and actions).



## **PROGRAM APPLICATION PROCESS**

- Potential participants (referrers are also welcome) attend the Information Session and will be encouraged to ask questions about the program experience
- Potential participants will be encouraged to ask questions about the program experience and invited to register their interest at the information session or by phone.
- A program facilitator will meet for a short period with each person by phone or in person to discuss appropriateness for them to attend the group at this time. A facilitator may also discuss suitability with the referrer.
- Each potential participant will have their attendance confirmed by phone.

*Program acceptance is based on:*

- The applicant's suitability
- Their counsellor/practitioner's endorsement
- Number of places available

## **STRUCTURE AND FEATURES OF THE PROGRAM**

A 10-week structured program that is practical, psycho-educational and experiential.

- Participants will learn:
  - About the neurobiology of sexual assault trauma,
  - About the impact of trauma on the whole self and reflect on their own adaptation to trauma
  - A range of mindfulness skills through body-centred exercises that engage each of the five senses.
- Sessions include a mixture of learning, group discussions, individual reflection, writing, music, art, nature and movement
- Each session begins and ends with a grounding exercise, to assist in establishing safety within the group
- The program is different from a support group because whilst there is group discussion and opportunity for sharing, participants engage in their own parallel processes in the group setting
- Participants are encouraged to complete practice tasks between sessions to consolidate the skills that they have learned. They receive a program manual and mindfulness CD recorded by one of the facilitators

## PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

- To increase participants':
  - Knowledge of the impact of trauma on the whole self and awareness of how trauma has impacted the progression of their lives
  - Willingness and capacity to stay in the present and accept their internal states including thoughts, feelings, memories and sensations
  - Knowledge and pro-activity around the importance of reducing physiological arousal in trauma recovery
- To enable participants to begin to experience themselves and their life in a more mindful and integrated way, enabling effective action that will increase their sense of hope, purpose and vitality.

## ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES

- A reduction in participants' trauma aftermath symptoms
- An increase in participants' level of mindfulness, self-awareness and psychological flexibility. Psychological flexibility refers to a person's ability to stay in the present and take effective action that is aligned with their personal values.
- An increase in participants' understanding of the impact of trauma on the whole self and their own adaptation to trauma

## NEXT PROGRAM DATES/TIMES/LOCATION

- Program sessions 1-10 will be held over 10 weeks with a two week break during school holidays starting early September 2017. Each session is 3.5 hours (with 05 hours for lunch).

### Session dates and location:

- **Geelong** sessions commence **Tuesday 5 September 2017** and will be held at the **Barabool Hills Conference Centre**
- **Colac** sessions commence **Wednesday 6 September 2017** and will be held at the **Colac Community Library and Learning Centre.**

## **PROGRAM OVERVIEW**

### **Information Session**

- Overview of the 10-week TACT program
- Overview of Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT)
- Explanation of the registration process and invitation to apply.

### **Session 1: Setting the scene**

- Getting to know each other
- Establishing a sense of safety and confidentiality in the group
- Introduction to basic trauma theory
- The importance of grounding and reducing physiological arousal in trauma recovery

### **Session 2: The unique dynamics of sexual assault and family violence**

- What is sexual assault and family violence
- Common misconceptions about sexual assault and family violence
- The human survival response
- The role of shame after sexual assault and family violence
- The importance of boundaries in trauma recovery

### **Session 3: The paradox of avoidance and control**

- Introduction to the paradoxical nature of avoidance and control
- Reflecting on the costs of avoidance
- Learning about trauma adaptation

### **Session 4: Willingness to stay present and accept what is**

- Learning about the neurobiology of trauma
- Introduction to willingness as an alternative to avoidance and control
- Exercises to experience what willingness involves

### **Session 5: Mindfully unhooking**

- Learning about dissociation
- Exercises to connect with sensations in the body
- The difference between being 'hooked' and getting 'unhooked'
- Unhooking strategies

## **Session 6: Acceptance as an alternative to avoidance**

- Exploring the idea of acceptance as an alternative to avoidance
- Exercises to connect with sensations in the body
- Strategies aimed at building acceptance of unwanted internal experiences

## **Session 7: The enduring essence of self**

- The distinction between the stable 'enduring essence of self' (core sense of self) and thoughts, feelings, memories and sensations that come and go
- Exercises to reflect on and connect with the 'enduring essence of self'

## **Session 8: Values**

- The roles we take on after trauma
- What are values? How do they differ from goals?
- Exercises to help clarify values

## **Session 9: Putting your values into action**

- Translating values into goals
- Overcoming stumbling blocks

## **Session 10: Bringing it all together**

- Review of the themes explored over the course of the program
- Preparing for setbacks that might arise after the program