

Email: daa.group@yahoo.com

Welcome to the Dorset Action on Abuse
Summer newsletter.

What is DAA's mission?

DAA works with, and provides services for women and men adult survivors of childhood abuse in Dorset. DAA was set up because of a recognition that survivors of childhood abuse often find it difficult to find suitable services. DAA is committed to the involvement of survivors as central to ALL our activities. We aim to relieve the suffering and distress of survivors and to improve local services available to them, through:

- Developing and maintaining survivor-led support groups
- Offering one-to-one counselling services for survivors
- Providing training seminars for volunteers and professionals in the field

Fund Raising Help Needed!

As DAA thrives, so does our need for funding. Our dedicated fund-raiser Ellie Fox-Kirk has worked hard to submit twelve bids for funding for 2009 and beyond. As yet, three have been refused and nine are pending. If you can help us either by volunteering time for fund-raising, or by donating funds to DAA to support our services, please get in touch.

Recent Training

In April Dr. Moira Walker presented the first DAA TRAINING EVENT of 2008. The topic was: *"The inter-generational transmission of trauma: the effects of childhood abuse on parenting and being parented"*.



We were delighted that over fifty people attended this informative session. Moira began by emphasising that the notion that people who were abused as children are likely to become abusers themselves is a myth. This myth can itself become

potentially damaging, as abuse victims often fear that they might abuse their children, even though they have no intention of doing so. This fear, coupled with shame, is only one of the enduring effects of childhood abuse on adults.

A survivor described her experience of being a parent: *'They are my pride and joy; they are my positive revenge against my mother, because I have shown her I will not be like her. But as they get older I do get terrified something will go wrong and I do find bad days with them difficult.'*

Some abuse survivors are unable to have children owing to severe physical damage caused by the abuse, which compounds losses already experienced. For others, 'normal' infertility may have particular repercussions of feeling guilt, badness, depression and rage. Some are too afraid to even contemplate having children, for various reasons, including concerns about the ongoing impact of abusive family members.

Many abuse survivors experience complex issues around boundaries and invasion; they may find it hard to trust others, which has implications when the person is feeling vulnerable, e.g. after childbirth. There may be anxieties about experiencing anger and setting safe, clear boundaries; of course, all children can push parents to limits and need boundaries and confident containment. The person may not recognise what their child needs, having had no good model themselves.

Some people experience an inability to communicate distress verbally and when difficult feelings around children arise as these can be felt as deeply unacceptable and shaming. The experience that many abuse survivors express of feeling bad and to blame, or not deserving anything good can have implications for when children are 'good' and 'bad'. Hypervigilance through a fear of damage and danger may communicate inappropriate fear and insecurity to the children. The child may be over protected or under protected and under socialized, as the parent may be unable to effectively gauge where risk really seriously exists, and when child needs to be allowed autonomy. Other parents might not foresee damaging impact on children of

events, for example of violent, abusive partners.

One parent explained: *'I don't know how it happened; how I didn't see what was happening to the children, especially my daughter. It's as if I didn't see her any longer, as if she were just part of me. It's hard to explain. I knew somewhere it wasn't right or good for them but I couldn't do anything about it. There was a sort of inevitability about it.'*

An outcome of this is that children of abuse survivors may become as anxious and isolated in their life situation as the parent was by being abused. Powerful parental memories about their own abuse sometimes surface at particular stages of their children's lives; the high levels of dissociation that abuse survivors frequently experience as coping mechanisms can make it difficult for them to recognise and respond to their child's distress..

Another key concern is what and when and how to tell children about the parent's experience of being abused, and what impact that will have on children. Withholding information is no easy solution as secrets are always liable to accidental discovery and not telling children always carries with it that risk. As one parent put it, *'If I tell the children what happened to me it takes away their childhood innocence just like mine was taken away, but if I don't they'll not know why we don't see them (grandparents) and I'm sure sometimes they wonder what's wrong with mummy anyway.'*

These are just some of the damaging effects of abuse that impact on parenting, and which may be passed down through generations. Survivors need help both to understand their experiences and feelings, and to learn beneficial patterns of relating and skills for parenting.

DAA Self-Help Support Groups

Both the Poole and the Bournemouth self-help groups are evolving, and we are forming a sub-committee to work with the development of self-help within DAA. Ann Daniel and Ruth Jordan are the core group contacts for this.

DAA Training

After the great success of our first training event of 2008, we formed a sub-committee to work on the development of DAA training. We will be offering four evening training events in the next year. All will be from 6.15 – 7.45 pm, location and facilitators to be announced later.

October 23rd 2008

Self-Harm

January 28th 2009

Working with Abuse: Impact on Self and Care of Self

April 29th

Gender issues and Male Survivor

July 10th 2009

Relationships & Working with Couples

Although we would love to continue to offer free training events, we urgently need to raise funds in order to keep DAA going. So, in future we are going to charge a small fee for the evening events £20 for organisations, £10 for self-funding individuals. We do, however, want our work to reach as many people as possible, so if you really cannot afford this fee, come anyway.

To help us plan future events, we'd like to hear about your training needs, as we intend to offer one day workshops, and longer courses in the future.

Please email Zoë at:

daa.group@yahoo.com if you have a particular training need, and/or you'd like to attend the above sessions.

DAA Counselling Service

The DAA counselling service at Longfleet Baptist Church is thriving, and we now have a small waiting list of clients around Poole. For more information about DAA counselling call Zoë Fitzgerald-Pool, on

07779 172338.

We are hoping to extend the service to the Bournemouth area, so if anyone knows of premises offering free or low cost space, suitable for counselling in Bournemouth, please get in touch with Zoë.