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# The Accidental Counsellor

Helen Jarvis

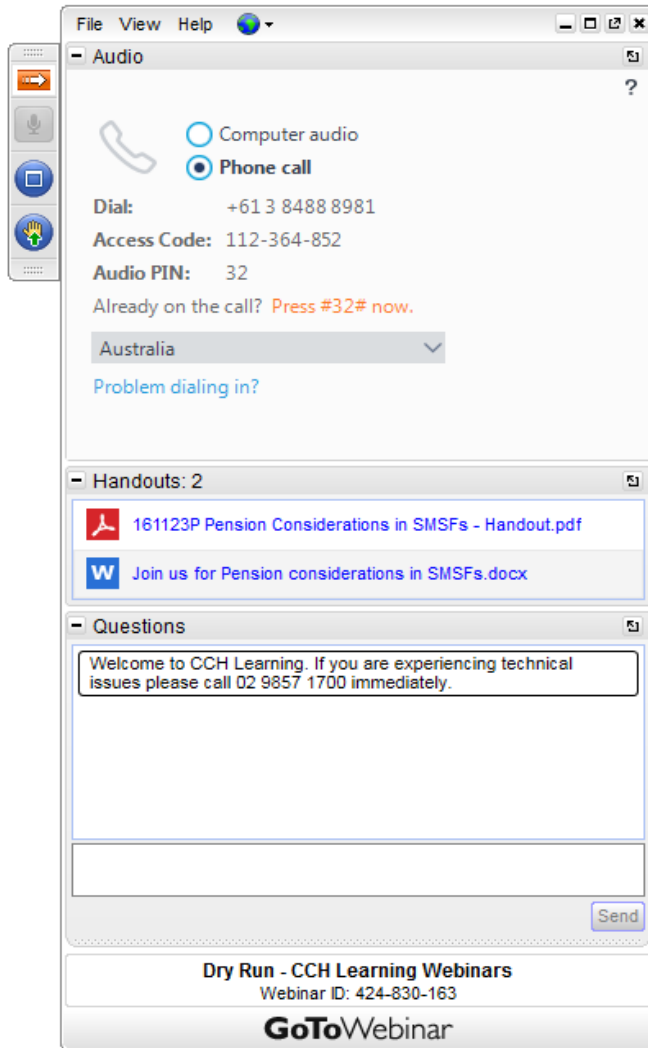
Wednesday 31 May 2023

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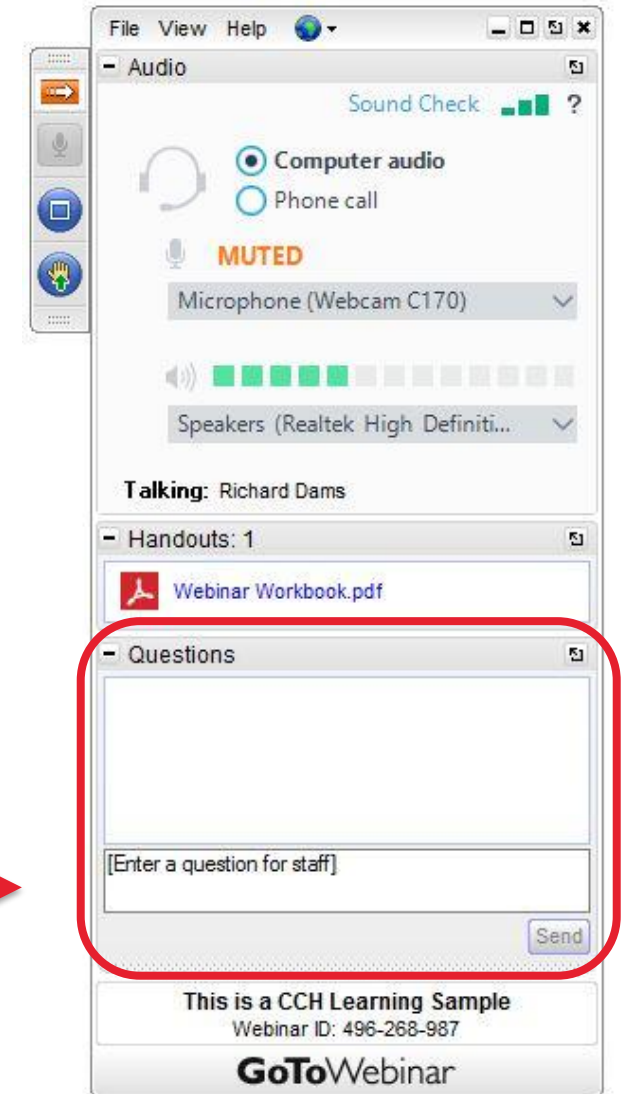
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Susannah Gynther  
Moderator

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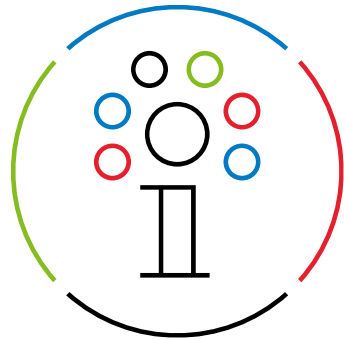
# Your Presenter



- Helen Jarvis
- Mediator, Counsellor and Founder of Ripple Learning

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# Today's session will cover



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## Accidental Counsellor

- What is an Accidental Counsellor?
- Stress and Mental Health
- Why be Proactive?
- Neurobiology of the Stress Response
- Accidental Counselling Tasks & Skills
- Responding to Some Complex Situations
- Self-Care

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# What is an Accidental Counsellor?

## An Accidental Counsellor:

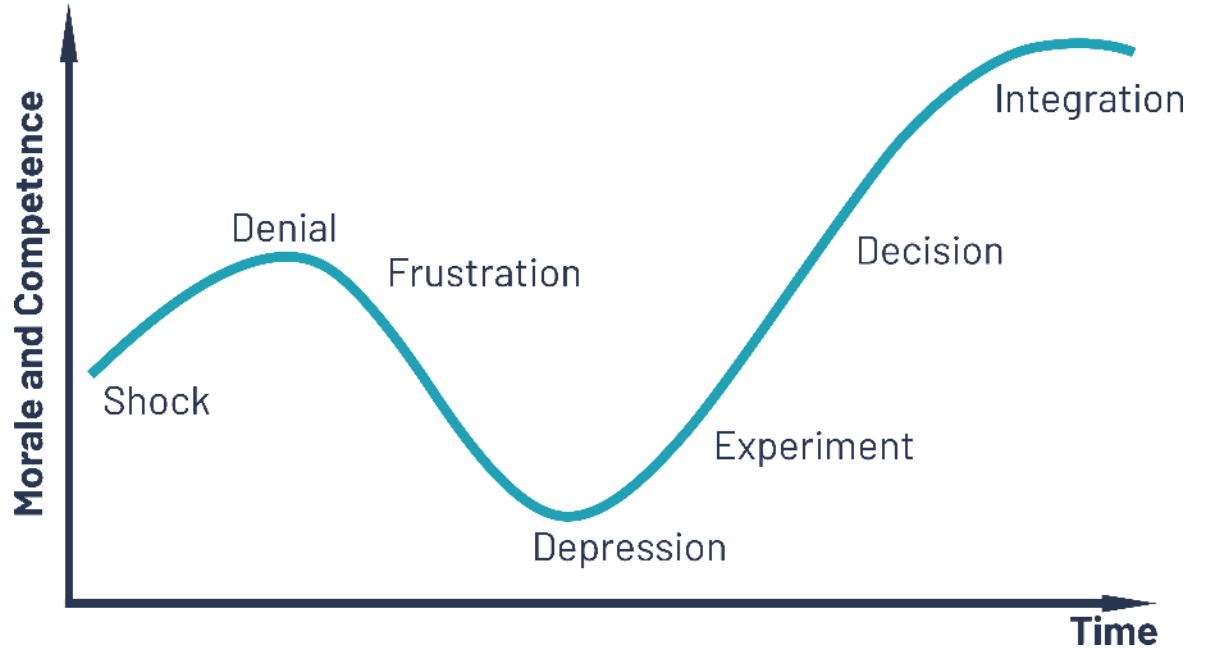
- recognizes signs of high stress and distress in clients/colleagues/family/ friends,
- provides appropriate support in the moment
- encourages the person to connect with appropriate supports
- follows up where appropriate

# High Stress and Distress often emerges when:

- Our needs aren't met
- Expectations don't match reality (e.g. when navigating change)



Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs



Adapted from a model by Adams, Hayes and Hopson (1957); and the Kubler-Ross 'Stages of Grief' model (1969). Cameron, Mike and Green, Esther., 2009, Making Sense of Change Management, p. 35



# Mental Health is on a continuum and is not static



**Mental Health** is “a state of well being in which every individual realises his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community”.

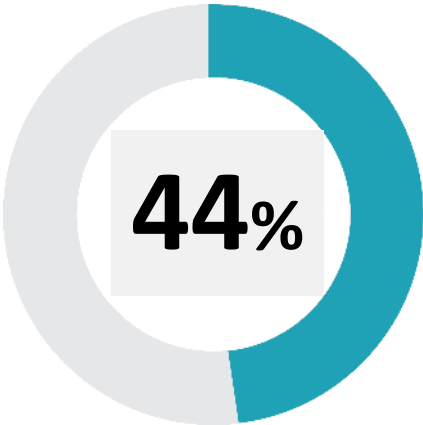
- *World Health Organisation*

The Mental Health Continuum Model was jointly developed by the Canadian Department of National Defence and United States Marine Corps Department of Psychiatry

# Mental Health Statistics in Australia



1 in 5 (21.4%) Australians experienced symptoms of a mental health condition **in the last 12 months**



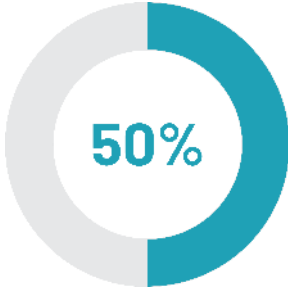
2 in 5 (44%) of Australians (aged 16-85) have experienced a mental health condition **in their lifetime**



# Youth Mental Health Statistics



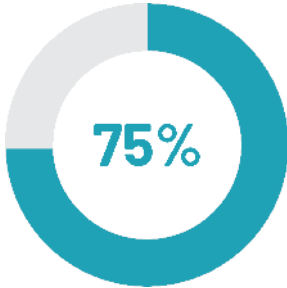
1 in 7 young Australians (4-17yrs) experienced symptoms of a mental health condition in the last 12 months



50% of lifetime adult mental health conditions emerge by age 18



2 in 5 young Australians (16-24yrs) experienced symptoms of a mental health condition in the last 12 months



75% of lifetime adult mental health conditions emerge by age 25

The Mental Health of Children and Adolescents. Report on the second Australian Child and Adolescent Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing (2013-14) (Lawrence et. Al. 2015)  
2021 National Study of Mental Health and Wellbeing - NSMHWB (ABS 2022a)



# Anxiety Disorder

- Impact on quality of life and daily functioning
- Persistent impacts with no apparent reason

## THOUGHTS



- Mind racing or going blank
- Decreased concentration
- “I’m going crazy”
- “I can’t control myself or my thoughts”
- “I can’t stop worrying”

## FEELINGS



- Excessive fear
- Intense worrying
- Catastrophising
- Extremely tense all the time
- Wound up and edgy
- Angry
- Panic attacks
- Hot & cold flushes
- Racing heart
- Tightening of chest
- Quick breathing
- Restlessness
- Choking
- Dry mouth
- Nausea, diarrhoea
- Muscle aches & pains

## ACTIONS

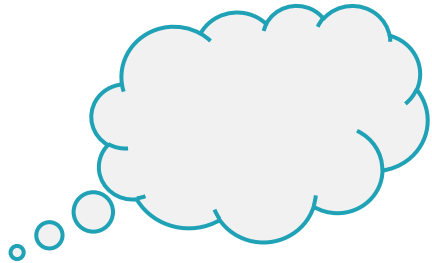


- Avoid situations or tasks which make you feel anxious
- Can’t make decisions
- Can’t concentrate
- Abuse alcohol or sedatives
- Obsessive & compulsive behaviour

# Mood Disorder/Depression

- Impact on quality of life and daily functioning
- Persistent impacts with no apparent reason

## THOUGHTS



- “I’m a failure”
- “It’s my fault”
- “I’m worthless”
- “People would be better off without me”
- “Life’s not worth living”
- Can’t concentrate
- Indecisive

## FEELINGS



- Very unhappy all the time
- Miserable
- Overwhelmed
- Very irritable
- Lacking in confidence
- Very unmotivated
- Indecisive
- Tired all the time
- Sick & run down
- Headaches and muscle pains
- Churning gut
- Sleep problems
- Loss or change of appetite
- Significant weight changes

## ACTIONS



- Crying spells
- Not doing usual enjoyable activities
- Sleeping too much or too little
- Eating too much or too little
- Loss of interest in personal appearance
- Withdraw from family/colleagues/friends
- Abuse alcohol or sedatives
- NSSI

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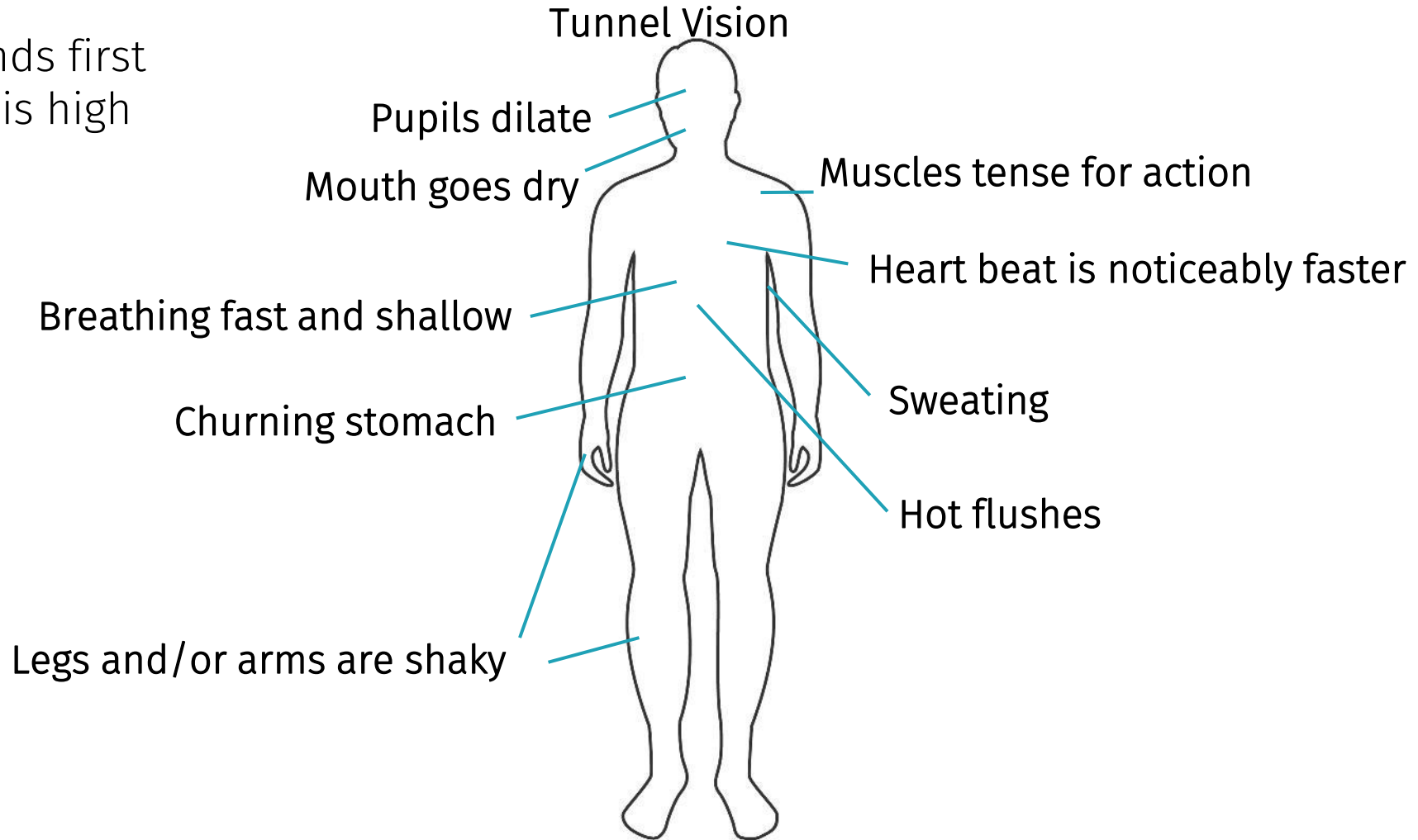
# Why Be Proactive?

Lifeline: 13 11 14 [www.lifeline.org.au](http://www.lifeline.org.au)

- 53% of people with mental illness do not access any help
- 1 in 6 (16.7%) of Australians aged 16-85 have experienced suicidal thoughts or behaviours in their life
- In 2021, 3,144 Australians died by suicide.
- Males are 3-4 times more likely to die by suicide (75% of suicides)
- Suicide is the leading cause of death for 15 to 44 year olds - Double national road toll
- The rate of suicide for residents of Very Remote areas (23.9 deaths per 100,000 population) was 2.3 times that of the rate for residents of Major Cities (10.0 deaths per 100,000 population)
- Suicide Rates for Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people are more than 2x that of non-Indigenous
- Untreated mental health conditions cost Australian workplaces **\$10.9 billion per year:**
  - \$4.7b in absenteeism
  - \$6.1b in presenteeism
  - \$146m in compensation claims

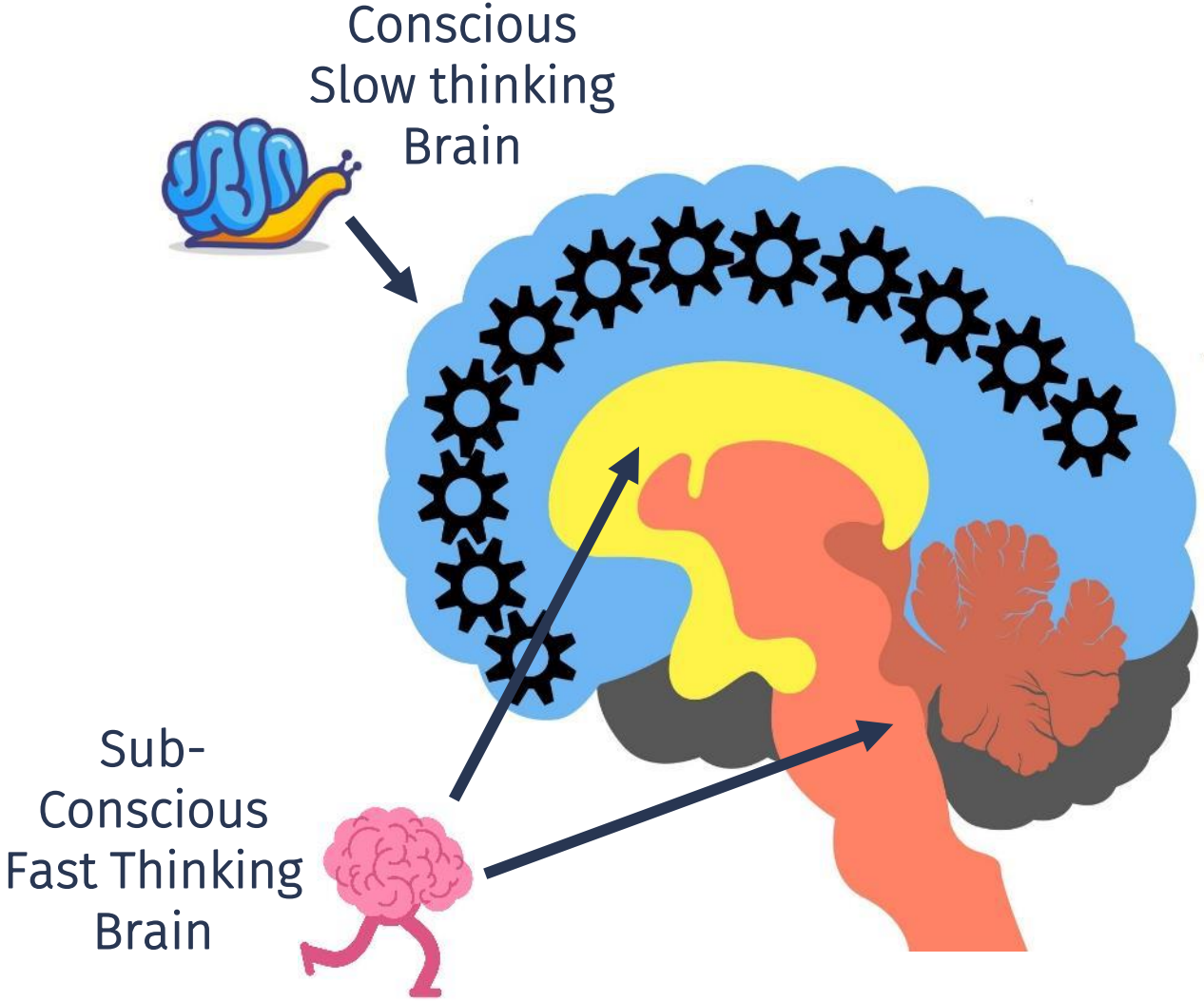
# Neurobiology of the Stress Response

- Our body responds first when the stress is high





# Neurobiology of the Stress Response



# Neurobiology of the Stress Response

## NOTICEABLE EFFECTS

- Pupils dilate
- Tunnel Vision
- Mouth goes dry
- Heart beat is noticeably faster
- Muscles tense for action
- Sweating
- Breathing fast and shallow
- Insomnia
- ADD/ADHD type symptoms

Fight



Flight



Freeze

## HIDDEN EFFECTS

- Brain gets ready for action
- Adrenaline released
- Liver releases glucose
- Cortisol released
  - ↑ blood pressure
  - ↑ blood sugar
  - ↑ memory & attention
  - ↓ immune system
  - ↓ pain sensitivity
  - ↓ serotonin
- Digestion slows
- Blood flow to muscles

# Tasks of an Accidental Counsellor

Always

- Prepare
- Ask
- Listen to H.E.A.R.

If they're willing/  
where necessary

- Encourage Action
- Follow up (where appropriate)



- Maintain Boundaries
- Ensure Self-care

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# Prepare – The conversation could be initiated by you or by them

- Are you the right person?
  - Will they feel safe with you?
  - Do you have the personal bandwidth to safely have the conversation?  
*If not you, who could you encourage to connect with them?*
- What is the **right time** for both of you?
  - Do you have enough time for the conversation?
- What is the **right place** for both of you?
  - Will the location maintain their privacy?
  - Does the location feel safe for them?  
*You could ask them where they feel most safe to talk*
  - Is the location free of distractions?



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# Ask

- Some Starting Options:
  - “I’ve noticed that.... *describe some behaviours you’ve observed that seem out of character...*
  - Would you like to talk about what’s going on?
  - Is everything ok?
  - Are you ok?
- Confidentiality
  - If asked to keep the discussion confidential, let them know that you can’t promise to keep confidential anything that affects their safety or the safety of someone else.

# Listen to H.E.A.R.

- Body Language of Listening
  - Sit down where possible
  - Ideally, sit with your chair angled towards them, but without directly facing them
  - Sit back, drop your shoulders, keep your arms uncrossed (ie open body position)
  - Use soft, indirect eye contact (ie don't stare directly at them)
  - Minimise fidgeting



# Listen to H.E.A.R.

## H

### Hear

Listen for:

- ✓ Content – *what is the problem?*
- ✓ Emotions
- ✓ Needs



## E

### Explore

- ✓ Be curious
- ✓ Ask OPEN questions to learn more



## A

### Acknowledge

- ✓ Reflect
- ✓ Paraphrase
- ✓ Summarise
- ✓ Check for understanding



## R

### Reframe

- ✓ Replace negative with constructive
- ✓ Don't minimize
- ✓ Convey hope, but don't make promises



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# Empathetic Listening Don'ts

## Don't

- Ignore or avoid
- Interrupt mid-sentence
- Debate facts or defend yourself
- Judge
- Ask 'why'?
- Label People or Ideas
- Take anything they say personally
- Think about what you're going to say next
- Take responsibility for their problems
- Challenge while they are very emotional or angry
- Invalidate: patronize/belittle/dismiss feelings or behavior

## Don't say

- Don't worry
- Calm down
- It'll be ok
- I understand
- I agree
- You could try.....
- Why don't you.....?
- That's not fair



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# Encourage Action

- Provide the person with information about websites and helplines
- Check what supports they have available from family, friends and community and encourage them to tap into these supports
- Encourage them to connect with professional help

Lifeline: **13 11 14** [www.lifeline.org.au](http://www.lifeline.org.au)

Your local GP

EAP (Employee Assistance Program)

Headspace (12-25 year olds ): **1800 650 890** [www.headspace.org.au](http://www.headspace.org.au)

BeyondBlue : **1300 22 4636** [www.beyondblue.org.au](http://www.beyondblue.org.au)

Black Dog Institute: [www.blackdoginstitute.org.au](http://www.blackdoginstitute.org.au)

MindSpot Clinic: **1800 61 44 34** [www.mindspot.org.au](http://www.mindspot.org.au)

Qlife : **1800 184 527** [www.qlife.org.au](http://www qlife.org.au)

Mates in Construction: **1300 642 111** [www.matesinconstruction.org.au](http://www.matesinconstruction.org.au)

Men's Line Australia: **1300 78 99 78** [www.mensline.org.au](http://www.mensline.org.au)

Domestic Violence: **1800 737732**

eMHPrac – E-mental health resources - <https://www.emhprac.org.au/>

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# Navigating Complexity

- Reluctance to Talk
- Panic Attacks
- Suicidal Thoughts and Behaviours
- Non-Suicidal Self Injury (NSSI)
- Aggressive Behaviours
- *Substance Use Problems*
- *Psychosis & Psychotic Disorders*
- *Eating Disorders*
- *Gambling*
- *Other significant long term mental health issues*

# Self Care

1. Be Self Aware & Establish Boundaries
2. Attend to any signs of Vicarious Trauma
3. Implement Practical Self Care Strategies
  - What are my core values and beliefs?
  - What gives me strength?
  - What depletes my physical and emotional reserves?

Ask yourself...  
Where is the line for me at the moment?



# Self Care – Attend to any signs of Vicarious Trauma

## Vicarious Trauma:

- Compassion overwhelms the helper - *The result of absorbing the sight, smell, sound, touch and feel of the stories told in detail by those who are searching for a way to release their own pain.*
- Happens quickly




## Symptoms: mirror PTSD

- Emotional numbing
- Social withdrawal
- Work related nightmares
- Talk about work too little or too much
- Feelings of cynicism, pessimism, despair and hopelessness
- Heightened sense of danger for self and others difficulty trusting
- Sense of disconnection
- Loss of sense of control over work and life
- Loss of sense of spirituality
- Lowered self esteem

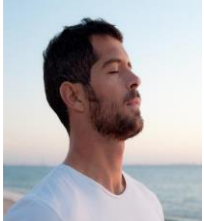
# Self Care – Implement Practical Self Care Strategies

- Practice positive thinking – choose realistic optimistic self-talk
- Practice positive emotions – attitude of gratitude
- Change focus – to get out of your head
- Cultivate self-awareness & self-compassion
- Be present centered
- Connect with others
- Acts of Kindness
- Exercise
- Get 7-9 hours of quality sleep each night
- Reflect on your own or debrief with a Counsellor


Tree Bathing




Slow breathing




Guided Visualisation




Hugs




Somatic Techniques




Energise heart centre



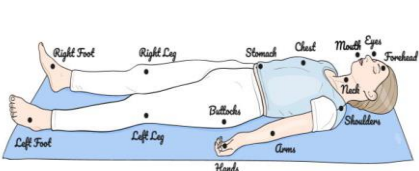
Music




Ground Feet



Body Scanning & Muscle Relaxation



Pleasing scents

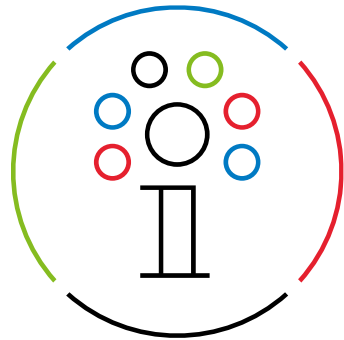




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# <Questions>

You can type them in the “Questions” box now  
Or contact me via:



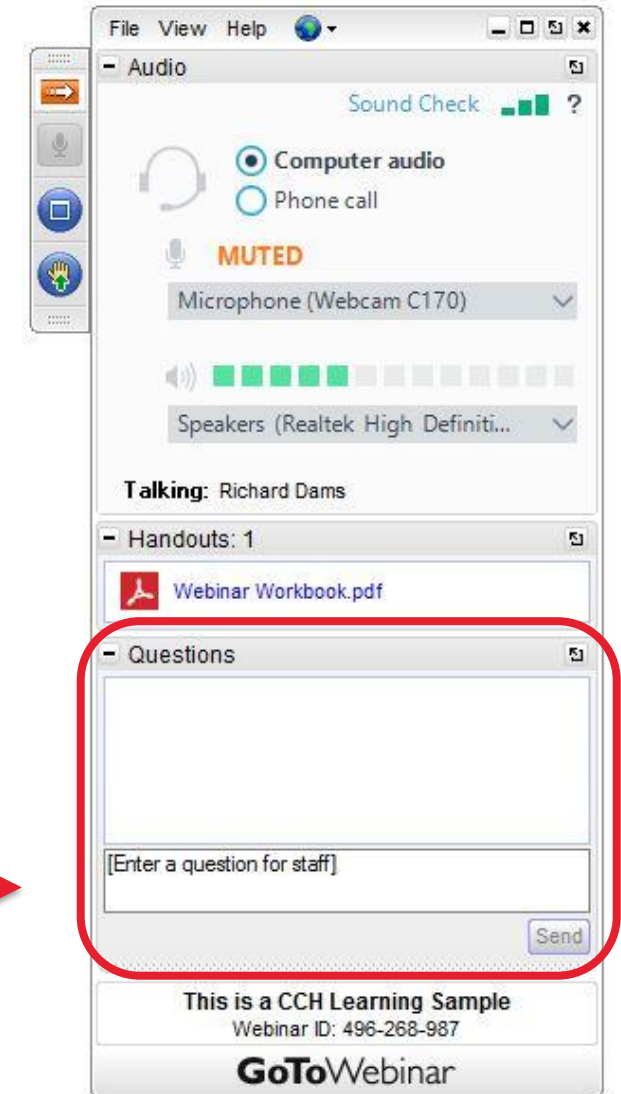
- <Helen Jarvis>
- <Ripple Learning>
- <0402 057 754>
- [helen@ripplelearning.com.au](mailto:helen@ripplelearning.com.au)

# Questions?



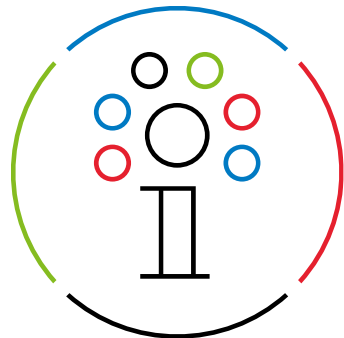
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Type your  
question and hit  
**Send**



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# Upcoming Webinars



- 31 May – Officer Duties of Due Diligence Under WHS Legislation
- 1 June – Year End Conversations for ALL your SMSF Clients
- 6 June – SME Restructuring (Part 1)
- 7 June – Thin Cap and Transfer Pricing Reform
- 7 June – The New \$3M Super Tax: What we know, and what your clients *MUST* know!
- 8 June – Aged Care for High-Net-Worth Individuals

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# Questions



- Helen Jarvis
- Mediator, Counsellor and Founder of Ripple Learning
- 0402 057 754
- [helen@ripplelearning.com.au](mailto:helen@ripplelearning.com.au)
- Ripple Learning is a social enterprise and their profits are donated to effective youth mental health services

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