

2016 STOP Domestic Violence Conference
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HELPING FAMILIES HEAL

**“Helping Families Heal” brings
together psychotherapy and
traditional healing within
Aboriginal communities**

Gloria Martin and Christabel Chamarette

ABSTRACT

- **“Helping Families Heal” – a community development program offered by the Family Violence Prevention Legal Unit in Fitzroy Crossing and the Yura Yungi Aboriginal Medical Service in Halls Creek to Aboriginal community members. It brings together concepts of psychotherapy and healing in order to address problems of violence, sexual abuse and suicide, and their origins in childhood adversity.**

Helping Families Heal

Presenters : Gloria Martin and Christabel Chamarette

PRESENTER BACKGROUND

GLORIA MARTIN – Anglicare Kununurra Counsellor I

- I'm a local Indigenous woman from the Kimberley region.
- I work with and support mainly Indigenous people.
- 99% are women trying to deal with children, education, housing, overcrowding, shortage of food, bedding and Domestic Violence.
- Most cases of DV throughout the Kimberley region are Alcohol and Drug related.

PRESENTER BACKGROUND

CHRISTABEL CHAMARETTE – Clinical Psychologist

- 10 years – Fremantle Prison where I first met and made friends with Aboriginal people
- 20 years – SafeCare counselling for all family members where child sexual abuse is a risk
- 44 years – Individual and group therapy
- 2013-2015 – 2 weeks a month in Halls Creek and Fitzroy Crossing with Helping Families Heal.

AIMS OF HELPING FAMILIES HEAL

- To help women, men and young people to develop a sense of safety and security and to support one another.
To learn to express and share our feelings creatively and positively about difficult life experiences.
- To work with underlying issues in order to address the symptoms like addiction, violence and suicide.

AIMS OF H F H cont...

- To learn new ways of building emotional strength and personal skills to cope with stress, grief and loss.
- To enable people to overcome barriers, to improve their lives and work.
- To build up personal and parenting skills to help family members in distress and crisis.

Community Development Philosophy

Helping Families Heal

provides group programs for adult community members who want to learn about healing from childhood trauma as a way of assisting their families.

Community members, leaders and mentors assist in facilitating the program to ensure it is culturally appropriate and sustainable in the long term.

Understanding and skills developed by participants and facilitators assist them to continue similar work into the future.

HFH APPROACH

METHOD:

- Drawing exercises and diagrams are used to help us understand problems that can arise in our lives.
- The activities are designed to encourage releasing of emotion through drawing and colour, learning to listen to others, learning to share feelings and to think of different ways of responding to difficult situations.
- To identify feelings and to discuss ways to express anger, fear, grief and stress as alternatives to bottling it up inside or fighting or substance use which only make the problems worse.

Helping Families Heal

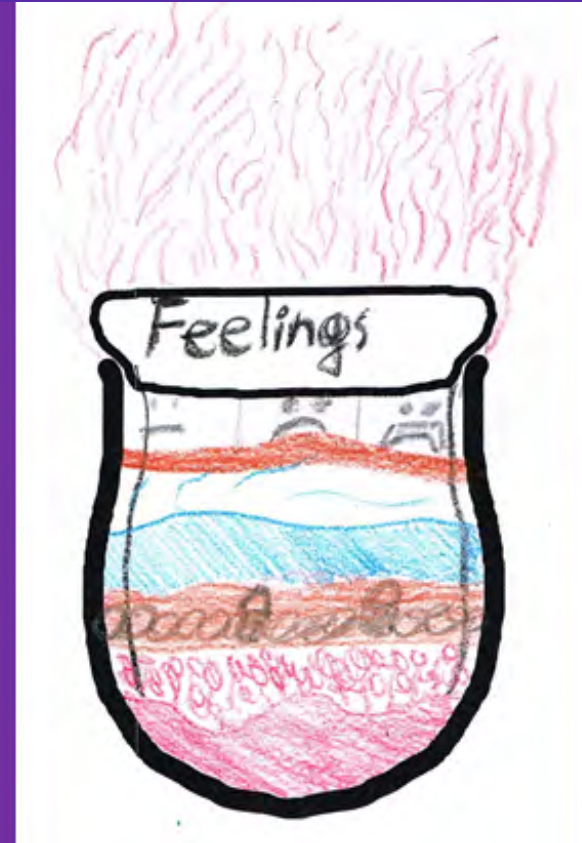
Presenters: Gloria Martin and Christabel Chamarette

The Feelings Jar exercise offers a way of expressing and describing different emotions through creativity and sharing.



THE FEELINGS JAR EXERCISE

This allows us to get in touch with difficult situations which we face in our daily lives



Instead of exploding and leaking out, feelings can be fished out one at a time during counselling and sharing.



FAVOURITE PLACE EXERCISE

always follows Feelings Jar exercise



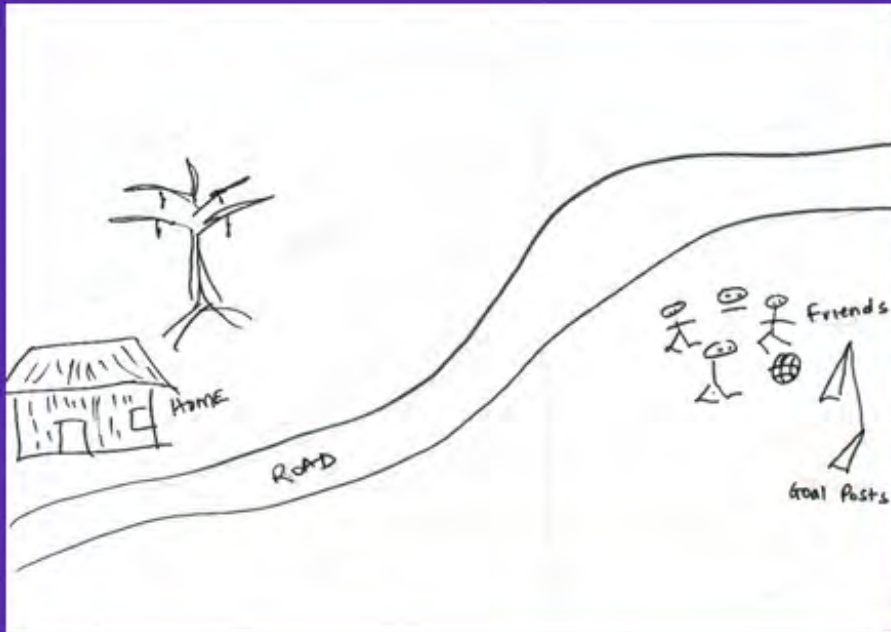
FAVOURITE PLACE DRAWING

brings back positive memories and feelings



FAVOURITE PLACE DRAWING

These positive memories strengthen and help us to cope with pressures in our lives



Program continued

- Child-Adult Diagram – helps us to recognise when buried memories of trauma and hurt in childhood can re-surface as difficulties in our adult life and relationships.
- Self-Esteem, Suicide and Change Process are other simple ways of understanding and learning to help ourselves and each other to grow personally and in relationship.
- LifeStories - Community mentors can provide supportive role models in the discussion. No one is under pressure to share.

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Qantas Domestic Route Network



FITZROY CROSSING from the air



HALLS CREEK from the air



RINGER SOAK



RESPONSE

ATTENDANCE: over 300 participants May 2013 – Dec 2015

Fitzroy Crossing: 96 (37 men, 35 women and 24 boys)
have participated in between 1 and 5 days of HFH groups.
Halls Creek: 164 (107 women, 4 men, 43 boys and 10 girls)
have participated in between 1 and 5 days of HFH groups.
Ringer Soak: 30 (9 men, 21 women)
Kununurra: 30 (20 boys, 10 women)
Local service providers also attended information sessions.

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Evaluation

The Evaluation phase is still in progress:-

20% interviewed so far.

Of these 100% would like a refresher course in the future.

To the question

How likely are you to recommend the workshop to others on a scale of 0 to 10, where 7-10 are likely and 1-3 very unlikely?
84 % said 9 and 10, the rest said 7.

FURTHER INFORMATION

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for further info and copy of presentation
or resource booklet

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Gloria's comments

- I choose to use the resource book Helping Families Heal with all my clients from children to adults as I have found it simple and easy and straight to the point of getting in touch with your feelings not complicated at all to understand.
- The first topic we talk about is the ice breaker and that is the feelings jar and their reactions are amazing as they start to engage and talk about their feelings and how it helps them to talk and connect with the other women in the room, in the same situation, sitting next to them and have known each other all their lives and all have almost identical story's.

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How do I think this will help to stop Domestic Violence?

In my experience working with Indigenous Women and family members they have this mentality that “this is how it is”, “we don't know any other way”. But with the resource book *Helping Families Heal* it has helped some of my clients get in touch with their feelings and not to bottle things up. It helps them see that its ok to talk to somebody you know you can trust, maybe a friend, a family member or a counsellor and there is always someone who is willing to listen.

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REFERENCES

- Marninwarntikura Women's Resource Centre Aboriginal Corporation Violence Free Valley Strategy
- www.mwrc.net.au
- Halls Creek Healing Strategy – a community owned solution
- For info re the Halls Creek Healing Task Force see [https://www.chuffed.org/project/halls-creek-healing-taskforce-the-search-/](https://www.chuffed.org/project/halls-creek-healing-taskforce-the-search/)