

Healing, Together

A Family Violence Group Work Resource



The *Women Looking Forward* Banner, developed by women attending an Arabic speaking women's family violence support group through Merri Community Health Service, 2014

July, 2015



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Note: This resource is intended to be used alongside *Collected Wisdom* (http://www.whin.org.au/images/PDFs/collectedwisdom2_web.pdf), a manual for facilitated family violence support groups for women in the northern metropolitan region of Melbourne. The manual includes information on group work theory, how to start a group and group work session outlines.

Introduction: The Benefits of Group Work for Victim/Survivors of Family Violence

Family violence is extremely isolating. The hurt, shame and fear are amongst the intense barriers that threaten disclosure and the seeking of help. Yet it is within relationships, social networks, gatherings and communities that our shared experience can most support recovery. These spaces offer understanding, validation and compassion. They honor strengths, skills and self-reflection.

As human beings, we tune naturally into others as we share each other's lives. Knowing this, informed facilitators can thoughtfully tailor themes to deliver in safe and supportive places for women, children and families to rebuild relationships, explore difficult experiences and find safe ways to move forward.

This manual aims to highlight the diverse array of therapeutic group work projects offered in the northern metropolitan region of Melbourne. It identifies the practical tasks and processes that can turn an idea into reality.

Jennifer Dawson
Counsellor
InTouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence

Northern Integrated Family Violence Services

Northern Integrated Family Violence Services (NIFVS) is the partnership that leads the integration of family violence and related services in Melbourne's northern metropolitan region (NMR).

Our Vision

For women and children to live safe and free from family violence.

Our Mission

To maintain and continually develop the integrated family violence service system in the north, in order to improve the safety of women and children.

The NIFVS partnership formed in July 2006, following the reforms to the family violence service sector introduced by the Victorian Government.

The *NIFVS Regional Plan 2013-2017* sets out the priorities and key initiatives of the organisations involved in the partnership.

An integrated approach to family violence would see all parts of the family violence service system working together to provide a better service to victims of family violence and reduce the incidence of family violence.

Integration in northern metropolitan Melbourne involves:

- a shared understanding of family violence and a shared vision for change;
- all parties understanding and striving to improve the system;
- strong structures and relationships across the system;
- information-sharing and collaboration across a broad range of organisations; and
- opportunities to discuss and resolve issues, ensuring a continuum of care through smooth referral pathways and consistent service responses.

The NIFVS coordination team includes the Regional Integration Coordinator (RIC) and two project workers. The team resources, coordinates and supports integration by:

- providing leadership for regional integration;
- convening and supporting regional networks, alliances and groups;
- disseminating key family violence information;
- identifying and promoting good practice models;
- delivering training and facilitating forums to the sector; and
- facilitating links between local, regional and statewide family violence structures.

The team is employed by Women's Health In the North (WHIN) and funded by the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). For more information on the work of NIFVS, please visit www.nifvs.org.au.

Counselling and Support Alliance

The Counseling and Support Alliance (CSA) is a working group of the NIFVS partnership and a key element of the integrated family violence service system.

Access to family violence counselling and support services is critical for women and children in identifying and pursuing options for change and safety in their lives and assisting the process of recovery from experiences of intimate partner violence.

The CSA model provides a coordinated regional framework for the planning, implementation and evaluation of quality family violence counselling and group work service provision to women and children. As generalist organisations that provide a broad range of services to the community, community health services are identified as an ideal setting for women to access personal support, family violence counselling and group work.

The nine community health services in the NMR are part of the funded CSA alliance, along with Anglicare, Berry Street and InTouch Multicultural Centre Against Violence. The long-standing role of Anglicare, Berry Street and InTouch Multicultural Centre Against Violence as specialist providers of women and children's family violence counselling and secondary consultation is an integral component of the model.

The CSA is convened and resourced by the NIFVS coordination team at Women's Health In the North. WHIN undertakes responsibility for coordination and monitoring of family violence counselling and support services and ensures the application of responsive, gendered and diverse community perspectives in the implementation of these services. WHIN has memorandums of understanding (MOUs) with each of the funded service providers.

Background to the One-Off Funds Projects

Every year, a proportion of DHHS funding for the CSA is allocated to family violence counselling projects. In previous years, CSA members have undertaken projects such as *Collected Wisdom* (a manual for facilitated family violence support groups for women in the NMR) and group work facilitators' forums. These projects assist the CSA member organisations to work collaboratively to strengthen their delivery of high quality family violence counselling and group work to women and children across the NMR.

Within the 2012 – 2013 financial year, member organisations were invited to apply for one-off funding to provide additional targeted groups or counselling responding to particular needs of their specific client groups.

The objectives and selection criteria of the *One-Off Funds* projects were to progress the work of the CSA as identified in the Terms of Reference, including:

- building on the particular experience and expertise each organisation possesses;
- refining and strengthening the existing service responses for women and children experiencing family violence; and
- providing an opportunity to develop and deliver services within consistent quality standards.

The purpose of this resource is to outline the diversity of family violence group work practice and provide examples of the work carried out across the northern metropolitan region of Melbourne.

Benefits of the *One-Off Funds* Projects

The injection of an extra \$12,000 for family violence group work or counselling meant that CSA members could provide additional support, over and above what they could already do, the benefits of which are spoken to throughout this resource.

For example, an Anglicare Victoria manager reported that 'the learnings from the project have further enhanced the understanding in this agency of the needs of this client group, and the benefits of offering groups involving creative arts'. Further, a group work practitioner from Sunbury Community Health Service stated that at the time the funding was received, there were no services in the local area that directly supported children who had experienced family violence and, as a result of the funding, they were able to fill that gap.

Acknowledgements

Each of the projects showcased in this resource were written by those who ran the groups and provide a wide range of information and unique perspectives.

WHIN would like to thank the following people for their contributions:

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Jan Pfeiffer and Kathleen Armour, Anglicare Victoria;

Jennifer Dawson, In Touch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence;
Jemma Mead, Amuna Abdella and Cass Dolby, Merri Community Health Centre.

We would also like to thank members of the Resource Working Group for their input into the development of this resource:

Anne Robertson, Darebin Community Health Service;
Jennifer Dawson, InTouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence;
Jemma Mead, Merri Community Health Service; and
Maryse Premier, CoHealth.

The role of the working group was to make a decision about which projects would be showcased within this resource. Members also provided advice about resource content that would be useful.

The projects in this resource were chosen based on their unique characteristics in working with specific groups within our community; for example, working with children, providing a therapeutic camp, working with a specific cultural group and focusing on art and movement therapy. The projects that were omitted from this resource were either similar to those included, or difficult to capture in this format.

Summary of all One-Off Funds Projects

Service Provider	Project Summary
Anglicare Victoria	Growing Connections: A seven-week creative arts based group for women and children who have experienced family violence.
Banyule Community Health	ACTIV8: A six-week group engaging at-risk youth (aged 15-25) who have experienced family violence in strength-based activities.
Berry Street Northern Family & Domestic Violence Service	Enhanced counselling for women who are experiencing family violence and assessed as high risk. The funding contributed to a family violence counsellor working with 12 women, for one day per week across 40 weeks.
Darebin Community Health Service	Pathways to Health: a ten-week group for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women working with mosaic and clay.
Dianella Community Health	Meditation Relaxation Group: A six-week meditation and relaxation group for women who have experienced family violence. Tuning into Teens: A seven-week group for mothers with teenagers (aged 10-19) who have experienced family violence.
Elizabeth Morgan House and Merri Community Health	Women's Group: An eight-session program that ran across a 12 month period, specifically designed for Aboriginal women and their children who had experienced family violence with a focus on the health and wellbeing impacts of family violence on children.
inTouch Multicultural Centre against Family Violence	Parenting After Violence: An eight-week group for Turkish families with teenage children. A three-day therapeutic camp for six Turkish families.
Kildonan UnitingCare	Stepping Out: An eight-week psychoeducation group for women who have experienced family violence.
Merri Community Health Services	Looking Forward Arabic Speaking Women's Group: An eight-week group to provide Arabic-speaking women and their children with a culturally appropriate and safe service where they can access support, information and make social connections.
Sunbury Community Health	Bright Futures S.O.S: A six-week support group for primary school-aged children who are homeless and/or experiencing family violence.

*Highlighted projects are outlined within this resource

Bright Futures S.O.S– Sunbury Community Health

Note: This group is based on the S.O.S model developed by Creative Futures, Samaritan Foundation NSW. This program has been adapted by Bright Futures, Merri Outreach Support Service to fit with the Bright Futures group work model.

Purpose of the Group

Bright Futures was a six-week support group for primary school-aged children who are homeless and/or experiencing family violence.

The Bright Futures program focused on emotional development and, in particular, the emotional responses to trauma and homelessness a child may experience. The Bright Futures program supported children to build their capacity with regard to dealing with triggers, the meaning of emotions and coping mechanisms.

The group was offered to families with complex and high needs. The children who attended the group were either existing clients of one of the programs offered through Sunbury Community Health, or referred by one of the partner schools — Sunbury Heights Primary School or Goonawarra Primary School. The group ran for six weeks, during school term.

The group provides children with a foundation of strategies that can support them while their families experience and recover from the impact of family violence.

Summary of the Group

The group provided children with the opportunity to discover new strategies to cope with difficult circumstances and develop an increased emotional capacity, heightened self-esteem and resilience.

Below is an outline of activities undertaken across the six weeks.

Week 1
<p>Check In. Facilitators to explain:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• That this is a six-week program and this is week one of six.• Some of the things that may happen in the group and what to expect: talking about 'tough times', feelings, strengths, strategies, support people.• That there will be some games and fun times throughout the group.• How 'check in' and 'check out' will work: we go around the circle and the children are invited to say their name. We invite the children to talk about whether there have been any tough times during the week and whether they would like to share the strategies they used to get through it. The purpose of this activity is to support the children to verbalise and share how they're going. Sometimes a child may be hesitant and not say anything, in which case we'll just ask their name. Sometimes the kids are extremely

chatty and go into every detail. It's about supporting them to express how they are and what they're bringing into the group this week. Check out is similar — children are asked: How did you go in group today? What can you take home with you? What did you like or not like about group today?

- Relaxation: We use the 'Smiling Mind' app. The app is a little voice that talks us through breathing and relaxation exercises. Parents are encouraged to download it on their phones and use it at home, as well.

Game: All stand in a circle and throw the ball to each other saying something about themselves, for example, name and favourite colour, favourite food.

Group Agreement: In a group discussion, all to discuss what guidelines each participant agrees to abide by.

Explain the term 'confidentiality' and why it is important the group is 'confidential'.

Strengths: children to choose a 'strength card' that represents a strength that they have and add it to their book.

Relaxation and Check Out.

Week 2

Check In: Remind everyone that it is now week two of six.

Invite children to share their thoughts, how they are feeling and how their week has been.

Book: 'Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No good, Very bad day'.

Tough Time discussion: Ask the children to share what they think a 'Tough Time' is.

Explain each of us has tough times and different people have different ideas and experiences about 'tough times'. List a range of 'tough times'.

Ask the children to list in their workbooks the 'tough times' that they can identify with (even if not listed on the board).

Feelings: Discussion about the different emotions we may experience during a 'tough time' and the different places in our body we may feel these feelings, e.g.: nervousness in your stomach, anger in your hands. Discuss how we can show our feelings through our body language (can use 'feelings cards' as aids) e.g.: arms folded, head down, frowning face.

Activity: Children to colour on the 'people figures' where they feel the different emotions in their body.

Relaxation and Check Out.

Week 3

Check In: Remind everyone that it is now week three of six.

Invite children to discuss their week. Any 'tough times'?

Book: 'Captain Grumpy'.

Discussion of strategies: we all go through 'tough times' however we all have different 'strategies' which can help us get through the 'tough times'. Just like 'Captain Grumpy,' we can use different strategies to help us. Discuss as a group the different strategies which can be used when dealing with a 'tough time'.

Children to go back and add to their book the strategies they feel they can use in a 'tough time'.

Strengths: How do our strengths help us in a 'tough time'? For example, resilience helps you to bounce back. Facilitators choose a 'strength card' for each child. Children choose for each other.

Relaxation and Check Out.
Week 4
<p>Check In: Remind everyone that it is now week four of six.</p> <p>Discussion of supports: Discuss the different types of supports around us, e.g.: parents, school, community services and friends. Discuss how different supports can help us at different times. As a group, list the type of supports we have around us. Discuss emergency services (Police, Fire, Ambulance) and Kids Helpline. Children invited to develop a list of the supports around them. Children to list different supports for different places and situations.</p> <p>Strengths: Children to choose a 'strength card' for themselves and describe how they feel they carry this strength. Children/ co-facilitators to choose a 'strength card' for each child and how they feel this has been displayed by the child.</p> <p>Relaxation and Check Out.</p> <p>Invitations to be given out for parents to attend in week six.</p>
Week 5
<p>Check In: Remind everyone that it is now week five of six. Remind children that at the next group parents/carers/teachers/adult will be coming along — ask kids who will come along/who they wish to invite. Generally, the parent who has been bringing the child to the group will come.</p> <p>Game: Working together. Children need to get to another part of the room only being able to step on the paper on the ground.</p> <p>Discussion of future: Discuss how we may always have 'tough times' throughout life, however, it is important to have things to look forward to, and the 'tough time' will pass. Discuss things coming up in the 'short term', something to look forward to, e.g.: something on the weekend. Discuss things that children are looking forward to further into the future.</p> <p>Strengths: Each child to choose a 'strength card' for themselves and for another in the group.</p> <p>Relaxation and Check Out.</p>
Week 6
<p>Check In: Check in process is explained to the parents and they are invited to participate along with their child. Facilitators provide an explanation of how the afternoon will run: parents and children will be split into two rooms.</p> <p>Parents: Parents will be informed about what the past five weeks have consisted of and what their child has learnt. Parents have an opportunity to ask questions about the group. Facilitator to speak with parents about how to encourage their child to use the new skills learnt in <i>Bright Futures</i> during a 'tough time'.</p> <p>Children: Children have a quick practice presenting their reflections from the group to each other. When the groups come back together, the children will choose to present to all parents and group participants.</p> <p>Parents to place the strength sticker they chose for their child on the child's strength list.</p> <p>Child receives <i>Bright Futures</i> Certificate. Parents are invited to join in on snack time to finish the group.</p>

Why This Target Group? Why This Approach?

Prior to this group being implemented, there were no other services in the Sunbury area directed specifically towards children who had experienced family violence. This group provided an avenue for local primary schools and Sunbury Community Health to refer children who experienced the impacts of family violence.

The strength of this program lies within the provision of support to children that teaches them that we all have tough times, tough times are normal, and we all need to learn new skills to deal with tough times.

By inviting children into an informal group environment where their feelings were normalised, the children could see that they were not the only ones having a 'tough time'.

This group has increased organisational knowledge and expertise required to support children who are living in such challenging life circumstances.

Case Study

Both siblings Tania (9)* and Tina (8)* completed the group on separate occasions. The children, along with their little brother, were living in a home where family violence was consistently perpetrated by their father, and included verbal abuse and very controlling behaviours. The family was also engaged with Family Services at the time. Tania learned to move away from arguments between her parents, and shielded her siblings from the argument. Tina moved her and her siblings away from the arguing, and created a new distraction, for example, playing a game together or turning on the TV.

Facilitators of the group observed a huge improvement in Tina's self-confidence throughout group. Tina was incredibly hesitant to talk during the group, check in and snack time. For example, the facilitators often struggled to get Tina to say her name during check in. However, by week six of group, Tina showed an incredible improvement in her confidence, easily taking on the task of participating in check in and check out and creating new friendships within the group.

*names have been changed

How Was the Group Evaluated? What Did the Organisation Learn?

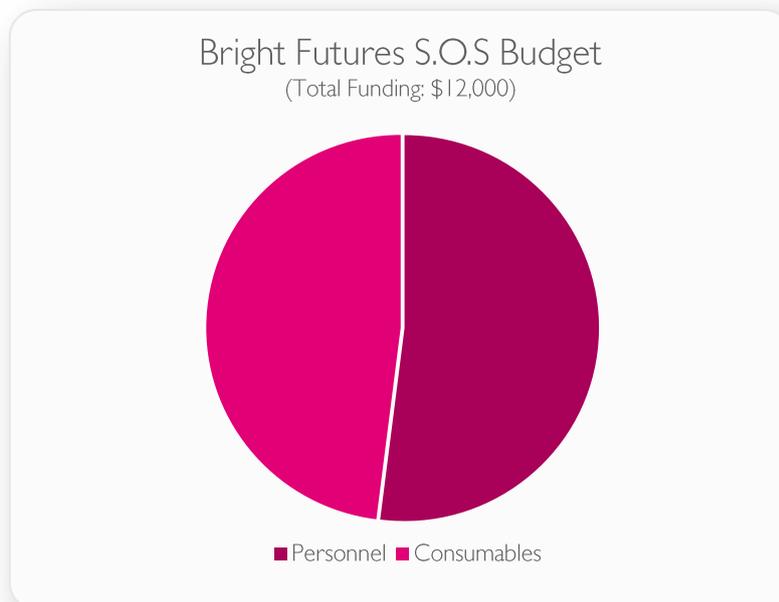
Through informal conversations with facilitators, parents reported that they observed:

- improved general behaviour in their children;
- children managing emotional outbursts after learning coping strategies; and
- children displaying enhanced confidence and resilience when dealing with daily challenges.

The facilitators observed that children working in a group environment, building on personal strengths and resilience, were able to articulate their concerns well with the support from other children their own age. A group environment that includes other children who are also living with difficult circumstances seemed to provide a sense of comfort that allowed them to talk about and discuss their concerns as a team.

The *Bright Futures* facilitators learnt a lot from the children who attended the group and can continue to use these skills to improve future groups. The children gained knowledge about emotions, strategies and supports and once the parents and/or carers became aware of the skills their children had developed, they could continue to reinforce this learning in the family home.

What Did It Cost to Run the Group?



Personnel: \$65.00 per hour x 32 weeks (Five groups)

Consumables: Excursions (e.g. Movie, zoo), afternoon snacks, art and craft material x 32 weeks (\$1,152 per group across five groups)

Who Should Run the Group?

Practitioners who have experience working with children who have experienced family violence and/or homelessness.

What Advice Would You Give to Others Who Want to Run a Group/Activity Like This?

- Small groups, with a maximum of eight children, work well, as this permits ample time for each child to speak, ensures children feel safe and allows children to speak in their own time.
- A significant challenge experienced by the facilitators was when children shared confronting details in front of other children. It was important that facilitators ensured disclosures were managed so that conversations stay 'group appropriate'.

Growing Connections – Anglicare

Purpose of the Group

Growing Connections was a seven-week creative arts-based group for women and children (aged 5-15) who had experienced family violence.

This group enabled women and their children who were affected by family violence to:

- recover and heal from their experiences; and
- reconnect and rebuild their relationships and trust with each other and with their wider community.



The objective of Growing Connections was to provide innovative, experiential and alternative healing experiences for children and their mothers that have experienced family violence. Growing Connections allowed mothers and their children to regain a sense of safety, recover and heal from the trauma of family violence.

The facilitators achieved the goals of Growing Connections by developing and providing a group which involved therapeutic experiences, including creative arts, games and dance therapy.

These were designed to be developmentally appropriate, enjoyable and fun while also rebuilding positive mother-child relationships.

Five women and six children participated in the group, which was for two hours per week for seven weeks.

Summary of the Group

All women and children were interviewed prior to the group commencing in order to determine their level of safety to attend and their readiness to participate in a group setting. Growing Connections was a group for women and children who are no longer in crisis.

The women were supported to improve their connection with their child/children in a safe, supportive, creative and fun environment.

The theme each week was connected to various movement and art-based activities, so that participants could express themselves through the various modalities. The use of metaphor and symbols allowed complex themes to be explored safely¹. For example, mirroring, clay, felting, silk painting and mask making were used to illustrate themes such as creating a safe place, co-operation, empowerment, feeling strong, connecting as a family, emotions, and giving and receiving. The process of each activity gave participants the opportunity to work together as a mother-child group.

¹ Atlas, M. and Sheridan, J. Bright Futures Therapeutic Group Work Program, Parity – Homelessness and Children, Vol 24 Issue 2, March 2011, p 49 – 51.

The establishment of safety within the group for each woman and child was critical to the successful outcomes of the group, as a whole. The facilitators achieved this by offering a space which was physically comfortable and psychologically safe, so that the participants could trust that their emotions were being heard and 'held' and so that the trauma each had experienced would be acknowledged in a respectful way. The venue for the group was crucial and, because of the activities, it had to be a big space. Carpets, cushions and all the supplies were brought in by the facilitators every week. A lot of work was put into setting up and cleaning the room.

Two facilitators were involved in the group, each week: one from Anglicare Victoria Plenty Valley Family Services and one from Anglicare Victoria Hume Moreland Family Services.

Below is an outline of activities undertaken across the seven weeks.

Week 1: Safe Place
<p>Invite each participant as they arrive to choose something that catches their eye from the table set out with figurines and animals, then to come in and sit on the mat with cushions in a circle, in the center of the room.</p> <p>Group Agreements</p> <p>Discussion around the group agreements, with input from all.</p> <p>Invite Sharing</p> <p>Looking at the object chosen from the table and reflect 'why did I choose this?' Then go around the circle and invite participants to say their names and share this reflection.</p> <p>Movement Activity</p> <p>Play and rhythmic activity on rug then moving around the room — feel the space element. Where do you feel more comfortable: in the center, in the corners? Experiment.</p> <p>Introduction of the Theme for This Session – A Safe Place</p> <p>Art Activity</p> <p>Creating your safe place with clay. What does your safe place feel like, look like? This is a place that makes you feel unconditionally safe. It could be in nature, a magical place, with pets, in a particular room, on a chair, with your favourite thing, with a particular person, imaginary or real. What does it feel like in this safe place? Know you can come back to this place any time you need to.</p> <p>Return to the center mat with your clay safe place. Reflect and share your safe place with the group.</p> <p>Relaxation</p> <p>Participants lie on the mat and facilitators pass a large coloured silk over the group, music in background. Handout sketch book, pencils and mandalas to colour in. Discuss drawing and colouring in each week. Afternoon tea for all before going home.</p>

Week 2: Family Connections

Objects

Choose an object from the table, this time for your family member, then meet in the circle on the mat as you did last week. Review of group agreements.

Rhythmic Activity

Drumming names. Drum and yell out your name. Everyone repeats it. Do this a few times and go to the next person. Creating the noise is important. Bring out your object for your family member, find a comfortable space in the room, then go with your family member and discuss why you chose the object for them. Back to center mat and share with the group.

Movement Activity

'Move Shake Twist Brush': Each participant comes up with a doing word (ask 'any more doing words? What is another word we can 'do?'), then speaks the word to the group and we all do the movement that the participant creates from the word. Then build up the energy, dodging each other.

Introduction of the Theme for This Session – Family Connections

Art Activity

Work together drawing your family connections on the large paper on the floor. Who else is part of your family? What else is important to each family — for example: places, animals. Discuss with your family member who you would like to include and/or leave out and why, respecting each other's opinions and needs. You may need to find a way to accept diversity as this may be a bit different for each family member. This is normal as we are all separate people with varied ideas and feelings.

Return to the mat, sharing circle then relaxation.

Introduce rain dance (an adapted South American ritual to finish the session, starts as pitter patter) and Angel card (cards with one word per card — choose a card/the card chooses you, encourages people to reflect and encourages you to look at the spiritual) as a finishing ritual.

Afternoon tea for all before going home.

Week 3: Boundaries

Invite each participant to meet in the circle on the mat.

Rhythmic Activity

Using names — say it twice (yell, whisper) then on to the next person.

Introduction of the Theme for This Session – Boundaries

Each family group to work together, remembering and using the co-operation and respect of choices from last week.

Movement Activity

Working in couples, a participant does a movement three times. Then partner repeats the movement three times. Then present the move to the group, so we can all do this movement.

Art Activity

A large silk has been traced from last week's family connection drawing (this activity was done on paper). Paint the silk. Mother and child choose which colour dye they want to use, together. Being mindful of each other and encouraging each other, being respectful of boundaries, where are you comfortable sitting? And what do you need to colour the silk? Think/discuss how do you let each other know what you need, what words do you use, and how do you use these words?

Return to center mat.

Relaxation and finish on mat with rain dance and Angel card for the week.

Afternoon tea for all before going home.

Week 4: Emotions/Anger

Meet in the circle on the mat.

Rhythmic Activity

Select a musical instrument (drums, shakers, bells, triangle) then together shut our eyes and make a rhythm with the instrument, keep your eyes shut, pass the instrument around. Then shout out our names to the ceiling very loud, and then whisper, repeat many times.

Introduction of the theme for this session – Emotions/Anger

Movement Activity

In pairs with your family member — brushing all over your family members body, focus on this movement. Then the child takes their mother's hand, and takes her to a place in the room. The child shares a movement with their mother, repeats and then mother shares a movement with the child, repeat. This activity focusses on the development of trust. Sliding, stomping, around the room. In pairs, spin the hoola hoop to each other

on the floor — repeat all around the room with others.

Art Activity

Discussion of the meaning of the Tibetan prayer flag; that the intent/prayer flows from them across, around and through the world. Demonstration of felting process. On pre-felts, choose wool colours and make a symbol that says something about you. Discuss with family member a symbol that says something about who you are, and then make this pattern on the pre-felt. Let the process of felting take over, enjoy the sensuality of the colours and texture of the felt, the emotion of the water and using the energy to knead and work into the felt. Lay all prayer flags together and each person reflects about their symbol and the process.

Return to the circle for relaxation.

Finish with rain dance and Angel card for the week.

Afternoon tea for all before going home.

Week 5: Empowerment/Strengths

Meet in the circle on the mat

Introduction of the Theme for This Session – Empowerment/Strengths

Rhythmic Activity

Around the circle each person calls out their name and the group repeats the name in unison three times. Then each participant shuts their eyes and makes a rhythm on the drum and shaker, keeping their eyes shut, and then passes the drum around.

Movement Activity — ‘doing’ words

‘Stretching, Stomping, Punch, Twist’ — do this with your bodies. Art therapist would role model it. A mixture of having fun and playing, as well as expressing emotions.

Art Activity

When creating the masks, let’s bring out our strength. We all have masks for different occasions. For example, ‘I come today with a mask of expectation, excitement, apprehension and focus’. Today we want to focus on when you feel you have a voice, when you feel you have been listened to, when you are strong and when you feel empowered. We are going to create our mask of empowerment, our strong self. What colours, what shapes, what materials express to you ‘I feel strong today’? Sometimes being strong can be quiet, sometimes loud, sometimes talkative. We all do ‘strong’ differently, so this is about expressing your very own strong — what does *your* strong look like?

Movement Activity and Relaxation

Extra silk drops have been hung in the room. Participants gather in a line, and are then invited to walk through the silk hangings to feel the silk wafting over their faces.

Finish with the rain dance and Angel card.

Afternoon tea for all before going home.

Week 6: Giving and Receiving

Each participant comes in and starts playing with the hoola hoops that are prominent in the room. Then all are invited to sit on the mat in a circle.

Introduction of the Theme for This Session – Giving and Receiving

Activity

Giving and receiving is a very intimate expression of connection. How do we give and how do we receive? Each participant is invited to go outside and find a 'gift' for their family member. This gift can be anything found and the giver is to explain why they have chosen this particular gift. We meet in the circle and each person explains what they have chosen and why. We then move to the large silk drops hanging in the room. Each family member 'giver' walks through the silk letting the silk waft over them. They then walk to the 'receiver' who is waiting, and then give their gift and say why they have chosen this gift for them. Each family member gives a gift and receives a gift. Music is playing in the background. When all participants have given and received, they spend time together in the room in a comfortable place talking to each other about how they felt. Given the mood created, all participants are invited to walk through the silk again three times and are encouraged to notice how this feels.

All participants are reminded that the final session is next week.

Return to center mat.

Finish with the rain dance and Angel card.

Afternoon tea for all before going home.

Week 7: Final Session

Each participant comes in and starts playing with the hoola hoops that are prominent in the room.

All the made activities are laid out in the room for all to see. Hand out evaluation questionnaires

Revisit All Sessions

- Week 1: SAFE PLACE with clay
- Week 2: FAMILY CONNECTIONS drawings
- Week 3: BOUNDARIES painting silk
- Week 4: EMOTIONS/ANGER felting
- Week 5: STRONG SELF masks
- Week 6: GIVING and RECEIVING ritual

Playing with Voice, and Drumming on the Mat

For the evaluation, each participant is asked:

- What experiences you will take with you?
- Are there any things you see and do differently now and how will you maintain this?

The large silk is then cut up with music in the background, with everyone holding the large silk and everyone helping with this delicate ritual. Each member then collects their section of the silk, felt, masks, drawings and clay. Meeting on the mat for the last time, yelling and drumming together.

Finish with the rain dance and Angel card.

Afternoon tea for all before going home.

Why This Target Group? Why This Approach?

There was an identified need to address the impact of children's exposure to family violence in the local government area of Whittlesea. Data collected by Victoria Police² at the time this project was developed reflected that the City of Whittlesea has one of the highest reported incidents of family violence in the northern metropolitan region of Melbourne and that children are present in one out of three incidents that police attend.

Two underlying principles of Anglicare's work are that:

- family violence affects the whole family, irrespective of whether children have been directly involved in particular incidents; and
- relationships between mothers and their children can be affected when family violence occurs.



Family violence often targets and undermines a woman's mothering and attacks the mother-child relationships.

The benefits of using the creative arts in healing have been documented widely — especially when working with children who may not yet have the cognitive capacity or language to express themselves through the more traditional verbal means (either due to age or trauma). Mitchell³, in describing the benefits of using the creative arts in therapeutic group work, states that the experiential nature of art therapies 'bridges the gap between the conscious and the unconscious'.

Malchiodi,⁴ at the International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies (ISTSS), citing Foa *et al*, provides a comprehensive summary of the role of the creative art therapies in the treatment

² Victoria Police 2007/2008, 2008/2009, 2009/2010 Crime Statistics, Recorded Family Incident Reports, Corporate Statistics, Victoria Police, July 2010.

³ Mitchell, D. (2012) The Benefits of Expressive Arts Therapy. Retrieved on 21/2/2013 from <http://goodtherapy.org/blog/expressive-arts-therapy-benefits>.

⁴ Malchiodi, C. (2013), *Trauma-Informed Art Therapy and Trauma-Informed Expressive Arts Therapy*. Retrieved on 18/2/2013 from <http://www.cathymalchiodi.com/Trauma Informed Art Therapy.html>.

of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). The ISTSS statement underscores the growing interest in the relationship between the creative arts therapies and the brain, including how the brain processes traumatic events and the possibilities for reparation through art, music, movement, play and drama interventions.

Malchiodi goes on to state that because young survivors of trauma may not be able to place memories in an historical context through language, art therapy combined with neurobiological, somatic, and cognitive-behavioural approaches can assist children in bridging sensory memories and narrative.

How Was the Group Evaluated? What Did the Organisation Learn?

Both pre-evaluations and post-evaluations were undertaken. The pre-evaluation and group readiness questions were asked as part of an individual discussion between each woman and both facilitators and explored the following:

- What are the access arrangements with your ex-partner?
- What do you hope to get out of participating in this group?
- Do you have any concerns about participating in this group?
- Is there anything else you would like us to know, or feel it is important for us to know, about your current situation?
- Do you have any injuries that may restrict your ability to participate in some movement exercises?

This approach enabled the participants to ask questions and the facilitators to explore the readiness of the woman and her children for the group. The post-evaluation questions were in a written evaluation form, and were completed by the women and the children, individually. The post-evaluation questions were as follows:

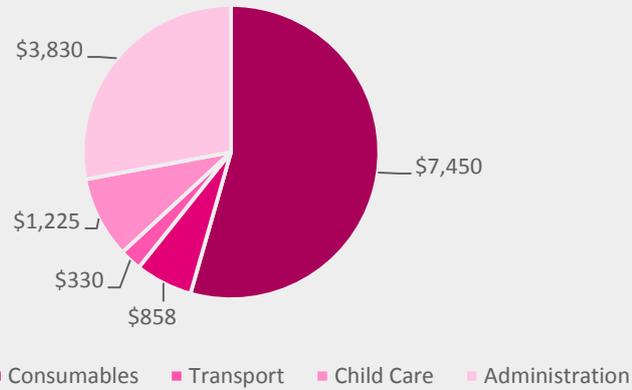
1. Was the group helpful to you?
2. What did you like most in the group?
3. What did you like least in the group?
4. What could we have done differently to improve the group for you?
5. How has the group changed your relationship with your child?
6. Have other people noticed any changes you have made? What have they noticed?
7. Have you done any activities from the group with your mum?
8. Have you done any of the activities from the group with your child?
9. What did you enjoy doing the most with your mum?
10. Have you noticed anything different about your child since coming to the group?
11. What did you enjoy doing the most with your child?

What Did It Cost to Run the Group?

The funding received from WHIN did not cover the costs of running this group. There were also significant in-kind contributions from Anglicare Victoria.

Growing Connections Budget

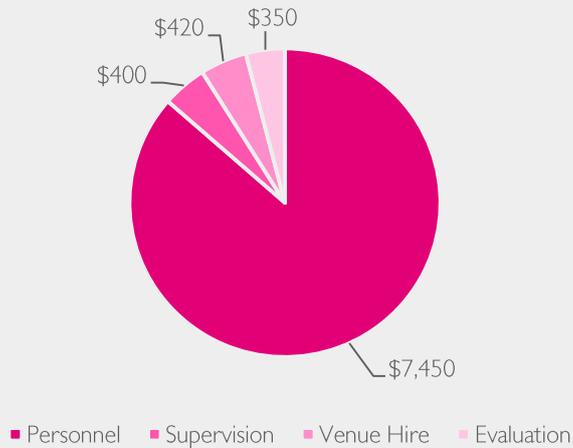
(Total Funding: \$12,000)
(Total Expenses: \$13,693)



- Personnel:** Group preparation, providing the group and debriefing and packing up (one facilitator). Planning and research (both facilitators). Assessments of all families (both facilitators).
- Consumables:** Healthy snacks each week of group. Art materials.
- Transport:** Transport to and from group for clients.
- Child Care:** Child care for four children provided by mobile child care service on-site.
- Administration:** Administrative costs, IT, management and compliance.

Growing Connections Expenses

(In-Kind from Anglicare Victoria)



Personnel:	One facilitator
Supervision:	Two external sessions
Venue Hire:	\$500 deposit was refunded
Evaluation:	Post-group – four hours for both facilitators.

Who Should Run the Group?

It would be essential for both facilitators to be experienced in:

- facilitating groups; and
- working with women and children affected by family violence.

It is important and advantageous for the facilitators to have qualifications and expertise in art therapy and dance therapy. If this is not possible, it would be essential for them to be very confident in using these modalities in a multi-age group setting with this client group.

What Worked Well, What Didn't and Why?

- It was great working with movement and having someone who would introduce a different theme to compliment the art therapy.
- Creating the safe place was a real winner because women and children felt safe to participate in everything.
- We didn't over-theorise the content, we just met the participants where they were at.

What Advice Would You Give to Others Who Want to Run a Group/Activity Like This?

- Ensure the women and their children are settled and able to be reflective about their relationship with their partner/father who was violent.
- Choosing the right people to participate is very important. The initial interview with the woman is crucial. Meeting her children and talking about the group with them is vital.
- Begin each session with a movement activity; this will get the participants moving and feeling present before doing the art activity for that week.
- Creative arts activities are an effective method for supporting women and children affected by family violence to rebuild their trust and re-connect with each other.

Looking Forward Arabic Speaking Women’s Group – Merri Community Health Services

Purpose of the Group

The Looking Forward Arabic Speaking Women’s Group was an eight-week group to provide Arabic-speaking women and their children with a culturally appropriate, safe service where they can access support, information and make social connections.

The purpose of the group was to create a space where women could:

- access a program that is culturally appropriate and in their own language;
- feel a sense of belonging and safety;
- share their experiences and stories in a supportive environment;
- create social connections; and
- gain access to information, resources and skilled staff.

The group used a creative medium to capture and give form to the women’s shared life experience. This resulted in the design and production of a banner.

Fifteen women and eight children participated in this group, over eight weeks, for two and a half hours, each session.

Summary of the Group

The program ran over a six-month period in two phases. Phase 1 ran in 2013 and focused on defining and exploring healthy relationships in a culturally appropriate context. This phase was necessary to build trust and rapport with the women.

Building on this knowledge and feedback from the women, phase 2 of the program was held in 2014. These sessions focused more directly on family violence and the impact it had on the family. This phase looked at ways to further the women’s ideas of contributing to community awareness about strong, healthy families.

Phase 1	
Week 1	Introduction session — welcome, group agreement, what do women want?
Week 2	Women’s rights in relationships.
Week 3	How does witnessing verbal abuse affect children? How can women parent their children more effectively if they have witnessed verbal abuse?
Week 4	Self-care.
Week 5	Your right to have personal space: ‘If your space has been invaded by anyone – what do you do?’ Provision of specific information regarding family violence and how to seek support if needed Evaluation — where to from here?

Phase 2	
Week 6	Defining family violence.
Week 7	Effects of abuse.
Week 8	Common explanations for abuse and moving away from self-blame.
Week 9	Healthy relationships.
Week 10	Evaluation.

Sessions were planned around the topics listed above; however, the women took the lead in deciding what was meaningful and culturally appropriate on a session by session basis. This meant that session planning and delivery was flexible and organic.



The group formed a partnership with the local community-based Multicultural Women's Sewing Group, to assist with the design and creation of a banner that aimed to celebrate Arabic-speaking women's strengths and roles in their families and in their communities.

The women reported that their experience in the group had developed their awareness of their rights in relationships and in their families. It also increased their knowledge of, and access to, community supports. In addition, the women communicated that the group had

met their greatest need (beyond learning or skill development) which was for them to have a culturally safe space to interact socially, and to just 'be together and share experiences and stories'.

The creation of the Women Looking Forward banner built on these shared stories and experiences of survival and strength. The banner was launched on 21st August, 2014 by the staff and women involved in the program. The women gave very moving speeches about the impact the group had on their lives, which included the forming of friendships and inspiring them to return to study or get their driver's license. The banner was also utilised during the Week Without Violence, which is held in the third week in October every year to address family violence.

Why This Target Group? Why This Approach?

There had been an identified need within Merri Community Health Services (MCHS) for services for women from Arabic communities who spoke English as their second language. The Integrated Family Services Team and the Counselling Team had also identified an increased need for targeted interventions aimed at addressing family violence within Arabic-speaking families living in the City of Moreland.

In addition, the group was strengthened by collaborating with the Multicultural Women's Sewing Group. The women who participated in the group can now attend the sewing group as an additional ongoing community service link that they can access outside existing service responses at MCHS.

In developing this group, Merri Community Health Services undertook consultations with Arabic-speaking women to explore their experiences of family violence, particularly in relation to their cultural identity, to identify service gaps and future options to expand service delivery to this target group.

As a result, facilitators were aware that there were a number of barriers for engaging women, including:

- Women not recognising for themselves that they were experiencing violence in their relationships. Facilitators addressed this barrier by initially advertising the group as being focused on 'Healthy Relationships' and did not mention the words 'family violence' in the flyers.
- Language barriers. These were addressed by providing flexible language specific information (written and verbal). MCHS has a highly skilled Arabic-speaking worker in the Counselling Team who co-facilitated the program with the Family Violence Counsellor.

How Was the Group Evaluated? What Did the Organisation Learn?

A client-centered approach was taken in evaluating the program. Women were consulted about their experience of the group using a combination of open-ended and scale-based questions. Questions drew on ideas from a narrative approach which focus on new stories and how they influence the self and others.

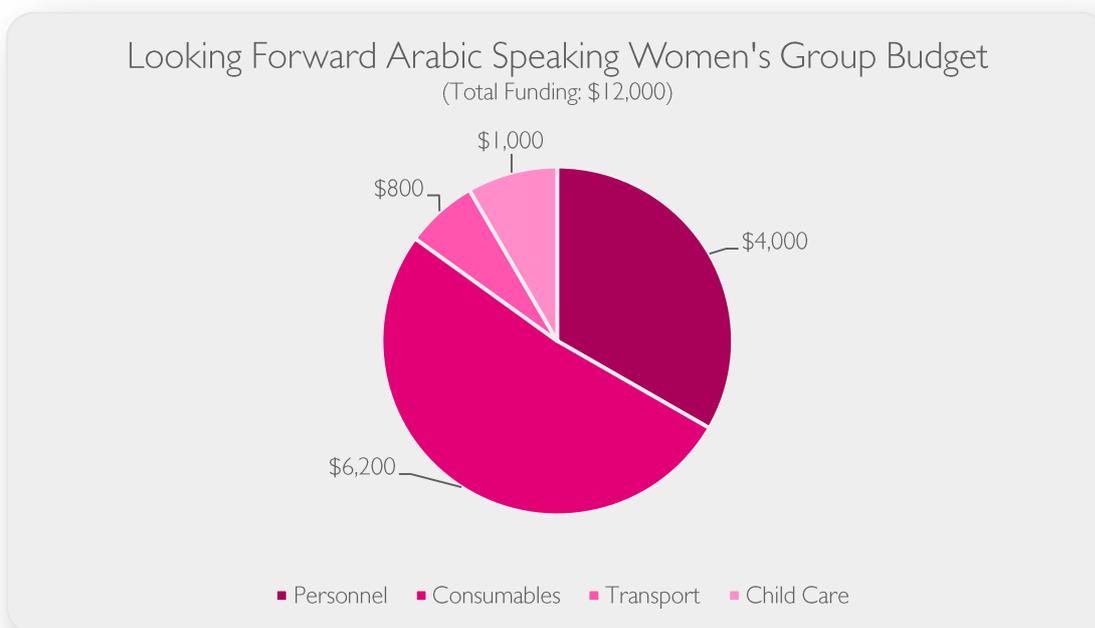
Evaluation questions

1. What will you take from the group and continue to think about?
2. Has your attendance at the group had any positive flow-on effect to people close to you (e.g. children, partner, and extended family)? In what way?
3. Has your awareness of your rights changed in any way during the course of the group? (not at all; a little; quite a lot)
4. If so, what are you doing or thinking differently?
5. Has this group changed the way you are looking after yourself? (not at all; a little; quite a lot)
6. If so, how?
7. What feedback can you give group leaders about the way the group was run?

Below are some examples of the women's feedback:

- 'I started to think about the importance of sharing and being connected to others. I started to understand that the best way to solve problems is by talking about them and finding solutions from them. I started to feel I'm alive. I started to know my rights and my responsibilities.'
- 'The change in the way I think e.g. my rights as a woman. My physical space (awareness of) and my privacy. I learned how to say no, if I don't want to, to anyone who invades my space in terms of verbally or physically.'

What Did It Cost to Run the Group?



Personnel: Group facilitators, childcare for children of group participants.

Consumables: Cost associated with the production and launch of banners, Multicultural Sewing Group, hire of venue, catering, program resources.

Transport: Taxi and public transport vouchers for group participants to attend.

Childcare: For children of participants.

Who Should Run the Group?

This group should be run by Arabic-speaking counsellors and coordinated by a family violence specialist. For non-Arabic speaking counsellors and guest speakers, interpreters should be used.

What Worked Well, What Didn't and Why?

The professional and cultural knowledge and strong collaboration of the facilitators worked well. A culturally sensitive approach to the use of language, particularly in promoting the group, was crucial to engaging the women.

The partnership with the Multicultural Women's Sewing group was very successful. The activity provided an opportunity for the women to explore the strength of women in their community and families, to promote a positive message to the broader community and to be creative together.

The greatest challenges were around the consistency and regularity of women's attendance. This could be addressed in future groups by sending reminder texts or phone calls each week.

What Advice Would You Give to Others Who Want to Run a Group/Activity Like This?

- It is essential to consult with the women, at every opportunity, about their needs and be open to changing session plans to meet those needs.
- Be flexible with time. Women often came to sessions late and sometimes missed sessions. This required staff members taking the time to go over previous material and catching women up on what was discussed.
- Facilitating the group in both Arabic and English took up a lot of time. Try not to fit too much content into each topic.
- Be interested in women's stories — they have so much to share. Listening to, and telling stories, takes a lot of time.

Making Childhood Memories Camp – In Touch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence

Purpose of the Group

A three-day family camp took place over the April 2013 school holidays and was attended by nine families (nine women and eighteen children). Families were clients of InTouch and all had experienced family violence.

Recognising the impact of trauma on families, in particular on the attachment between mothers and their children, the aim of the camp was to provide Turkish families who had experienced family violence with the opportunity to spend an enjoyable and therapeutic time together in a safe and engaging environment.

Conversations between counsellors and clients at the camp focused on parenting after family violence and provided positive engagement opportunities. The structure of the camp provided disadvantaged families with the chance to spend quality time together over the school holiday period with joint activities they could share as a family.

InTouch initially ran an information session for their clients, where women reported common difficulties and experiences regarding parenting and, in particular, of not having the opportunity to experience positive things as a family post trauma. Women reported that they had not had the opportunity to reconnect with their children after their shared experience of family violence.

Summary of the Group

The group was held at the YMCA Camp at Swan Bay, along the Bellarine Peninsula in Victoria.

The camp was led by family violence clinicians and, as such, there was always a family violence lens in conversations with families.



Counsellors ensured that camp activities were designed to include all family members. For example, each family group, rather than friendship groups, shared a canoe. The families were encouraged to spend time together, and this continued during meal and campfire time.

During activities, children were split into age groups: younger years, primary-aged and teenaged. We wanted them to feel comfortable with their peers and for the activities to be age appropriate. The mothers did a separate meditation activity at the end of each day as they had identified that they needed more respite and downtime in their lives.

The camp opened participants' minds and hearts by creating a space to share their stories and spend time together. Family violence can often isolate women and this was a good opportunity to make friends and see they were not alone.

Through conversations with InTouch counsellors across the duration of the camp, participants were able to recognise that their experience of abuse was not their fault.

Women reflected on the importance of being able to maintain connections within the Turkish community, which for many was lost when they left the relationship.

The camp provided families with a space where there were some shared values, particularly with regard to how children should behave and speak to their parents. The counsellors also supported the mums to see things from their child's perspective.

Outline of activities across three days.

Day 1	
14.00	Families gather at departure point
15.30	Arrive Camp Wyuna
15.30	YMCA Camp led orientation
15.45	Room check in
16.00	Afternoon Tea
	InTouch Orientation — Introductory Session
16.00	Women lead by counsellors
	Children divided into two groups
16.30	Free time to explore camp; Beach walk
18.00	Dinner
19.00	Cultural event (camp fire—marshmallows)
Day 2	
8.30	Breakfast
10.00	Workshops x 2: YMCA-led canoeing or drumming (to connect to country)
	Morning tea at camp
11.00	Lunch
12.15	Workshops x 2: canoeing or drumming
13.30	Free time — InTouch lead
15.30	Afternoon Tea
15.45	Activity
18.00	Dinner
19.00	Cultural event — InTouch lead
Day 3	
8.30	Breakfast
9.30	Clean up, pack up and check out
10.00	Morning Tea (for mums)
	· Victoria Police presentation
	· YMCA-led children's group (rock pool ramble and marine center visit)
	Victoria Police engagement with families
11.30	Lunch
12.00	Evaluation
12.30	Pack Bus

13.00	Depart camp
14.30	Arrive Melbourne

Further information and reflection:

- Families gathered together to take part in the rule making and to share expectations of the camp. This provided families with an opportunity to get to know each other and ensure they understood what activities would be offered and when meals would be served.
- After settling in, exploring the camp site, the beach, local surrounds and dinner, families enjoyed a camp fire and roasted marshmallows. They played music with some dancing and singing.
- After sleeping in family assigned cabins and having breakfast, the families broke into their two groups and attended the planned activities for the day.
- Canoeing was offered to the children, mothers and teenagers. The YMCA leaders explained the ecology of the local area and wild life and what creatures to expect to see.
- InTouch Legal Centre and Victoria Police attended the camp with the objective of eliminating barriers between the families, the legal system and the police. This provided InTouch with an opportunity to re-confirm the rights of women and children and inform them of the services available.
- Each group was offered a drumming session designed to cater for the specific ages of the children. The younger children danced around the drum pretending to turn into the animals in the local area. The teenage group did clapping songs and chants. In the afternoon mothers were given some quiet time around the drum to do meditation and relaxation while their children played.
- In the evening after dinner, the group had a camp fire and some teenagers told the younger children and mothers some 'scary' stories. Then they had a pyjama party, were taught Bollywood dancing by the Indian facilitator, sang traditional Turkish folk songs and did some Turkish theatre.
- While mothers were engaged, their children attended a YMCA session at the local Marine Centre. They were educated about marine life, were given the opportunity to touch fish and other sea life in an interactive water tank and were given a show bag.
- Prior to departing the camp, InTouch facilitators lead an activity in which the group held hands and crossed their arms to make a chain. They were asked to untangle themselves without letting go. This was a fun way to explore the problems we all have in life and in relationships and the need to support each other to solve problems.

Drumming Therapy (Alison Casas, Drumming Therapist)



The community drum came from a personal desire to connect people from many cultures, backgrounds and personal experiences using the drum as the meeting place.

For thousands of years drums have been used to join communities together for discussions and decision making, rites of passage, celebrations and loss. It is a way for people to join in the celebration of all being a vital link in the chain of community — to feel valid and whole. It is an opportunity to welcome families to Australia recognising their belonging and also their responsibility to take care of the land.

There is something in the sound of a deeply resonating beat that takes us out of the business of our lives and into the present moment — so we can experience and feel that which lives inside of us. From this place we can take stock, discard, plant and honour the paths our lives have taken, feeling empowered to move forward in positive ways.

Each session alters accordingly to age of participants and the level needed to engage and encourage.

Morning Session Outline

Created a circle and drummed into this space to create safety, support and a sense that we are all connected.

We travelled into the four directions and talked about the man holding one direction (here a young man drummed for us), the children holding one direction (here the children drummed for us), the women holding one direction (here the teenage and young women drummed for us) and the elders holding one direction (the older women drummed for us).

This created a circle and started to drum and women began to bring some of the songs from their culture into the circle with others playing percussion, singing or drumming.

The three teenagers were then invited to be the drummers and create their own beat. This was powerful and engaging and they really enjoyed creating a lot of sound together and being heard by the community.

After a short break those wishing to have some quiet time were invited to lie on the ground and feel the vibration of the drum beat. We talked about the drum symbolising the earth's heartbeat and to stop and plant our roots in the ground. Using breath to very gently let go of stress, body tension and tiredness, we then allowed ourselves to be filled up by the earth — regenerating our senses and bodies. This component went very well and was felt by participants in a gentle yet transformative way.

Afternoon Session Outline

Attended by a very large group of children, boys and girls of varying ages and a small group of women. We talked about the land, the traditional owners and that we needed to thank them for providing us with this place.

The group split into two with the girls engaging first — there was lots of drumming and singing. They sang some songs, creating their drumbeats whilst the boys raced around and played and the women sat and talked.

The women then had a deep session of relaxation with the drum — again using the drumbeat to take them into themselves, to let go and to be filled with love and support from the earth.

The women then held each other, sharing some tears and supported each other. We placed our hands over the drum to feel the vibration and sent prayers from families, communities and countries all around the world who were in need of support and care. Stories and tears were shared as the women all held each other.

One woman, who had desperately needed some time to herself, told me 'I feel so different — before I was so heavy and tired and I feel like the earth has stood me up on my feet again, light and free'.

The boys then rushed in to learn a dance about strength. As they played the beat I asked them to feel the spirit of the buffalo. The buffalo is strong but non-violent so they felt that they could be strong and steady.

Why This Target Group? Why This Approach?

InTouch developed a uniquely tailored program focused specifically on the needs of Turkish mothers and children and parenting after violence. The aim was to help families reconnect within their relationships and aid in strengthening communication.

The families in this community were financially disadvantaged and had identified via previous feedback and evaluations that they did not often have the opportunity to share holidays with their children.

InTouch has a good history of engagement with the Turkish community. We have run parenting groups, women's groups and holiday programs. From our experience and past engagement we understood that this community would benefit from more intensive support around helping families to reconnect after their experiences of violence.

How Was the Group Evaluated? What Did the Organisation Learn?

Initial interviews were conducted to assess participant's interest and suitability in attending the family camp. During the camp and toward the end of the camp participants were approached to provide face-to-face feedback about their holiday. They were also encouraged to complete a confidential participant questionnaire, which formed the basis of a qualitative report. The questions asked in the evaluation were based on the initial interviews, where women shared what they hoped to get out of attending the camp. The questionnaire is reproduced, below:

Evaluation Survey: *Making Childhood Memories, Turkish Family Camp*

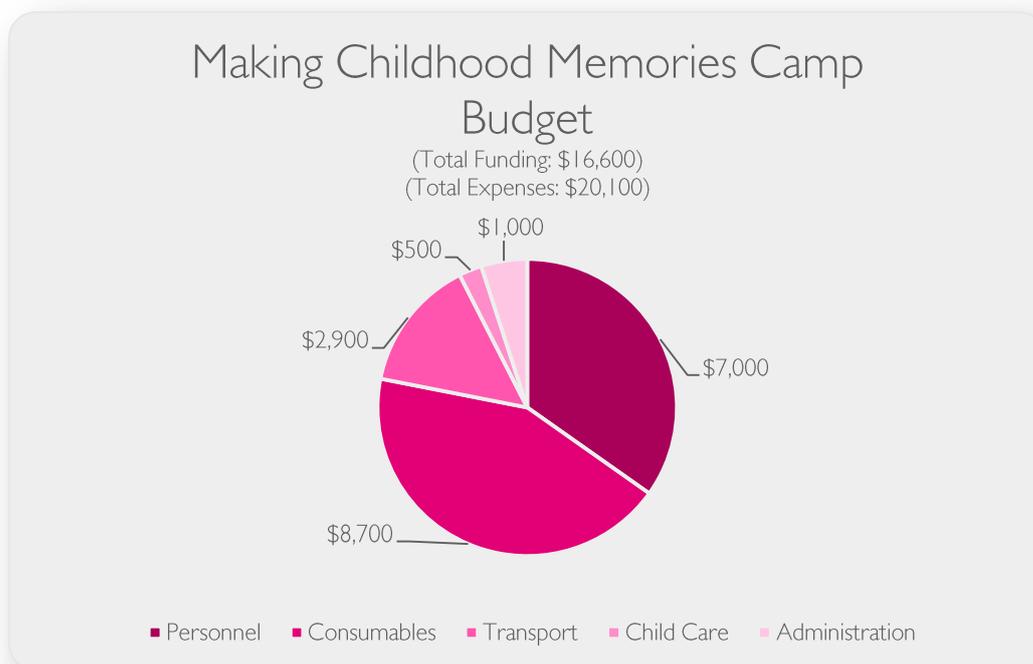
Please circle what you gained from the camp

Having fun with family Making friends Better emotional and physical health Doing fun activities Enjoyed the dancing Having a rest	Understanding the impact of domestic violence Knowing they are not alone — others have shared similar experiences Sharing my story with others Engaging with Victoria Police Information session
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A significant benefit to come out of the camp was that InTouch were able to carry out more thorough assessments about what was going on for families. Counsellors could observe the family dynamic and assess specific needs and/or tensions. This allowed InTouch to recognise that we needed to design a group to meet those needs.

As a result of the camp InTouch, developed and ran a group for Turkish-speaking mums and teenagers who had experienced family violence in early 2014. This group focused on communication between generations, parenting and respectful relationships. These were some of the key issues we picked up on in the camp.

What Did It Cost to Run the Group?



Personnel: Salaries for six workers and manager.

Consumables: Catering info session/training, YMCA activities, accommodation costs for six families and workers, translations, travel snacks, lunch on first day, art therapy materials, water bottles, sunscreen, extra blankets.

- Transport:** Bus hire, train tickets, taxis.
- Child Care:** Childcare for attending children.
- Administration:** Administration and general support.

Who Should Run the Group?

Facilitators should be experienced in supporting women and children who have a history of family violence.

Where possible facilitators should also be matched to the cultural background of participants attending the group, be bilingual and have existing rapport in the community.

If necessary, interpreters should also be engaged to assist communication needs.

What Worked Well, What Didn't and Why?

The camp provided InTouch with the opportunity to engage with women and families at a deeper level, providing facilitators with the chance to assess needs that may go unnoticed in a traditional service setting. The camp enabled workers to recognise that mothers were having some difficulties parenting their teenage children. This information was used to inform the development of the group 'Parenting after Violence Group for Turkish Mothers' in early 2014.

One of the challenges was coordinating the individual needs of all participants over a three-day period. We found it useful to allocate different tasks amongst the facilitators. For example, assessing and interviewing, safety planning and risk assessment, coordinating transport, camp hire, planning activities, organising and coordinating guest speakers and ensuring a culturally sensitive menu.

What Advice Would You Give to Others Who Want to Run a Group/Activity Like This?

It would be useful to provide childcare for future camps as this will allow mothers with young children to have a break themselves.

Some families were unsure what to do in their free time. Future camps should consider the benefit of providing options for more formalised activities that families can opt in on.

Women's Group – Elizabeth Morgan House and Merri Community Health Services

Purpose of the Group

The Women's Group was an eight session program that ran across a 12 month period, specifically designed for Aboriginal women and their children who had experienced family violence. The program focused on the impacts of family violence, particularly on the health and wellbeing of children.

Elizabeth Morgan House Aboriginal Women's Service (EMHAWS) and Merri Community Health Services (MCHS) partnered to facilitate a group program for Aboriginal women and children experiencing family violence. The group built on the existing EMHAWS programs.

Objectives

- To raise awareness of the impact of family violence on children (sleep, education, nutrition, behavior, development) and how mothers can support children who have experienced family violence.
- To educate the women about existing support services that can provide early intervention.
- To focus and develop awareness in regard to women and children's health related issues.

Fifteen Aboriginal women and 21 children attended the eight-session group over the 12 month period.

Summary of the Group

Given the increased importance of community connections for women who have experienced family violence, the facilitators developed a program that enabled women and children to come together, share stories, reduce isolation, and gain relevant life skills and vital health and parenting information.

Family violence can have serious short to long term consequences on children and young people. These impacts may include:

- behavioural, learning and psychological issues;
- developmental delay, including speech;
- emotional responses such as fear, stress, depression, sadness, guilt, confusion, anger, anxiousness, despair, shame, eating disorders; and
- headaches, stomach aches, stress reactions (e.g. rashes or immune system related illnesses) and sleep disturbances (e.g. nightmares, insomnia or bedwetting).

Conversations with the women in the first session, where they began discussions on the impact of trauma on their child's health and wellbeing, informed the development of the session outlines.

The following topics were covered across the eight-week program:

Week 1: Child Nutrition
<p>What are children's nutritional needs? Ideas for healthy snacks and meals. What to do when they are pickers? How might the experience of family violence affect your child's eating habits or patterns? What can women do to minimise the impact of family violence on their children?</p>
Week 2: Kids Behaviour
<p>How to manage tantrums. How to manage your own anger when children 'play up'. How to manage the feeling of being judged by other parents. How to understand children's behavior in the context of them witnessing violence.</p>
Week 3: Victorian Aboriginal Health Services Information (VAHS), facilitated with VAHS workers
<p>What services are available? How to access services? What other specific services are available for women and children who have experienced family violence?</p>
Week 4: Children's Speech (facilitated with MCHS Speech Pathologist)
<p>Normal speech development for children. How to help children with their words/expressing themselves. How children's speech is affected if they have witnessed or experienced family violence.</p>
Week 5: Budgeting
<p>General financial management. Food shopping — how to budget. What is financial abuse? Strategies to gain financial independence.</p>
Week 6: Further Education Information
<p>What's available/how to access it? Courses, traineeships (hospitality and beautician). How might engaging in education or courses make you feel about yourself and your abilities?</p>
Pampering Day
<p>Women sat around a big table yarning (and doing art work) about their social connections and just sharing stories, children moved in and out. Provision of haircuts, nails, hand massage (by the Body Shop). T-Shirt painting workshop — modelled on The Clothesline Project from the Week Without Violence Toolkit. Provision of information about safety and safety planning.</p>

Why This Target Group? Why This Approach?

EMHAWWS's core business is to support Aboriginal women and their children who have experienced, or are experiencing family violence. MCHS has been working in partnership with EMHAWWS since 2006 to provide counselling and support to the women and children accessing services at EMHAWWS.

Both services, together with the clients, had identified a significant service gap for a health and wellbeing program, and took this opportunity to discuss how family violence can impact the health and wellbeing of children.

How Was the Group Evaluated? What Did the Organisation Learn?

A client-centered narrative approach was used in relation to evaluation which was culturally sensitive to Aboriginal women. Facilitators created opportunities for sharing stories and listened for the new stories of change and exchange of information. The benefit of this 'yarning approach' was that women could express and share their experiences in an informal non-confrontational, natural way. A formal evaluation was also conducted, which yielded a limited response. Below is an example of the evaluation questions.

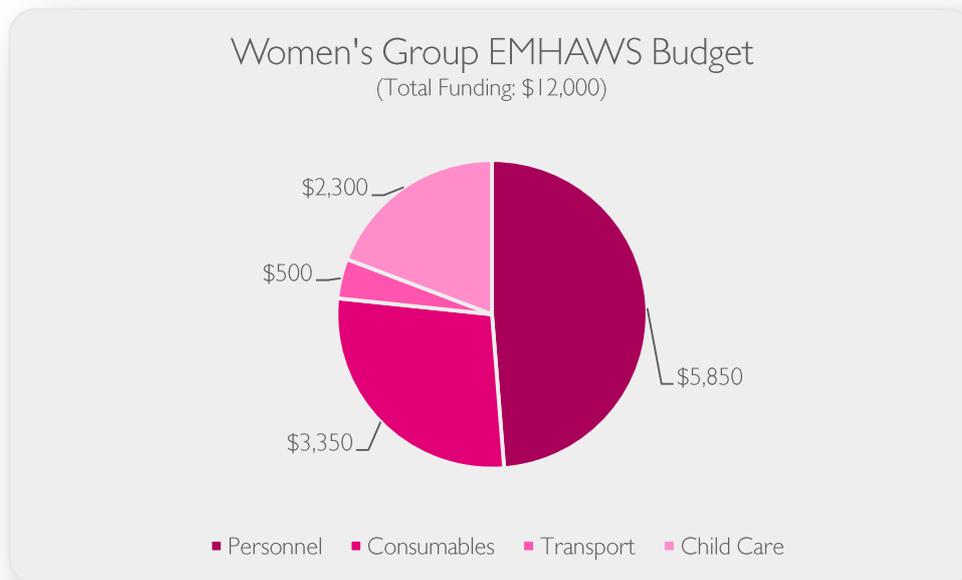
Please circle the most relevant answer.

1. Has your awareness of your health and your children's needs changed over the course of the women's group and if so, how? (Not really; a little; a lot) Describe:
2. Are you more aware of the services available to you and your children? (Not really; a little; a lot) Describe:
3. Have the monthly meetings been too far apart? (Not really; a little; a lot) Describe:
4. Has your awareness of family violence and its impact on you and your children increased? (Not really; a little; a lot) Describe:
5. Safety: Do you have active safety plans in place? (Yes; No)
6. If we were to get more funding what would you like to see happen in our groups in the future?
7. Do you have any feedback for the facilitators

Evaluation information gathered from the yarning follows:

- Women spoke, in general, about the value of coming together with other women from the community on a regular basis. Some of the women said that they would have little opportunity to connect with community members otherwise.
- During the session that focused on children's speech development, the women freely shared their concerns, asked questions and shared advice and stories about what they had done with their own kids to assist with early communication.

What Did It Cost to Run the Group?



Personnel: Facilitators, guest speakers.

Consumables: Catering for morning tea and lunch, supply of art and craft materials for the workshops, printing of flyer and information sheet, resources for women and children.

Transport: Myki, taxi and petrol.

Child Care: Child care worker and assistant child care worker.

Who Should Run the Group?

Family violence specialists working with Aboriginal women and children who understand and can demonstrate cultural competence and sensitivity and who are willing to partner with an Aboriginal facilitator(s).

What Worked Well, What Didn't and Why?

What worked well?

- Working in partnership worked well — having a worker with counselling/group-work skills working alongside workers with the cultural skills and background.

- Consulting with the women before session planning to ensure that the group content met their needs. This created a sense of 'ownership' for the women.
- Flexible delivery of topics and inviting Aboriginal organisations to provide support and information.
- EMHAWS provided onsite childcare, which allowed for the children to move away from their mothers when they were ready, enabling the mothers to focus on the content of the sessions.
- Sharing lunch together after each group created a natural space for yarning (not just about the group session but about themselves and families).

What didn't work so well?

- Sessions were held monthly — this posed a challenge to regular attendance.

What Advice Would You Give to Others Who Want to Run a Group/Activity Like This?

Provide fortnightly, rather than monthly, sessions to increase regular participation.

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