

Spring-Summer Newsletter 2015

Olive Branch Counselling

Olive Branch at Full Capacity

We have had another exciting year at Olive Branch, where we have expanded our capacity both in the number of people being counselled, and in the breadth of counselling issues we are able to handle.

Some of our more experienced counsellors have begun to counsel people with severe mental issues, and those who have suffered sexual and domestic abuse, with trauma-related interventions.

Operation Yewtree and other police investigations have helped some clients to feel it is now safe to come to us and talk about childhood abuse, whilst television and media reports regarding the

varied levels of domestic abuse have also helped clients to begin to address this issue. Further training has also helped counsellors to develop their understanding of complicated trauma.

In many respects we have become a victim of our own success, as referrals far outweigh places available. Churches, Doctor's Surgeries, Citizen's Advice Bureaux and past clients all pass on the good news that we exist. How do we, now at full capacity and bulging at the seams, cope with this pressure? One at a time!

15 counsellors now see an average of 42 clients per month, paying from £5 to £30 per session. There is

always someone waiting, always someone in need and we are looking at ways to help alleviate bottle-necks and busy periods.

At the moment we close the list for assessments when 20 people are waiting, and try to help these people one at a time before re-opening.

We are looking into more creative ways of addressing this such as group sessions, perhaps another agency in the area, or more stringent onward referrals.

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Changes to our Counselling Team

Over the past year we have said goodbye to Zoe and Sarah (and Crystal the dog) and welcomed Maddy returning from a sabbatical at Lee Abbey. We are also very pleased to have added two more counselling students to our



team, Marion and Paul. My cup runneth over as I now have three men in my life! Three of our current counsellors are male, which is helping to bring a much-needed balance to our team.

Our students are training with Lackham College, The Willows, Swindon and Waverley College and are as always a blessing to our team.

Olive Branch continues to grow in strength and understanding—please pray for us all, our work and our clients as we strike out into uncharted waters and once

again adapt to the changes that life and society bring to us.

Chris, Counselling Manager

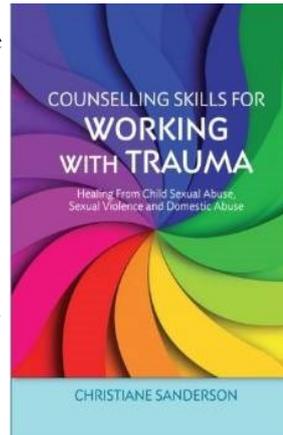
Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

At one of our regular monthly peer group meetings, the counsellors at Olive Branch recently discussed PTSD as an issue that may arise at any time, in the counselling room.

PTSD has been described as a normal response to an abnormal situation. It is a response to a traumatic event or events, and is very common amongst servicemen and women returning from combat areas. It can also arise for those who have witnessed or have been involved in shocking or horrifying events such as the 7/7 London bombings, violent crimes or road traffic accidents.

PTSD is experienced as intrusive flashbacks where to the person concerned it feels as if they are re-living the event in the present. Other symptoms include nightmares, insomnia and other sleep disorders, a heightened 'startle response' triggered by certain sights or sounds, hypervigilance, raised anxiety levels and panic attacks.

Those affected by PTSD will often turn to alcohol



A book purchased for the Olive Branch counsellors' reference library

or other mood-altering substances in order to cope with what they are experiencing, and may undergo personality changes, a lowered sense of self-esteem, difficulties in relationships, angry outbursts, and even suicidal thoughts.

Skilled, compassionate therapy can bring enormous benefits and relief to those suffering from PTSD.

Margaret, Counsellor

Olive Branch at Full Capacity.....continued from page 1

In recent months we have been dealt a slight curve ball - Shamrock Linen Warehouse is on the market to be sold. At present we do not know how this is going to affect us and the service we provide, but we plan to be here in Chippenham for many years to come.

Over the past year in particular, Olive Branch has been able to help many

clients who fall through the NHS safety net in appropriate treatment of mental health issues.

In many respects we have become a victim of our own success, as referrals far outweigh places available.

Whilst being able to help to some extent here, we do still believe that the most appropriate and safest way to help patients is through the provision of a robust mental health service in Wiltshire.

Chris, Counselling Manager

How common are mental illnesses in the UK?

- Anxiety will affect 10% of the population
- Bipolar disorder will affect one in 100
- One in every 150 15-year-old girls will get anorexia, and one in every 1000 15-year-old boys
- 20% of people will become depressed at some point in their lives
- OCD will affect 2%

- Personality disorder will affect one in 10, though for some it won't be severe
- Schizophrenia will affect one in 100

(Source:

[Royal College of Psychiatrists](#))

Psychological risk factors that make a person more vulnerable include suffering, neglect, loss of a parent,

or experiencing abuse. Difficult life events can then trigger a mental illness in a person who is susceptible. These stressors include illness, divorce, death of a loved one, losing a job, substance abuse, social expectations and a dysfunctional family life.

(Article first published on the BBC website 19th April 2013)

Could It be YOU?

When I was nervous on my first day, you put the kettle on. You checked I had all I needed, and above all, you welcomed me with a smile.

When I came out of a counselling session the friendly presence in the office to greet me felt like a gift sent from God.

The words you spoke encouraged me to carry on. On this journey people have said to me "I wish I could do what you do", but the

fact is I couldn't do what I do without you!



**Who was I?
The student
counsellor
who was nervous
to the core.**

**Who were you?
The voluntary
supporter who had kindly given
your time.**

WE NEED YOU

I am no longer a student, but I still value and need the support. I

think I can safely say, so do all the other counsellors I have the privilege of working alongside.

NO GIFT IS GREATER THAN ANOTHER

The letter to the Corinthians reminds us that we are all part of the same body, each with different gifts, all important. If you feel you could offer the gift of support and a friendly presence while counselling is going on, please contact Chris, Geoff or Margaret in the office on 01249 443810 to find out more.

Trina, Counsellor

'Inadequate' Care for those in Mental Health Crisis

Last year 1.8 million people in the UK sought help for a mental health crisis, according to a report published this month. Last year also a Crisis Care Concordat between the government and the care sector was signed, which promised round-the-clock support for those who needed it.

The Care Quality Commission (CQC) has reviewed the help given to people in mental health crisis and found that the system is 'struggling to cope'. A mental health crisis could involve

psychotic episodes, severe panic attacks, or suicidal thoughts and feelings.

The review included inspection of services, patient questionnaires, and analysis of national data, and found

A mental health crisis could involve psychotic episodes, severe panic attacks, or suicidal thoughts and feelings.

that 42% of patients did not get the help they needed.

Paul Farmer the chief executive of mental health charity Mind, said that the report would not come as a surprise to anyone who experienced a crisis or has supported someone in this situation.

Care Minister Alistair Burt said that improving mental health care is his priority.

(Source: BBC website June 2015)

Positive Outcomes for Dissociative Survivors (PODS)

PODS is the name of an organization formed by husband and wife team Carolyn and Rob Spring to help those living with and recovering from dissociative disorders, trauma and sexual abuse.

Several counsellors from Olive Branch Counselling have recently attended an excellent CPD workshop run by PODS, entitled 'Trauma and the Body: Dissociation and Somatisation'. The workshop looked in considerable

detail at the impact of severe early trauma on the different parts of the brain and the body, and the myriad symptoms which survivors can then experience in adult life.

'The body remembers' is a phrase often used now in teaching on the effects of trauma. There may be very few or no conscious memories at all of the abuse or traumatic events, but survivors often experience ongoing physical problems such as chronic

pain, recurring infections, Chronic Fatigue syndrome or ME, fibromyalgia, rheumatoid arthritis as well as self-hatred focused on the body.

The workshop explored how the body can be the key to unlocking the psychological issues of trauma, and how these issues can then be worked with in therapy.

Margaret, Counsellor

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Empathic confidential counselling
service for adults in North Wiltshire

[www.olivebranch
counselling.org.uk](http://www.olivebranchcounselling.org.uk)

Olive Branch Counselling is a counselling service which was set up by a group of volunteers from local churches in 1989. Since those first days of counselling in people's homes, the organization has developed into a well-established agency with its own premises, a team of counsellors and two paid part-time staff. We are based in central Chippenham. Our counsellors are trained and experienced and many are qualified to Diploma level. We also have some trainee counsellors on placement with us.

We are able to help with a variety of problems such as anxiety and panic attacks, stress, low self-esteem, childhood trauma and abuse, depression, anger management, bereavement and loss, relationship difficulties and much more.

Olive Branch FAQ

Q. Do you counsel children or teenagers?

A. Counselling children and teenagers requires specialist training and facilities. At this time we counsel those over the age of 18.

Q. How much does it cost?

A. We do not charge a set fee, but ask you to contribute what you can afford. We ask for £5 to put you on our waiting-list and this is deducted from the cost of your first session. No one is turned away because of an inability to pay.

Q. Do I need to be referred by a doctor or CPN?

A. No, we prefer it if you contact us directly, by phone or email.

Q. Do you only offer a few sessions?

A. We agree on a certain number of sessions to begin with, and then towards the end of that we review how the counselling is going. If you want to continue on and have more sessions you can do so, and many of our clients stay in counselling for several months. Many people need more than this, and stay for much longer.

Q. Do I have to be a Christian?

A. No, we see people of all faiths or

none, and we do not impose our beliefs on you. We are here to help you to face whatever problems you are struggling with, and there will be no 'religious' talk unless you want that to be a part of your counselling.

Q. Will you tell my doctor I am having counselling?

A. We would never contact your doctor without your permission, and only if we were concerned about your health or state of mind. We would discuss this with you first.



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