



8 YEARS ON TRAUMA. MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES AND OUR YOUTH.

It's a field that is in its infancy when it comes to understanding the totality of how and to what extent trauma effects people at different ages, however, that it has a real impact on young lives is without doubt. Factors that come into play include the age the child was at the time of the traumatic event and these things are being looked into so as to help our kids and others in future situations.

<http://beyondbushfires.org.au/>

Recently we had here in Kinglake the privilege of Rob Gordon and Prof Lisa Gibbs presenting a community forum on the longer term effects of trauma on a community. Prof Gibbs has been part of an extensive research program called **BeyondBushfires** (<http://beyondbushfires.org.au/>) in which some important factors came to light regarding our kids. One big issue was the environment and the impact on the trees on our young. It seems that the very reason we live here is the beauty of the bush and reconnecting with that is very important to them.

Activities that involve kids getting in touch with the bush are very beneficial whether that be bike riding, bush walking or camping. And all of these reduce the hyper reactive state that is the result of adrenalin that is triggered by any situation that can reactivate the trauma state.

One observation local youth workers in all fields mention is the delay in areas of learning, for instance those kids that were in primary school now often show lower reading and writing skills due to that being the time such things were learned. Social anxiety is another area that is frequently seen in older youth with many young people not getting out and meeting new people as there is a sense that no one will understand them like those who were here do, or are simply anxious in any new situation.

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Practical Preventable Medicine

Ellimatta, our own youth centre has been providing many programs and activities to connect local kids so please check them out. They are doing heaps of important work in **Mental Health Awareness** that is very important. Encourage your kids to get involved as all evidence that comes from looking at long term trauma recovery show consistently that being involved with a community group results in far less long term mental health issues.

Night terrors are also a common complaint of parents of children who were very young as their young minds did not yet have the words to articulate their trauma and can result in nightmares.

Things that can help include the many natural therapies out there. Of course pharmaceutical medication is not often appropriate in most children and there are many ways to gently assist you children along with the above mentioned activities. Reflexology, massage, Acupuncture (laser can be used) with very good results in PTSD cases as well as herbal medicine and the famous rescue Remedy or Australian Bush Flower essences such as Emergency Essence or Calm and Clear.

Talk to your kids and check in on how friendships and school is going and making sure their school is aware that Post Trauma kids find the exam process a trigger for adrenalin which is much harder on them.

A final thing to come out of the forum was things will never be the same for most of us, and many don't want it to be either. A new normal is all we can aspire to so do what you love and encourage your kids to do the same, and if you are worried contact a health professional for advice.

Until next time

Stay well

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