



NEWSLETTER AUGUST 2017

DATABASE: 7351 WHANAU CARERS

Tena Koutou, Talofa Lava, Kia Orana, Fakaalofa Lahi Atu, Malo e Lelei, Bula Vinaka, Taloha Ni, Kam Na Mauri, Greetings to all!

## Luna's Lullaby by Stars of Aroha

Tess and Nette, two of our members have created a bi-cultural 'nature lullaby' for their 12-month-old mokopuna Luna (granddaughter) when she came to live with them. They found that the sounds from New Zealand's animals and wildlife and the natural environment captivated and calmed her. Tess and Nette want to share this resource with other grandparents and whānau (family). It is an interactive and relaxing experience for young and old.

Luna's Lullaby by Stars of Aroha® is a nature soundtrack for children, from Aotearoa New Zealand. Children will enjoy listening to Aotearoa calling her tired children home to sleep. They will have fun identifying the animals, insects, fish and birds run, fly, swim and buzz their way home. It is available at the iTunes Store: <https://itunes.apple.com/nz/app/meditationz/id1168982009?mt=8>

\$3.99

## How Common is Developmental Trauma?

Developmental trauma is more common than many of us realize. According to the [National Child Traumatic Stress Network](#), 78% of children reported more than one [traumatic](#) experience before the age of 5. Twenty percent of children up to the age of 6 were receiving treatment for traumatic experiences, including sexual abuse, [neglect](#), exposure to [domestic violence](#), and traumatic loss or [bereavement](#).



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Adults who suffered from developmental trauma may go on to develop Complex Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, or "cPTSD", which is characterized by difficulties in: emotional regulation, consciousness and memory, self-perception, distorted perceptions of perpetrators of abuse, difficulties in relationships with other people, and negative effects on the meaningfulness of life.

Although we do not have statistics on the rates of cPTSD, risk factors for cPTSD are disturbingly commonplace. According to the [CDC](#), in 2012 there were 3.4 million referrals to state and local child protective services for cases of abuse or neglect. It is estimated that in 2012 alone, 686,000 children, or 9.2 per 1000, were victims of maltreatment.

However, experts believe these numbers underestimate the true frequency, and up to 1 out of 4 children may actually experience some form of maltreatment. It is estimated that the total lifetime economic cost of child maltreatment in the US is \$124 billion. While thankfully not all children who experience maltreatment go on to develop cPTSD, many will - and recovery is challenging even for those who do seek treatment.

### How does developmental trauma impact [identity formation](#)?

Identity formation is an important part of normal development, and takes place across the lifespan from birth, through [childhood](#) and [adolescence](#), adulthood, and old age. Identity - including one's sense of self as being good enough, integration of emotion and intellect, basic awareness of emotional state, feeling secure and coherent as an individual, and even the basic experience of who one actually is - is disrupted by developmental trauma because basic survival takes precedence over, and uses resources ordinarily allocated for, normal development of the self. Early trauma shifts the trajectory of [brain](#) development, because an [environment](#) characterized by [fear](#) and neglect, for example, causes different adaptations of brain circuitry than one of safety, security and love. The earlier the distress, on average, the more profound the effect.

The task of identity development in adulthood, challenging enough (though rewarding) for those with a secure, safe and enriching upbringing, is especially fraught for those grappling with the aftermath of developmental trauma. Because of developmental delays and adult consequences of trauma, which often include [substance abuse](#), [eating disorders](#), [depression](#), higher risk for many [health](#) problems, behavioural issues, and difficulty in personal relationships and professional development, identity development gets stuck.

Identity for adults with unresolved developmental trauma is often organized around being a survivor and maintaining basic safety in relation to others, leading to re-traumatizing and disheartening repetitions, preventing growth-oriented experiences. Individuals in this situation become highly identified with a "traumatic self", at the expense of a more inclusive, flexible sense of self. People with significant-enough developmental trauma dissociate from their environment, and from

themselves early on - a last ditch survival mechanism - and may remain disconnected from themselves throughout childhood, adolescence and early adulthood - only recognizing what has happened when there is no other choice but to do so.

*With these considerations in mind, I am highlighting key ways that identity tends to be shaped by earlier traumatic experiences.*

*[Understanding](#) these basic themes, which are often a result of dissociative effects on the traumatized [personality](#), can help people recognize areas of difficulty so they can take steps toward doing the work of recovery, repair and personal growth.*

#### **1. Loss of childhood: "I never really had a childhood" or "I can't remember much from growing up."**

People who experience a very distressing childhood often can't remember big swathes of their childhood. They may remember particularly vivid moments, sometimes called "flashbulb [memories](#)", which don't have any context to them. They often don't have a clear story of themselves as a child, up into adolescence, early adulthood, and sometimes later in life. This autobiographical sense is called a "coherent narrative" in [attachment](#) theory, and can be absent, under-developed, false or oversimplified. Many people have told me they feel like their childhood has been stolen, and without such a foundation, adult identity is compromised.

#### **2. Missing parts of oneself: "I've always felt like something was missing, but I don't know what it is."**

With chronic developmental distress, children often disconnect important parts of themselves in order to survive, a form of dissociation. They may come to rely on one major persona in order to have stability and make it appear as if everything were OK - such as being an exemplary student - while having little or no real personal life. Later in life, they may feel like parts of themselves are missing. Through personal growth and [therapy](#) they may rediscover and even create anew these missing parts. Sometimes they are there, stowed away for better times if you will, but younger-feeling than their everyday persona. It's common for these missing parts to be associated with particular emotional states and memories, and reuniting leads to a fuller sense of identity.

### 3. Attraction to destructive relationships: "I'm the kind of person who always dates people who are bad for me."

It is not uncommon for people who are traumatized by key caregivers to end up with friendships, [romantic relationships](#), and even finding work settings which are not good for them. They find people who fit their traumatic identity, even when they are trying to make different and better choices, leading to re-traumatization through repetition of the past.

They may end up being around emotionally unavailable people, abusive or [narcissistic](#) people, or end up trying to rescue and fix people they date, for example. Consciously, they want to find someone who provide what they intellectually know they need and want, but unconscious influences lead them down unwanted familiar paths. Frequently, there is a powerful "chemistry" with new relationships which makes it seem like the relationship will be different, only to learn with disappointment it is all too familiar. When friends try to warn them, it's not unusual to pick the new romance over a trusted friend. Repeatedly getting into destructive relationships can be disorienting and confusing, leading one to question one's self-understanding, locking them into the old identity while preventing new identities from taking root.

### 4. Avoidance of relationships: "I'm someone who is better off alone."

Alternatively, people with negative developmental experiences involving intimate relationships may opt to avoid closeness, and isolate themselves. Sometimes this starts early on, and sometimes later as an attempt to break the cycle of harmful relationships. But, healthy relationships with other people are crucial for personal development, presenting opportunities for growth and change. Missing out on them in adulthood as a self-protective measure further impairs development of a fully adult identity, solidifying a self-perception of unworthiness and self-condemnation.

### 5. Avoidance of oneself: "I don't like to think about myself; it only makes me feel bad."

Especially when childhood trauma was a defining component of key relationships - [parents](#), siblings, and other important people -

any reminder of those experiences may lead to efforts to manage painful emotions and experiences through escape from oneself. In extreme, this may lead one to self-destruction.

Connection with oneself, as with others, is a powerful reminder of prior trauma, activating memories and emotions which are often too much to handle. Self-care is impaired, and one learns to live apart from oneself as a matter of habit. They may not be able to reflect upon themselves at all, and flee from any encouragement to do so. Sense of self is often characterized by disgust and essential badness, reflecting a rigid traumatic identity.

### 6. Difficulty integrating emotions into one's identity: "I'm not the kind of person who has strong feelings about things."

When feelings had no place in one's family of origin, emotions become split away from identity. They continue to have influence, leading to confusion and an unstable sense of self because one is unable to predict, let alone manage, strong emotions. We need that emotional data to be fully ourselves, and to make decisions. Emotional dysregulation leads to problems from [impulsive](#) decisions and gets in the way of forming health relationships with others.

People may experience a sense of emotional numbing, or (paradoxically) feel they don't have any emotions at all. They may experience a limited range of emotions or feel muted emotions. They may, for example, only be able to feel vague emotions such as frustration or boredom, or they may block out dissatisfaction until [anger](#) explodes. They may only feel negative emotions about themselves, such as disgust and self-loathing - and recoil from anything or anyone presenting a positive view of them, feeling uneasy with [gratitude](#) from others, "not knowing how to take a compliment" or feeling mistrustful when people express kindness. They may adopt an overly intellectualized identity, acting stilted or awkward around others.

This leads to difficulty in personal relationships, as emotions are required for intimacy and shape [career](#) choices while often limiting advancement. Identity is narrow and flat, and re-integrating emotions into one's sense of self,

while rewarding and necessary for growth, can be very challenging, full of fears and difficult learning experiences.

### Moving forward

*While it can be disheartening to read about the effects of developmental trauma in adulthood, and daunting to contemplate doing the work of recovery and identify formation beyond that of the traumatized self, therapeutic efforts are effective.*

*Recovery, grieving and growth often take place over a longer time period than one would want,*

*and re-connecting with oneself has many layers. Developing a sense that long-term [goals](#) are attainable and worth working toward is an important element to establish, even if it doesn't feel possible or true. Working toward getting basic self-care in place is an important first step, as is working toward feeling comfortable seeking help when trust in caregivers has been broken. Developing compassion for and patience with oneself can be difficult, but useful.*

**Grant H. Brenner M.D. ([at Psychology Today, Blog](#))**

*Note: I can personally relate to this with our girls now aged 23 and 26. So very sad.*

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## Support Group Check-in

### Wairarapa

They hold regular meetings and you would be most welcome. Come check out the place, it is nice and warm as well as child friendly so if you have little ones don't hesitate to bring them along. Contact Colleen 06-3799159: if transport is needed, and for venue and times. There is plenty of parking too!

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### Birkenhead Auckland

Meetings are held every 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday of the month, very relaxed and informal, lovely morning tea kindly baked by "Good Bitches Baking" a community group. Meetings are not held in school holidays though. Please contact Di 09 4806530 for times and venue, all most welcome.

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### Porirua

We would love to see you attend these if you can make it. Any problems please feel free to ring or email me also for venue and times. Come along and enjoy the company of others in similar situations.

Lise Maru. [lise.maru@clear.net.nz](mailto:lise.maru@clear.net.nz) 04 4779445 / 0211219453

### My Day

I wake up to the alarm going...have missed the first one and it is now 6.15am....stretch and throw the



covers back...time to get up. If I am lucky I will get breakfast on the table before she wakes up.....

In the kitchen, clattering away and filling the jug for that

all essential first coffee, and here she comes! She has her slippers on and dressing gown, as she has discovered how cold she can get if she forgets.... She comes up for a cuddle in her half-awake state. Love that warm fuzzy cuddle first thing in the morning... big hugs.... tight squeeze and a kiss... from both of us. Directing her to her seat, at the dining table and her breakfast I go back to make the Coffee and Milo... and join her at the table while we eat and wake up slowly.



With her routine firmly established this lovely 4 year old can wake up slowly as she eats her cereal, cranberries and yoghurt, knowing that Gran has gone to make the beds and open up the bedrooms. It is nice that time has given us the chance to build these routines.

Breakfast over, it's off to the bathroom to clean teeth and have the 'munchies' (Gran's lovely warm flannel for face and hands). Then time to get dressed, racing Gran to see who gets dressed first, at this stage this bright eyed button is singing and going through her songs, looking at Gran in her enquiring way for Gran to join in... we sing our way through the process of finding the heels in our socks, and putting shoes on the right feet, and once our hair is brushed we head off to the car and seatbelts.

Arriving at day care it is a big bustle to see if her friends have arrived yet, and little ones that she loves to take care of, and settling in for the day's events. Big hugs and kisses make sure that Gran is okay while she is at work, and the hugs will last all day until Gran comes back later.

Time in traffic, while for some this is a hassle, for Gran it is a time to breathe, relax, sing her songs if she chooses, and plan the rest of her day both at home and work.

Often there is a game of hide and seek on collection, or wanting to go visit her friends' houses instead of coming home, but all in all the conversation about the day and planning for school holidays with the things day care is getting into, is all part of a non-stop conversation all the way home.

Dinner is quickly started then Gran runs a lovely bubble bath – big, up to my arms? – to wash off the paint and glue from the day, with clothes into the washing hamper ready for Gran later. Nice cuddly jamas, and those slippers again...at the dining table – oops – forgot my frozen serviette, gotta get it –At 4 our girl loves the game of setting the table by wrapping cutlery in the serviettes, and is learning how to do it well in preparation for a big birthday

party for her great, great grans birthday in October. Lots of meat and vegies later, and a yummy milo and it's off to bed with a story and again lots and lots of hugs for this 'big girl'. Watching her as she snuggles down I can't help but be blown away by the way this wee girl has developed and grown in my care, taking pride in being allowed the privilege of helping her grow her mind and body...expand her horizons.

Big sigh...now, where was I? I take time off if I am lucky to catch the last minutes of my favourite soap on telly, then its dishes, clothes for next day for her and myself, laundry to keep ahead of things, and planning the next evening's meal. Wiping the dining table of sticky finger marks from dinner so that the last wash can be folded and put in hot water cupboard to air I take a glance at the time and see that it is after 9 pm. Time to hit the shower and head for bed....ready to start the next day.

Tired – Yes: Exhausted some days – yes: Financially careful – yes: Rewarding – yes indeed!

This Gran will continue doing all she can to help this wonderful little person. Who deserves nothing but the best, to feel loved and protected as she grows up. I have changed too with her being with me, as she has taught me patience, and how to give of myself more than I ever thought possible, and to enjoy the little things. Also, while I am getting older now, this wee treasure is helping me cope with the aches and pains that get to us all. I have to ignore them and to just keep going! So, so, very worth it!

Great Gran



# Grand's reflections...

## Ha ha ha

Commented on Granddaughters lovely harakeke back pack and asked if her aunty had made it for her....yes she did Nana and do you know what, she is 50 now and still alive.....I didn't like to shock her and say I was a wee bit older than aunty....out of the mouths of babes.

Nan A



## They Learn

My "nonverbal" grandson Ryan 16 and I went thru the KFC drive thru as we do every Tuesday before music therapy and I ordered his usual popcorn chicken and krusher - lady came back with small or large - and my boy screamed LARGE!! So clear and correct - first time I had heard that word. Yes he got an upgrade to large!!

Jules.

## Oh My Goodness

There's nothing like taking kids out to a fun day out. Prepared well and excitement building. To make it even better you begin a health trip. Give up smoking by buying a vapour!

Sunny day at the fair, large groups of people around you as you sit happily enjoying family time. However, the urge to smoke takes over as the mornings preparing and smokeless car mean it's been a few hours, so you pull out your fancy Vapour, place it sweetly between your lips and take a sweet long inhale and ....

Right at the moment in a loud clear voice, that

angel faced darling, little love joy in your life, sitting next to you, yells....

"You use drugs, YOU HAVE A P-PIPE!"

At that moment, your world changes as many faces turn to you shocked and even disgust 'a drug user clearly in the mix with a number of children in her care'. You wonder how many cell phones are snapping taking photos or calls are being made in notifications.

The VAPOUR is returned quickly to the handbag from where it shall remain always with bitter sweet memories attached as you wonder what other less 'drug-like' thing you can use to give up the evil ciggy.

Never mind the fact you're reminded of the world seen by so many children that changes their view on so many things and innocence lost, but that's yet another story.

Nanny/Aunt

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## Grandmamma

You were given these children – yes you. No-one else, you were given these children because you are who they need. You have the soul to love them even on their hard days. You have the motivation and love to give these children everything they need. You have the heart to wake up every morning and do it all over again, even when you are exhausted. You have the smile that they crave and the touch to make everything okay. You are their sunshine and their comfort. You are theirs and they are yours grandmamma.

On days when you are questioning yourself, remember this. You've got this.

## Such is Life!

When it's just been you and your husband at home for a few years it takes quite awhile to get used to taking on a grandchild to raise. A granddaughter in fact. A noisy, boisterous eight-year-old who was the love and the bane of my life. Undisciplined and loud as often as she was loving and helpful and I knew that I would love to see her grow up to be an independent, strong-willed young woman with an unrelenting strong voice. But not today. Not in the Pak N Save supermarket! Not in the checkout queue as she helped to load the items from my trolley onto the counter. Picking up a box of tampons and holding it aloft for all to see she asked in the top of the range of her vocal cords, "What's this for Grandma"?

The queue standing in line behind us fell silent. In fact I think the queues in every other checkout line quit their chatter and paused in order to hear my answer. I didn't blink an eyelash.

"Those, my sweetie, are earplugs for Granddad when he's cutting firewood with his chainsaw...."

And that man standing third back in the queue can just wipe that smirk off his face right now!



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from the Spark Foundation

## Can we help you?

Members ONLY services are available nationwide

Caregivers Toll free helpline  
0800 GRANDS (0800 472 637)

For landline caregivers only please.  
New members and general information  
please dial ext. 1

Members' Support Manager:  
Di Vivian  
Auckland/free callers:  
(09) 480 6530  
Email Di at: [di@grg.org.nz](mailto:di@grg.org.nz)

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If you no longer wish to receive this newsletter or you have changed address please update your details by contacting Kelly at the Trust Office as this is where the total mail out membership is kept.  
Moved home or planning to? Be sure to let us know.

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**Member Support Manager: Di & Team (as a caregiver you are part of our team)**

*Heoi ano, na. E te Atua, aroha mai..... O God shower us with love.*

*Ka kite Ka Whangaia ka tupu, ka puawai* - That which is nurtured, blossoms and grows

**We are respectful, we listen, we learn**

*He rōpū manaaki, he rōpū whakarongo, he rōpū ako mātou*

Please pass this on to other grandparents/kin carers you know.

GRG Trust Head Office hours are 9am – 2pm daily. (We raise grandchildren too)

**We are a Charitable Trust**



[Anti-bullying](#)



0800 456 450



[www.powertoprotect.net.nz](http://www.powertoprotect.net.nz)

Thank you to our Sponsors and Funders supporting GRG's Support Services throughout New Zealand including this newsletter



# SUPPORT GROUP CONTACT NUMBERS

For the most up to date contact details please go to our website [www.grg.org.nz](http://www.grg.org.nz)

If you are a grandparent or whanau caregiver and need a referral to one of our Field Officers please call 0800 GRANDS (0800 472 637) or if you are in Auckland please call 09 480 6530

\* Telephone Support \*\* Telephone Support and Meetings

<b>Auckland: North Shore**</b>	Diane Vivian (temp)	09 480 6530	<a href="mailto:office@grg.org.nz">office@grg.org.nz</a>
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