

MEN'S GROUP TREATMENT PROGRAM

This community-based specialist group treatment program for men addresses the issues relating Problematic Internet Use (PIU) and/or charges of Child Exploitation Material (CEM) and internet crime as well as the treatment of those who have sexually offended against a child or are at risk of doing so. The 20 – 30 session program is designed to cover victim empathy training, childhood issues, relapse prevention strategies and positive sexuality. Internet and child pornography offending are also dealt with as a preventive intervention. The program is based on a distillation of the SafeCare treatment program and the research into problematic internet use (PIU) as described in Elliott & Beech (2009) *Understanding online child pornography use: Applying sexual offence theory to internet offenders*.

Participants with similar and specific problem behaviours (such as viewing child pornography or CEM) are assessed, screened for motivation level and attitudes to treatment and accepted into the group program to guard the program milieu and confidentiality. Within a positive therapeutic environment, facilitators utilise prevailing research and treatment philosophies across a range of treatment modalities including psychodynamic/attachment theory/developmental and cognitive behavioural approaches and assist individuals to generalise new learning into the realistic community setting.

THE FACILITATORS

The group was offered initially as an adjunct to the private practices of Ms Christabel Chamarette, in Fremantle and Mr. Peter Dunlop in Shenton Park, who are both Clinical Psychologists with over 40 years' experience in the treatment of sexual offending against children. There are several other members of the Facilitation team consisting of registered Psychologists Ms Janice Paige, Mr Rick Underwood, Mrs Monica Macoun, Sam Munslow-Davies and other facilitators.

IN-PERSON / HYBRID GROUPS STRUCTURE AND COST

In-person / hybrids groups allow for participants to attend remotely via Zoom, however, some sessions are required to be attended in-person.

Different aspects of the group program utilize different therapeutic models, all of which are grounded in recognised theory, research and practice. The 20+ week course consists of 4 modules of 5 weeks each, and there is usually a short break (2 to 4 weeks) between modules 2 and 3. The participants are required to enter into a contractual arrangement that has child protection as its focus and to contribute financially for their treatment (\$120 per weekly session). At this stage, Medicare rebates are available for up to 10 sessions/year where the participant is referred by a doctor. The group meets one evening a week for 2.5 hours and the number of participants is limited to 10.

ONLINE GROUPS

Online groups follow a similar program to the in-person / hybrid groups, but do allow for suitable participants to attend entirely via Zoom.

COURSE CONTENT AND THERAPEUTIC APPROACH

Module 1: INTRODUCTION –Psycho-Educational approach

The participants are assisted to recognize the sexually abusive nature of their behavior in relation to children, and to accept responsibility for it. The group also provides support for the men, most of whom are facing major upheavals in their lives. The topics covered include:- What is Child Sexual abuse and why Internet offending and viewing child pornography are treated as indicators of risk to children; sexual addiction; cognitive distortions – e.g., rationalizations, minimizations and denials; factors which may have led to the offending, the effects of sexual abuse on victims and other family members as well as coping skills needed during a crisis. This module draws on Finkelhor's Precondition Model of Sexual Offending.

Module 2: CHILDHOOD ISSUES - Psychodynamic/Developmental approach

This module recognizes that many men who have offended have themselves had a traumatic or damaging childhood that has blocked their emotional development. We believe it is vital for men to heal from the effects of their own childhood trauma if they are to fully accept responsibility for their actions. This module enables offenders to examine childhood issues that have impacted on their lives and also teaches them skills to help restore the inner child, enabling them to mature emotionally.

Module 3: EMPATHY –Psychosocial/Role Modeling (Gestalt, Art and Drama)

The work in this module is primarily experiential and builds on the self-knowledge gained in Childhood Issues. Participants are introduced to the concepts of personal rights and boundaries using aspects of gestalt therapy to elicit some of the painful feelings and emotions which may have been suppressed. Accessing their own painful emotions from childhood is essential for the development of empathic understanding of children in general and victims of child sexual abuse in particular.

Module 4: RELAPSE PREVENTION /POSITIVE SEXUALITY – mainly CBT

The relapse prevention and positive sexuality module initially focuses on identifying more clearly the risk factors associated with offending and on developing strategies to avoid high risk situations in the future. It has a very practical approach which provides participants with greater confidence and skills in preventing re-offending. The second part of the module focuses on developing positive, sexual relationships and healthy sexual attitudes and behaviours.

REFERENCES

Beech, A. R. & Fisher, D. D. (2002). The rehabilitation of child sex offenders. *Australian Psychologist*, Vol. 37 (3), pp. 206-214.

Elliott, I A & Beech A R (2009) Understanding online child pornography use: Applying sexual offense theory to internet offenders. *Aggression and Violent Behaviour* 14,180-193

Ward, T. & Stewart, C. A. (2003). The treatment of sex offenders: risk management and good lives. *Professional Psychology: Research and practice*. Vol 34 (4) pp. 1-8.

Also see: www.safecare.org.au