

FEELINGS

by
Andy Strowman





Introduction

What does it take to write such a book?

Solid memory, bravery and the belief that one day you will be fully heard.

May the following words get past the rules and regulations of the Professionals such as the Police, Psychologists, Social Workers, Counsellors and teachers.

Ordinary people among them may attune to the words and phrases of those who have been through trauma. Others may get to read this.

I hope it makes a change.

This is my aim to change one life to a better direction.

On the cover you will see a picture of a black horse. Each night before sleep I read a chapter of my favorite book, (other than the Psalms) called Black Beauty by Anna Sewell.

I have given so many away for free. It is an ideal book for many trauma victims.

Wouldn't it be a dream for professionals to offer free either the DVD or Black Beauty books for their clients. What a difference that would make!

Please consider it.

No part of this book may be reproduced without permission of the author, who asserts his right to be the sole author.

Preface

This book has been written with thoughtfulness, compassion and bravery.

I would recommend it to any person training as a counsellor. However there are many parts contained here which speak to all of us.

B.Elliott B.Ed
Westminster Pastoral Counsellor
(Retired)

Auntie Rae

I owe a lot to my Auntie who lived with us who practically sacrificed her whole life and shared us the love my Mum was struggling to give. Surely we would have died, as my poor Mum was finding life harder and harder to manage.

Poem for the day.

She never went to the seaside,
She never saw the sea,
All she ever cared about,
Was the likes of you and me.

She never gave into swimming,
She never became a clown,
The only thing she ever knew,
Was the likes of London Town.

Some will call it sacrifice,
Some will call it chance,
She gave up all the pearly things and
Never knew the time to dance.

Her punishment was unfair and troublesome,
Her ending was not quite,
But I bet all the angels were singing for her,
As she drifted towards the Light.

Written 6.55 am
On Friday August 19th 2022

The Beginning

Many people have said I have great courage to come forward. However, the lack of confidence is still glaringly there. So you, reading this as a Professional what must you do?

The Ten Principles.

Here are ten top tips. If you do two of them then build up to ten that will be great.

1. Create a safe space for the interview.
Allow the client to sit near the door.
Many who have been abused have been trapped by the door being locked or another person blocking it.
2. Create an aura.
A bowl of flowers on the table.
A feeling of mutual respect is needed.
3. From the moment the person arrives thank them.
Say words like, "I am so pleased you came. I feel really privileged to meet you and I am going to do all I can to help you."
4. Offer them a quiet space to sit. Away from noise and distraction.

Get another member of the team to offer them a drink and if wanted cake or biscuits. Serve it on a tray.

You are trying to restore their dignity.

5. Remember who you are but remember what courage it must have taken for them to come in. After our daughter died I walked round and round the same round of Social Services trying to build up courage.
I walked around for nights. Sat in bus shelters.
It felt like World War three was going on in my head. So there is an example of courage – in the same vein – as coming forward to disclose abuse.
6. Give the client time to breathe.
Help them practice deep breathing with a few simple exercises. So valuable
7. Take them into a clutter free room.
Where noise from next door or nearby cannot be heard. So many times I have been given the opposite.
8. Use words like "Take your time. WE CAN DO BREAKS ANY TIME." This is your time. Thank you for your bravery. I am really proud of you.
9. Offer the toilet before commencing interview. Then once in the room ask "are you comfortable?"
10. Make sure they are safe to leave. Do not let them walk away in fear. Give a clue when you will be contacting them again. Emptiness is not what they need to feel now. Uncertainty even more so.

I think the important thing is to really imagine and remember what it was like for you as a child? How different or how similar it was compared to the person in front of you.

What would you want? If you were this person? Think!

I remember working with one family and there was a small child of seven.

It was coming up to her birthday and I asked her Mum if she had any plans for her girl's birthday party?

There was to be none.

Could I take her little girl out for a treat? Yes, I wish now it had been all of her siblings.

So at that time we could get section 17 money then from the Cashier, which was used to prevent children from going into care.

I made arrangements to go to Wimpy and told the staff what it was about.

The little girl ordered a Wimpy burger and a drink.

She was eating very slowly. During the meal the waiters watched her.

They brought out a birthday cake and a hat for her. Two of them were crying.

The little girl asked, "Can I take some cake back for my brothers and sisters?"

"Of course," I said.

So we did. Her Mum and her siblings were ever so pleased.

Sincerity and Kindness

What really helps is sincerity and kindness. So often lacking in a pressured job
Being there fully in the room and wanting to help.

The little things count. More than anything.
When I went to Liverpool to disclose my own childhood.
I remember being given a widget spinner, a copy of "Time magazine", about Mars, and sweets to eat on the journey home after my participation in trying to help improve the process for reporting child sexual abuse. It was given to me through Danny by someone else to overall manager.

It meant so much that I still keep the Time magazine and widget spinner on my bedside table.

I shall never forget. It fills my heart.

Giving People Time.

Being a professional can be a very hard and lonely job.

One time I came out of a meeting and fought hard to maintain the jurisdiction of keeping the child within her family background, and not sent seventy miles away.

To go to an Auntie where she would be safe and trusted.

After the meeting, and it was traumatic, I took her to a supermarket and out of my own money bought her a soft drink and a snack.

Just sitting on a quiet bench and giving her time and letting her say what she needed was enough.

Fitting in a Team

I think as a Professional if you are in a good team, and with a superior that you trust and who trusts you, it tempers the hardness of the job.

So, by the time you leave each day, you are not worn out and frayed.

Having a shut down time with a colleague and a laugh and a joke in the day helps enormously.

Loyalty

Loyalty to me is an important requirement.

However, it can be hard when we are in a team where people are leaving and new faces come and go.

It made me reflect my own childhood and abandonment issues.

This creates internal problems so it is a good point to ask yourself, "Am I really strong enough to do this work, or should I try and be in a calmer job?"

So many Professionals, including myself when I was one of them, barely know the long-term effect or even the short-term effect of their actions.

I reported the sexual assault on me at the cemetery (2016), and out of all the cemeteries why did it have to be where my dad is buried?

I had gone to pay respect on the funeral of a friend.

A Funny Moment.

I had been warned by my Section Manager that a mother had claimed to have heard voices. At the interview with the mother the subject about hearing voices was brought up.

"Yes," replied my Section Manager, " They come from next door, when they have the television on."

This exemplifies how easy it is for us all to judge someone and come to the wrong conclusion and misdiagnosis, as well as prejudice.

There followed another degrading process in my life. I question now, how many others who reported trauma to the police have gone through the same process as myself? I was sent for a scan to test for dementia and the questioned posed by the mental health professionals who tried to turn it into a “points quiz”, made me feel humiliated. No wonder so many people do not trust professionals. People who have gone through trauma have already had their trust badly shaken. Why shake it even more?

I was then passed about from one person to another in the Outpatient team.

This is how NOT to treat someone with an abuse history. Why? It throws all the abuse memories of being passed from one to the other back.

One day I finally saw the Art therapist, "Is she any good?" I asked the receptionist.

She grinned widely. "I am not allowed to say."

The Art therapist came in all flustered. Half hour late

"Oh dear, I've left all your notes in the car!", she said.

Every day I have to speak up for myself. "Do you? How hard is it for you? How much harder for your clients. There isn't a day when I don't have to. Everything I ever got I had to fight for.

Jack Dash's father echoed what I say to myself. Jack Dash himself was a famous dock leader in my area of the East End of London where I came from.

Unique

There are a few police officers who are unique. Kind and compassionate and know how to make the clients relax, trust and wanted.

Yes, but they are in the minority. Here are two.

After being shamed and shouted at by a Council receptionist, because I sat in a quiet part of the building in the CitizensAdvice bureau, the woman Police officer came to find me.

I had come to report. She led me quietly towards the Police interview room. Another officer came by and shouted at me.

"Where's your badge?" "It's ok," the woman Police Officer said, "He's with me." I was led to a quiet room.

A gentle smile and a welcome was given to me. My request for a drink was quickly delivered.

My explanation of using little objects to explain what happened was welcomed.

The woman Police Officer went out to discover when I would have a video made by the Police which would help towards prosecution. This is called an AB interview.

I was told, "No date was known."

I never did get that AB interview.

One of the Detectives told me, "I didn't want to put you through it."

Sadly, it never ever happened.

As she led me out through the exit to the street, she said, "I believe you have been assaulted." I felt human. I felt believed.

A ray of sunshine

We often overlook the ray of sunshine. It could be our children, if we have any.

Here is one ray of sunshine.

Her name is Ms Wolderufael.

Like most things in my life it did not get off to a good start.

I had wandered around many times plucking up courage to go in the building. I spied it out and entered to reception a few times then the next day caught the lift to 'Changing Lives Charity'. I learnt to do tasks in steps.

When I did it was easier to ask for help.

I was given a Counsellor and she seemed very inexperienced. The bottom fell out the box when I was led into an interview room where the man next door was disclosing and I could hear everything.

A scene repeated many different times at other places.

Even hearing a man measuring up for redecorations outside the room in another charity. This was in London.

So, in the end, after only a few sessions, I quit, and I wrote in and told them why.

This charity

Changing lives, had somebody very special in charge. Her name is Ms Wolderufael. What an apology I got! I held onto it. I put her letter (yes worthy letters read a lot) in my bookcase for a very rainy day.

Many places do not even reply now other than to acknowledge it if that.

The police tend to be in the top three for not replying. Shame on them.

The rainy days did come. Plenty was the rain.
The legacy of losing our baby girl and the historic memory
of losing two more babies fell on me as Christmas neared.
So, I contacted her. Ms Wolderufael.
Oh what a letter I got back and she would do the counselling
herself!

Arriving at the Best

If the receptionist in terms of friendliness wasn't enough, and she was very sweet, then what was to come was like a trip to Heaven.

I told the receptionist who I was and who I had come to see. She phoned Ms Wolderufael's office and soon one of her assistants came downstairs.

I was invited to follow her and wait in a quiet corridor. I started to feel calm.

She offered to get me tea or coffee so I picked a tea.

Soon it was brought and I began to think if I was imagining it. If I had died. It just was so unreal. Something in all my life I had never been given.

At school and after leaving school I was often told to wait, to be reminded I was unqualified, that my rights were nothing and at school told I was worthless as I was "Brought up in the gutter of the East End."

Ms Wolderufael Appeared

Ms Wolderufael came out and the one sparkling quality was her calmness.

She introduced herself quietly and asked me to follow me. I was led into a small room and asked politely to sit down.

Between our seats was a large vase containing blue Orchids.

She invited me to do some gentle relaxation.

Ms Wolderufael knew my liking for art and following weeks led me to do art and recite my poems.

All Good Things Come to an End

The local council clipped the funding and even though the free sessions were small in number I never forgot the charm and the dignity offered to me.

The charity closed and once again I was left in the wilderness.

Managing to see Someone

Such interim measures came and went after Ms Wolderufael. My safety net was Luton shopping centre in the mornings and, sitting and listening in Crown Court in the afternoons and imagining my cases would win. I go to Luton and visit the shopping mall. I see people part of my Whitechapel youth. Now I look for cafes in Harpenden where I live. Only one near to Station approach offers lightness and hope.

The other times I did odd job gardening and some tutoring. There was no one regularly to visit.

The invisible people became telephone support and writing poetry and sending it to others.

Remembering

The poetry fades and I go to Liverpool.

There, in Liverpool, I had a little taste and reminder of being with Ms Wolderufael, and I was listened to during the IICSA. (Investigation Into Child Sex Abuse).

One of the interviews led me seeing a man who said, "You are very brave and honest."

I replied, "I don't think so. I'm just like the Ancient Mariner."

My friend Graham who was with me said, "Andy, if a Judge tells you, you are brave and honest, you have to believe them.

Judges don't lie."

Once in Whitechapel, I saw a pimp and his prostitute worker enter the Royal London Hospital each carrying a tin of Jack Daniels and Cola. The security stopped them. He handed his tin to her. She waited outside.

I went in to see a friend. On the way out in a crevice near the doorway lurked the woman prostitute.

She looked so sad. I asked, "Are you all right?"

She replied, "I suppose so."

Then, "Are you looking for anything?" I replied, "Are you on the game?" "Yes," she said. I replied, "Surely you can do better than that."

Her final reply was, "What can I do? I am homeless."

Those words stuck with me. I had nowhere to go to get help and felt abandoned like a child again.

The Mental health services had long gone and the Police disappeared into abeyance.

My use of complaints and a third party led me to go to a Psychologist far away. Her comment to me ranks in the many of similar heard, "You are just like an old car. The best I can do for you is give you new plugs and an oil change."

Where was the dignity in that? How many other Professionals have used worse?

How many times? Yet no fine ever aid.

Yet I continued to see her. I had nowhere else to go. I broke down at Christmas in a day when in a charity event my friend in London took me to. I had to go back I had nowhere else to go. I needed her report too for the CICA (Criminal Investigation into Child Sex Abuse) she did this report. A special letter the CICA needed. Nobody else I knew would write it.

Once again I was reminded and became like that prostitute outside the London Hospital I saw before.

We often overlook our achievements. Here are some of mine.

I took my youngest son to Cardiff to watch a football match of his beloved Arsenal with his friends against the team with the most racist supporters I ever met, Chelsea.

I had no ticket so I made sure they were safely in and went off to Cardiff Museum for peace and to see a Van Gogh painting.

After the game Chelsea supporters were jeering Arsenal fans and we saw lone Arsenal fans getting beaten up.

I realised my number one responsibility was get these boys safely home.

Unfortunately, the Police had other ideas and as we were queuing up to get into the station one or two were beating up supporters, and then a human chain of Police blocked the station entrance.

The crowd began to push. I saw a father shielding his son and I picked out a woman Police Officer and begged her to let my boys through before they got crushed. This she kindly did.

On the train fights were breaking out and one woman came screaming into the carriage.

The troublemakers got off the train before the Police boarded at Reading.

At Paddington there were no more Underground trains and we were not allowed to sit on the platform.

I saw a man talk to a station official and I was told we could get a taxi home for free due to the train delay. This we did.

Was I glad to get home and the boys too. 😊

We have a saying in the East End. "If you don't ask you don't get." So while I was a Social worker I asked my boss, "How about a Community drop in and involve financial advice and Council help?" "Go ahead. On a trial basis."

St Augustine's Church said yes to the venue and we were on. It was that simple.

I can look back and remember Glynis. I campaigned as Union Representative for regrading education welfare officer. We won it after putting together a lengthy report, and long discussion with management. It was the first regrading in approximately eighteen years for the particular welfare officers and the branch organizer said it was the best regrading report he ever saw.

Some Good Advice from the Sister in the Pre-Op Team

The only one who suffers by worrying is you.

It's unnecessary stress for you.

Stop doing it.

Go for a walk. Listen to some music and relax.

Also pick your friends carefully.

If someone lets you down. Just leave it.

Let them be the one to call you next. Not you.

Go and treat yourself to tea and cake.

None of us is perfect.

Stop the worrying. It's doing you no good at all.

28th October 2022

One, Two, Three.

Children's homes. The reputation seems formidable. However, I think every Professional should work in one. Why? The experience will change your life.

I signed up for supply or relief work.

First was St Albans. On my first shift a boy of five disclosed sexual abuse and my report was written down but my boss from another team refused me the chance to escort the boy to a NSPCC suite. He never talked there and I feel I let him down. How would you feel?

Second a halfway house.

We were not even allowed to make tea or coffee on our own. It was not safe.

Third, another one, where one of the workers lent a rifle to a boy, and he tried to rob the Post Office.

A Day Out

When I was on student placement I had an idea to take three of the long term elderly residents to Woburn Safari Park.

They had never been there before and rarely left the place except for hospital trips and GP visits.

You should have seen their faces as we drove through the enclosure where the monkeys jumped on the car and played with the car aerial!

It was a special day for me and for them and so it was also very sad as one day I had to leave the placement.

Olive was one of the old ladies. It was very hard for both of us when I had to leave.

The place is no longer there. Sold for private accommodation.

An Apology

Returning to my old school after forty-eight years. I had tried several times on my own.

If it wasn't for my Safeguarding Officer it never would have happened.

I had tried but the Head Teacher told me not to. It would hurt me too much.

However, it was set up and a retired Magistrate accompanied me. The Deputy Head got on her knees and prayed for me and apologised for the way the school had missed so much.

I had been abused, physically, mentally and sexual bullying, for five years there and my brother too.

I was told after to claim money. However, I won what I wanted; an apology

I had shed my tears. My poor Mum must have known.

Why didn't they ask me what was going on at home? Why my studies were so poor?

Later, enquiries revealed I would not win compensation as it was too long ago.

I asked to speak at the school to encourage students to disclose. I was refused.

The Privilege of Helping Children

I still remember my little room in the school. A little office of my own. It was there that children would knock on the door in their breaks. Some would just want company. Some had problems of their own. Some brought others with problems.

One time a regular visitor brought a girl and claimed her friend was pregnant.

I went to see the Deputy Head and she was hesitant to go further as this girl had disclosed before and it didn't produce much.

However, I stood my ground.

Telling the Deputy Head I believed this girl, it was true. She was pregnant. If I only had one important recommendation to make to any Professional or parent involved in caring for children or adults, this is it.

Read the book "Black Beauty" by Anna Sewell. I have it in my bedroom and read it before sleep. I have read it nine to ten-times. Why is it so good?

If you will read Black Beauty and see her struggle for love and affection and being treated with kindness.

How many trauma cases have struggled with that too?



I have never been a Police Officer, but I can imagine.

My imagination takes me to understand so much of what they do is fine, bookings, cautions, criminal offence, reprimands, that their mentality on dealing with the public has this hard exterior. A guard that never wants to show a kinder side.

Is it any wonder then there has been institutionalised racism within the Police Force?.

Is it any wonder then that less than three percent of sexual abuse cases ever get to court?

Is it any wonder then that so many trauma victims who go to them find the entire process very stressful?

I was warned by one Police Officer to visit the Doctor before attending the Police Station as it would be just like that. Hugely stressful.

Perhaps, it is time the Police adopted a universal kinder approach, particularly with trauma victims?

Kindness costs nothing. Most people see the love I have in poetry.

It is how I best express myself, and what better way than to reveal the effects of trauma.

So the test will be whether I can do it for you.

White Box

My mind begins to think
Of all the days I had to count,
When I left your presence in a white box
And reentered this world to stupefy.

My mind begins to drink
All the plains and colours,
I was too scared to see
Or touch with my line white hands.

My mind begins to confuse
All the sounds I run from.
Only the golden forest of Bethlehem
Could leave me naked and free.

My mind begins to harm
The dangerous days I ran to you.
Where I came to shelter
The difficulties that I knew.

To Bessie Van Der Kolk (Author of the book “The Body Keeps The Score”).

The White Wall

I remember the white wall,
I remember the hard smash of my head against the white wall.

Returning there fifty years later releasing the child screaming
within. Where Mr. Newton the Chemistry teacher smashed my
head on the white wall.

Only eleven years old my singular crime was carrying a newly
given text book outside.

I fell like a dying boy.

Stars singing above my eye vision. Just like it would fifty years
later in the graves after being sexually abused.

Earlier he dragged me along by my new blazer.

The whole length of the lab smashing me to the floor with that
same hand.

To Lily, a woman who lived in Whitechapel

You harnessed pain with great beauty.
Taught me to love my mother.
Fought wars only Napoleon knew,
Told drivers the streets they never rode.

Lily, you pulled great curtains onto knowledge,
Sat like a Hamlet man without a smile,
Told Rabbis who came to live only you,
The wrong way home.

You fizzed up Rutland Street school, made synagogues weep
metre after metre.

Suffering you came to meet everyone.

Goodbye Lily

Returning hate for hate multiplies hate adding deeper darkness to a night already devoid of stars.

Darkness cannot drive out darkness. Only light can do that.
Hate cannot drive out hate. Only love can do that.

Martin Luther King Jnr