



Spring 2017



Marla* woke up one morning and thought, "That's enough!"

For months her boyfriend vacillated between being a loving and thoughtful partner to her and her children, and losing his temper, night after night in their tiny apartment. No amount of reasoning would convince him to stop his abusive behavior. His actions were demoralizing to her and destructive to her children. Marla knew this could not continue. She had given him so many chances to stop. She was ready for change.

When he left for work in the morning, Marla took the Victoria Women's Transition House number out of her wallet and dialed the Crisis Line.

She learned that VWTH had a wait list for women's counselling but thankfully, a newly established **Women's Drop-In Support Group** program was available. Created specifically for women survivors of domestic abuse and operating in partnership with the YMCA/YWCA of Vancouver Island, daytime meetings are held weekly in a confidential location in downtown Victoria and child care is provided.

Counselling and support for women impacted by domestic abuse is a critical need in our community. At Victoria Women's Transition House, we provide services to help women and their children heal from their trauma and, when needed, refer them to various community resources that will assist in their effort to create a safe and stable life, once they are no longer in crisis.



However, due to growing demand from women in the community, VWTH's wait list has continued to increase and accessing these critical counselling services, especially for survivors of domestic abuse, has become our urgent concern.

Transition House is grateful for funding from Victoria Foundation, and VWTH individual donors, as well as a partnership with the YMCA-YWCA of Vancouver Island to help us establish a Women's Drop-In Support Group. Led by two experienced VWTH women's counsellors and facilitators, the Women's Drop-In Support Group gives women the opportunity to connect with other survivors, share their experiences, offer and receive support, as well as receive referrals to community resources.

For women like Marla and her children, the Women's Drop-In Support group program is critical. Thank you Victoria Foundation, VWTH donors and the YMCA-YWCA of Vancouver Island.

For more information about the VWTH Women's Drop-In Support Group, please contact our Crisis & Information Line at 250.385.6611.

**Marla's name has been changed for confidentiality*

Our Mission

Victoria Women's Transition House Society, working collaboratively, provides shelter, support, counselling and education to women of all ages, with or without children, so that they can live free from the effects of abuse in intimate relationships. The Society strives to prevent and eliminate abuse through education, advocacy and partnerships.

How to Reach Us

Crisis and Information Line
250.385.6611

Community Office
Suite 100 3060 Cedar Hill Road
Victoria, BC V8T 3J5

P 250.592.2927
F 250.592.2995
E info@vwth.bc.ca
W transitionhouse.net

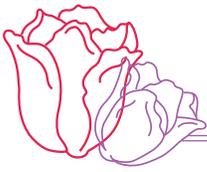
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Trauma and the Brain

Recently, our Deputy Director, Parm Kroad, returned from a very informative conference in Vancouver. One of the Keynote Speakers was Dr. Lori Haskell, a well-respected psychologist based in Toronto whose work focuses on understanding and treatment of psychological trauma including sexual violence and domestic violence and abuse.

In her presentation titled "The Neurobiological Consequences of Trauma: A Trauma-Informed Approach", Dr. Haskell outlined how advances in neuroscience have provided a greater understanding of the neuroanatomy and neurophysiology of trauma. These include impacts on the brain, body and self and the way fear and trauma affect key brain circuitries and cause traumatic memories to be encoded differently.

Law & Order

Consider a typical television crime drama: Immediately following a gruesome assault, detectives from the local police department's Special Victims Unit rush to the hospital emergency room to interview a female survivor of domestic assault. At the hospital, the detectives ask probing questions to get a description of the perpetrator and details of the attack. Amazingly, the woman remembers at least some details, vital clues for

the detectives to track down the perpetrator and facilitate a conviction, all in the space of a 60-minute TV show.

In the field, we have known for some time that a survivor of domestic assault is less likely to remember

details of that assault immediately following the attack. Survivors of trauma need 24 to 48-hours to allow the mind to recover from the immediate trauma to provide more clarity for details of the assault.

Forgetting details or confusing timelines immediately following an attack is not uncommon, but can be misinterpreted and seen as questionable by law enforcement officers unfamiliar with the neurobiology of trauma. A stressed, confused or even eerily calm survivor, may present as unreliable or uncooperative to uninformed individuals. Her version of events may be discredited or, in severe cases, dismissed.



Long-Term Abuse

Women who are subjected to long-term, ongoing domestic violence and abuse face additional challenges. When trauma occurs repeatedly, cortisol—the hormone released during times of stress—can exist in abundance in the brain. This hormone can activate a part of the brain called the amygdala, the area responsible for emotions, emotional behavior and motivation, and can cause even more cortisol to be released. Survivors of traumatic events like domestic assault may seem to "freeze up" and operate on automatic pilot - a response triggered by the abundance of cortisol.



In individuals who experience ongoing trauma, the amygdala is often overly sensitive, resulting in extreme alertness.

These individuals may appear aggressive, as they might be sensitive to perceived threats – in words or gestures – even towards people who are trying to help, including law enforcement or counselling staff. Alternatively, these individuals may withdraw for fear of being close to others. This is a self-perpetuating cycle that continuously puts the brain into a flight, fight or freeze reaction. In some cases, following a traumatic event the survivor may present as too calm to be believed or she may be extremely flustered or aggressive.

Trauma Informed Practice

Victoria Women's Transition House provides support, counselling and resources from a trauma-informed practice. Trauma-informed takes into account an understanding of trauma in all aspects of service delivery and places a priority on a trauma survivors' safety, choice and control. Working in a trauma-informed way does not necessarily require disclosure of the details of the trauma. Our VWTH clients in counselling don't need to relive their abuse. Rather, services are provided in ways that recognize needs for physical and emotional safety, as well as choice and control in decisions affecting one's treatment.

If you would like more information on any of our individual or group counselling programs for women, specialized programs for older women, or for Children Who Witness Abuse, including our unique Summer Camp for children age 9-12, contact our Community Office, 250-592-2927, Monday-Friday, 9am-5pm.

Victoria Goddess Run

Shirley Elm, VWTH Charity Champion!

As a member of the Board of Directors for Victoria Women's Transition House (VWTH), I am honored to run in the **Sunday, June 4, 2017** Victoria Goddess Run as a Charity Champion in support of VWTH. Over the years,



I have been an avid runner but with a cancer diagnosis last year, my running was put on hold. Now that I am in remission, I'm back outside again and putting in the kilometers - slowly but Shirley.

As a person who began life in the foster care system, I have experienced first-hand how chaos within family homes can have a hugely detrimental effect on one's life. I was lucky enough to eventually be adopted by a wonderful Canadian family, but am aware that all are not as fortunate.

I am also extremely glad that this year, the Victoria Goddess Run will support the BC Cancer Foundation. After spending a lot of time in the cancer clinics both here in Victoria and in Vancouver, I know how this disease cuts cruelly across all parts of our population, and how devastating this can be to families.

These days, as a school Principal in the Saanich School District, I do my best to create and maintain communities where everyone belongs. I am a strong supporter for equality, especially within relationships, and I do my best to equip students with the attitudes and dispositions that will help them navigate this increasingly complex world. I also strive to be a reasonable and loving parent to my own daughter by giving her the confidence to stand up for what is right.

I have a \$3000 fundraising goal for this project with all funds raised directed to VWTH. Please join me in support of the important work done by VWTH on behalf of vulnerable individuals in our community.

~ Shirley Elm

You can support Shirley's commitment to VWTH by donating to her Go Fund Me campaign: www.gofundme.com/shirley-runs-for-vwth or Google "Go Fund Me" and search "Shirley Elm". All proceeds support VWTH programs and services. Thank you for your support!

Violence Is Preventable



Did you know?

- 3 in 5 students in every classroom have been exposed to domestic violence
- Dating violence often begins between the ages of 12 and 18
- 1 in 3 youth report knowing a friend who is in an abusive relationship

The **Violence is Preventable (VIP) Program** offers dynamic and interactive classroom presentations geared towards Grades 7 to 12 students, educators and school staff in the Greater Victoria area.

The presentations aim to:

- Break the silence about relationship violence
- Increase student's awareness of the issue
- Increase student's knowledge of where to go for help
- Increase healthy relationship skills
- Develop school staff's awareness and ability to support students

MIDDLE SCHOOLS

- Strategies for avoiding or responding to unsafe, abusive or exploitative situations
- Strategies for developing healthy relationships

HIGH SCHOOLS

- Demonstrate an understanding of skills needed to build and maintain healthy relationships
- Analyse practices that promote healthy sexual decision making

For more information or to book a presentation, please contact:

250.592.2927 ext. 205
kerileem@vwth.bc.ca



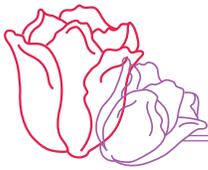
Proud supporters of the VWTH Violence Is Preventable (VIP) Program



BC Society of
Transition Houses



Canada Post
Community
Foundation



Fashion for Compassion

Fashion for Compassion, the February fashion show fundraiser sponsored and presented by Pharmasave Broadmead, was a big success raising **\$8000** for Victoria Women's Transition House and Bridges for Women.

We want to sincerely thank **Pharmasave Broadmead**, Manager **Rhea Cavelti** and her team; **John Carreiro, Carreiro The Studio** who styled the models' hair; **YAM Magazine**; music by **DJ Jansom, Atmos Events; Metchosin Soap Works** and their specially created "Compassion Soap" sold at the event; the volunteer models including CHEK-TV's **Tess van Straaten** and her son Tate; and event coordinator **Stuart Cameron, Concept Couture**.

Thank you to all who attended as well as our **Bridges for Women and Transition House volunteers**.

Thank You!

Photos by Simon DesRoches



YES! I wish to support Victoria Women's Transition House

I would like to give a gift of:

\$1000 \$500 \$100 \$50 Other \$ _____ A tax receipt will be issued for all donations over \$10



Mail: 100 - 3060 Cedar Hill Road Victoria, BC V8T 3J5

Online: Visit transitionhouse.net and click on Donate

Phone: Call 250-592-2927 to make a credit card donation

Enclosed is my cheque payable to Victoria Women's Transition House
I prefer to use my Visa Mastercard AmEx

Card No: _____ Expiry: ____/____

Cardholder Name: _____

Signature: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ Province: _____ Postal Code: _____

Phone Number(s): _____

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- Please send me information about donating stocks or securities
- Please contact me about monthly giving
- Please send me information about making a gift in my will to VWTH
- I have already included VWTH in my will

VICTORIA WOMEN'S
Transition House
SOCIETY

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