



# ELKANAH COUNSELLING

[www.elkanahcounselling.com.au](http://www.elkanahcounselling.com.au)

Issue Number One 2016

1 Whitehorse Road  
Balwyn VIC 3103

Phone: 9817 5654  
Fax: 9817 5654

**Reception staff:**

Helen Waterworth  
Robyn Everest

**Reception Hours:**

10.00 am – 4.00 pm  
Monday – Friday

**Consultation Hours:**

8.00 am – 8.00 pm  
Monday – Friday

8.00 am – 12.00 pm  
Saturday

Consultations by appointment  
only.

After hours: Elkanah does not  
operate a locum service. If you  
need crisis assistance Lifeline  
can be contacted on 131114.

Elkanah Counselling has a comprehensive team of eight psychologists and family therapists, all of whom are very well qualified and experienced. We are also all registered with Medicare, which allows rebates for people on a Mental Health Plan from a G.P. This year, we have a new team member, Traci Leung, who speaks fluent Cantonese and reasonable Mandarin. Appointments can be made through our friendly receptionists, Helen or Robyn, who are on duty from 10.00 a.m. to 4.00 p.m. weekdays.

In this addition, four of our team have written articles covering a number of human conditions. Traci begins by reminding us that we are not all the same, but we all need to feel safe and at times we will suffer from emotional pain. The main thing is to seek support of help from friends or if necessary from professionals.

Sylvia's article on adaptability talks about how some people cope better with life's challenges while others become paralysed in similar situations. We often can't change the situation so we can only learn to change ourselves.

Rob focuses on the effects of guilt, which is often used by others to try to change a person's behaviour. It is often learnt in families in my experience. If we do something wrong we need to apologise and then move on.

John goes further in saying we need to learn to forgive others but also to be able to forgive ourselves. Often people find this the hardest thing to do.

*Lyn Shand, Psychologist & Family Therapist*

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- |   |                             |                   |
|---|-----------------------------|-------------------|
| 3 | We Are All Humans After All | Traci Leung       |
| 4 | Adaptability                | Sylvia Werba      |
| 6 | Guilt                       | Rob Postlethwaite |
| 8 | On Forgiving Ourselves      | John Andersen     |

# Our Psychologists



## JOHN ANDERSEN

BA, DipPsych., MA., MSc,  
Member VAFT

After completing graduate studies in the United States, John worked as a police counsellor with the Police in Los Angeles, followed by work as a marriage and family therapist in a Christian counselling centre. John specialises in relationship counselling including: marital, stepfamily/blended family issues, and working with adolescents within the context of their families.



## MELANIE BIRCH

BA, BBS. (Hons), CertPastPsych, AdvCertTrauma,  
DipClinHyp MAPS,  
Member, APS College of Counselling Psychologists

Melanie worked in the field of organisational development before training as a psychologist and trauma therapist. She has now practised in this area for 17 years. The principle focus of her work is the treatment of trauma, grief, anxiety, depression and PND. She works both with people who have long standing issues and those with more recent difficulties. Melanie is also a trained hypnotherapist.



## ROBERT POSTLETHWAITE

BBS. MP. Psych. MAPS  
Member APS College of Clinical Psychologists

Rob's long term interest in chronic pain and illness has resulted in considerable experience in the treatment of depression, anxiety and anger problems that are some of the emotional consequences of these conditions. Rob's underlying philosophy is to focus on the here and now and address the current issues in a pragmatic and problem solving manner.



## SYLVIA WERBA

BEd (Psych) MAPS  
Member APS College of Counselling  
Psychologists & CED Psychologists

Sylvia has been a registered psychologist for over 25 years, both within the school system as well as in private practice – working with children, adolescents, adults and families. Sylvia uses an eclectic approach to work through life's complications, review goals and formulate a more optimistic and positive approach to the future. Sylvia also has experience in Psychometric assessment to help students achieve at their potential in the best possible way – including those with special needs.



## KERRYL BEISSEL

BSc (Hons – Psych), MAPS  
Member, APS College of Counselling Psychologists

Kerryl has experience in counselling for a wide range of personal and relationship issues. Her areas of work include management and treatment of anxiety, stress and depression; and assistance in dealing with the effects of difficult or traumatic past experiences. Kerryl has expertise in assisting people through times of transition or crisis, whether it be in their personal lives, in their workplace or ministry.



## EDDY KLEYNHANS

MA., MAPS  
Member APS College of Health Psychologists

Eddy has been a registered psychologist for 25 years. He has also been registered with the Dutch Psychological Society, Dutch being his second language. In Australia, he has been providing Employee Assistance Programs to organisations, often travelling interstate to consult with clients. He is an ex-president of EAPA. His expertise in private practice includes working with clients from diverse cultural backgrounds.



## LYN SHAND

BA DipEd GradDipPsych MAPS  
Member VAFT & APS Colleges of Counselling  
Psychologists and CED Psychologists

Lyn has much experience working with clients who suffer from stress, anxiety & depression. As a family therapist and psychologist, much of her evening work is with couples, family relationship issues and also separation as she is a trained mediator. She has considerable expertise and experience in working with women with P.M.S., postnatal depression and anxiety and problems at menopause, having written a book on this topic. Lyn is the owner of Elkanah.



## TRACI LEUNG

BASc, PCEd, Dip (Occ Health), Dip (Health  
Couns & Psych), GradDip Psych, MPH, M. Clin.  
Psych, Assoc. MAPS

Traci is a registered psychologist, currently completing her PhD. With diverse life and work experiences gained in Australia and overseas, Traci offers psychological services to clients experiencing depression, anxiety, stress, interpersonal difficulties, cross-cultural issues, and major life challenges. She is experienced in working with clients having chronic pain and other chronic health conditions, focusing on each client's unique situation and individual needs. In addition to English, Traci speaks fluent Cantonese and fair Mandarin.

# We Are All Humans After All

Traci Leung

We are all humans. We all laugh, we all cry, we all fear, we all hate. Simply put, we all love and we all need to be loved.

## ***We all will suffer from emotional pain***

We are all humans. We all think, we all feel, and we all will suffer from emotional pain arising from loss, loneliness, failures, misunderstandings and rejection.

It hurts when we lose someone we love because of death, separation, or unresolved conflicts; when a friend did not return our calls, text messages or emails; when someone we care about unfriends us on Facebook; or when we lose a job or something we cherish. We feel the 'pain', it hurts! We might also feel sad, and sometimes become angry at ourselves, at others, or at the world in general. It further hurts when we blame ourselves or question our self-worth, and that might possibly 'paralyse' us to get back on track if it becomes a self-perpetuating process.

## ***We all need to feel safe***

We are all humans, and we are all driven by basic needs to feel safe and to be respected by others.

However, not all of us feel safe. People who are in an abusive relationship or in abusive situations may find themselves being afraid of their perpetrator(s) or feeling threatened by abusive behaviours. Indeed, there has been increased research and media attention on the issues of dating violence, intimate partner abuse, and family violence. Some helpful resources include: Relationships Australia 1300 364 277; Centres Against Sexual Assault 1800 806 292; Domestic Violence Victoria 1800 015 018; 1800RESPECT 1800 737 732; Women's Support Line 1300 134 130; In Touch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence 1800 755 988; and Australian Centre for Human Rights and Health 9654 5600.

## ***But we are not the same***

We are all humans. However, in some ways, we are not all the same. We have things that make us unique. Every one of us has a story behind us and a life to live.

In this year, what are we carrying with us? Would it be a commitment to achieving some goals, such as getting good grades in studies, enhancing work performance, fostering a relationship, spending times with our beloved ones, or exploring an 'unknown territory'? All these things are what make us human beings tick, giving our lives meaning and purpose. When trying to pursue our goals over the course of our lives, we all will have ups and downs. While sometimes experiencing joy and happiness, we may sometimes feel worried, stressed, anxious, frustrated and depressed. Further, some of us might carry deep emotional wounds, for instance, long-standing guilt or shame, consuming sadness or might struggle with substance and behavioural addictions which cause harm to ourselves and people around us.

## ***We all need to be supported***

We are all humans, and we all help others and need help from others while navigating our life's journey which is filled with challenges and unknowns. We are not all alone!

If you find it difficult to engage with your life or you get to the point that you feel you are overwhelmed by chaos and difficulties, you may want to speak to your GP and seek psychological support. This may help gain perspectives on your situation and make your journey a little easier.

Please remember, we are all humans after all! Be kind to yourself and to one another

*Please feel free to give me a feedback on the last page of the newsletter. Thanks for reading!*

© 2016

# **ADAPTABILITY**

Sylvia B. Werba

Over the past years and particularly over the past months, it has become increasingly evident to me that the ability to adapt to changing circumstances in life is of utmost importance in overcoming adversity - and in generally "coping".

Both professionally in my role as a Psychologist, as well as personally, I have come to appreciate just how important this twelve letter word is.

Adaptability..... is defined by the Oxford dictionary as "the ability to adjust to different conditions - such as being an adaptable person".

Over the years, I have admired people who move their lives and their families from one country to another, those who continue to live life after being diagnosed with a chronic - or even a life-threatening illness, those who experience a major tragedy or trauma, and yet somehow find the strength to move forward. Or those who experience a change or altered circumstances in their personal or professional lives.

Some people are able to "ride the wave of adversity" more easily than others, or are able to move forward much more easily than others.

Why is this so??

There are many reasons, many variables and many possible explanations as to why some people find it difficult to adjust or adapt to life's many challenges - at times unbelievably difficult challenges and tragic situations, however, more often than not there is often a general theme - that of wanting the circumstance to "change back" to the way it was - or to "go back to the way things used to be" - or to try to change the circumstance, environment or situation to something more familiar, more manageable, less complicated, etc.

Many people in this situation, spend time wishing it were different, sometimes trying to change others, or lamenting their plight, or feeling angry about their situation.

Whilst this is a perfectly natural response - and often difficult to avoid, if not managed sensitively, this response - or these thoughts, have the ability to make things even more difficult, or to prevent adaptation, or adjustment, or even the ability to move forward. It creates a blockage - either making the situation worse, or just making the individual feel powerless or "stuck" - and often depressed.

Sometimes when we can't change the circumstance, or can't change the situation - we are battling something too big - and no matter how hard we try, we do not feel better. When this happens the only way to make any change at all, is to try to make the change within ourselves - For us to "adapt" to the situation, to try to help ourselves cope, manage, find a way to move forward - We can't change others, and we often can't change a situation or circumstance - we can only change ourselves. We can't change the world - we can try to make the change within ourselves. The world is continually changing. We need to change with it.

In recent years, Scientists have discovered and become excited about believing that our brains now have the ability to change, to repair, to heal. Neuroplasticity - or the ability of the brain to adapt to a change in circumstance or needs, is one of the most exciting discoveries in the world of Brain research. It debunks the previously held myth that once the brain is damaged, it is impossible to heal or repair. It gives new hope to those with brain injury or stroke.

Plasticity is one of the synonyms for Adaptability!

Surely if we apply the same belief to ourselves - then we believe that no matter what the circumstance or situation, it is up to us to try to "adapt" ourselves to the change, rather than to expect or hope that the situation will "go away" or change back to the way it was.

Sometimes it is just up to us to accept that this is now the new "altered" situation, and to ask ourselves: "What can we do to adapt ourselves to these new conditions?" "What can we do to make the situation as best as it can be - slowly, or one little bit at a time?"

I marvel at the way people are adaptable. It takes determination, strength - often courage, but it is possible!

Sometimes it is difficult to do this alone. Sometimes it is difficult to see things clearly through confused or cloudy eyes - or even through shock, illness or fatigue - but it is possible! We must be determined to make things work - or to simply just "cope". It is also possible - and not a terrible thing, to reach out to those around us - or to seek professional help. We must believe that it is possible, for it to even become possible. We must never ever give up or lose the power of adaptability!

You can't drive forward whilst looking in the rear vision mirror!  
Because if you do, you will crash!  
It is important to look ahead, be mindful of the moment!  
And cognisant of the destination!

© 2016

# GUILT

Rob Postlethwaite

Wikipedia defines guilt as “.. a cognitive or an emotional experience that occurs when a person realizes or believes – accurately or not – that he or she has compromised his or her own standards of conduct or has violated a moral standard and bears significant responsibility for that violation.

Guilt is a complex emotional experience with which we are all familiar and can play a positive or sometimes very negative role in our lives. In its positive impact on us it can motivate us into action to be better people and live lives more consistent with our own standards of behaviour. This usually means more harmoniously with those around us and/or in a manner that is better for ourselves. The guilt one feels about failing to follow through with the New Year’s resolution to exercise more or lose weight (or both) or spend more time with family rather than work etc can act as a motivator to take action. Alternatively we often dismiss the feeling of guilt by excusing ourselves with rationalizations about how it was impossible in some way for us to stick with the change in our behaviour. It may be that our expectations of ourselves were unrealistic but in failing to follow through we miss the opportunity to achieve positive change in our lives that can improve relationships or self esteem/self confidence.

It is also quite possible for us to feel guilt about things for which we are not responsible and get caught in quite negative feelings about things we could not have changed. This can be quite damaging and generate a sense of helplessness that leaves people feeling depressed. Often there is only a tenuous connection between the person and the cause of their guilt and sometimes this sense of guilt may be created or exacerbated by the blame of others around. It is often associated with the need either to understand that that we did all that we could have to change the situation or it is not something that we could have changed.

Guilt is also closely associated with the sense of remorse and sometimes shame. Remorse is an appropriate emotion that hopefully motivates us to change in some way and often discussed in the courts as evidence that the person has understood the wrongness of their behaviour and experiences a sense of guilt about it. Shame however, is a state of significant distress that can result in withdrawal and avoidance and is indicative of a sense of low self esteem and perhaps even self loathing.

Guilt is frequently used by others around us with the intention of changing our behaviour and in this context its impact is often quite negative. The intent is often to motivate us to change our behaviour in some positive manner but it may have an effect the reverse of what is intended. Parents who use guilt to effect how their children behave or employers who use it in an attempt to motivate or friends who induce feelings of guilt about how we have behaved when it doesn’t suit them, is a manipulative tactic that complicates relationships and often has a negative effect. The adolescent who is left feeling guilty about an untidy room etc may comply but will also frequently be left with feelings of anger or rebelliousness that doesn’t improve the relationship or respect of the parents.

The employee who is pressured to work harder by being left feeling guilty will in some way respond negatively and the relationship/friendship that is effected by someone creating a sense of guilt in those around will be damaged in some way. It may be that the “guilty” person changes their behaviour in a manner that seeks approval but it will also result in quite negative feelings. Sometimes this turns inwards and results in low self esteem and loss of self confidence or perhaps generates anger and aggressiveness.

It is often an issue for people with addiction problems that those around attempt to change their behaviour by inducing guilt about the addiction which is generally quite counter-productive. The most frequent response by the person with the addiction is to “treat” their (often) intense sense of guilt by drowning it out with further addictive behaviour which further damages relationships, diminishes an already low self esteem and results quite negative experiences for all. Similarly those who struggle with weight issues are often the target for comments intended to generate motivation by inducing guilt which is equally unhelpful and often naively presupposes that the overweight person doesn’t understand that their health would be improved if they were able to reduce their weight.

Similarly those who experience chronic pain or chronic illness can sometimes experience a sense of guilt about their health and their inability to maintain their role in a relationship or family. They may also experience the frustration of others around them who “make them feel guilty” about their condition and, in either case, without honest and open communication the relationships will be damaged in some way. While some people may need to manage their condition better, this is more likely to be achieved by encouragement and support than inducing guilt.

There is an old saying that “You catch more flies with honey than you do with vinegar.” Not that many of us want to catch flies but the underlying concept is that positive relationships achieve much more than negative ones. One of the issues associated with resolving guilt is forgiveness, either of ourselves or of others. It requires overcoming the anger we experience about someone else’s behaviour or to be able to overcome the self blame that we experience. Generating anger or low self esteem in others by inducing guilt does not improve relationships or assist them to behave in a better way. Most of us know when we have behaved badly or in a manner that we are not proud of and someone else turning the blow torch on our sense of guilt does not motivate us or assist us to improve. It is very possible to address an issue that a person appropriately feels guilty about without focussing on how badly they have behaved and diminishing them personally.

The solution to these situations has to much more focussed on positive outcomes. What else could the person have done? What will lift the person to feel better about themselves or behave better in the future? People with a sense of self esteem and self confidence generally behave well, get on better with others and achieve more in their lives. People who feel badly about themselves often withdraw, relate badly, sometimes engage in quite negative behaviour and achieve less. Changing behaviour does not require punitive responses, it requires being encouraged or inspired to do better and behave in a way that you can be proud of.

© 2016

# On Forgiving Ourselves

John Andersen

Guilt is an emotional place of accountability. We experience guilt when we realise we are accountable to others or to ourselves for our actions. Guilt truly testifies that no person is an island. We all live in relationship with others, and with relationship comes accountability and with accountability comes guilt.

Who holds us to account? For believers, God holds us to account. Indeed, this is regarded by some as the ultimate accountability. We have all experienced times when others hold us to account. When we accept that we are accountable, we respond by feeling guilty.

What do we do with guilt? What does guilt request us to do? Typically guilt demands that we make it right. When guilt is doing its proper job as an emotion, it has a specific wrong in view, a specific person or persons who have been wronged, and it urges us to do something to make it right.

So the most constructive way of dealing with guilt is to identify what is it that I need to do to make it right. And then do it.

What I find, however, is that guilt does not end there. Too often we continue to feel guilty. A person can carry guilt for years, and it becomes a continual burden of self-reproach, or an endless treadmill to do more better, to work harder, in an ultimately fruitless attempt to assuage guilt, but it never goes away. In this way, people can get caught in a guilt-trap. The way out of this guilt-trap is not to do something to make it right. This is because a feature of the guilt-trap is doing things to make it up to someone, or make it right, only serve to keep the guilt-trap going.

## **Forgiveness is the only way out of a guilt-trap.**

When there is wrong between people that what is needed is the guilty person to do something to make it right, to really provide an apology that is not just words but has substance to it. But for the relationship to be made right, there is also a need for forgiveness. For the wronged person to forgive the one who is guilty, and for the guilty person to receive that forgiveness.

Forgiveness is crucial for repairing relationships where there has been wrong and guilt. Forgiveness releases the guilty person from his or her guilt, but forgiveness also frees the person who has been hurt from the hurt the wrong has caused. For both parties, forgiveness provides the opportunity to let it go and move on.

What I have found surprising as a psychologist is that people find it easier to forgive others than it is to forgive themselves.

## **Forgiveness means it's "Paid in Full"**

Forgiveness is a demanding thing. It is demanding upon the one who chooses to forgive because it requires that I let it go. This may mean letting go of any further demands for justice or for compensation. Forgiveness, to use a financial metaphor, involves stamping my outstanding invoice as "Paid in Full". It means that I accept what the guilty party has done to make it right as sufficient to make it right. It means when nothing can make it right, that I write the rest of the debt off. I regard it as "Paid in Full".

For forgiveness to have real substance that makes a genuine difference, it requires that I genuinely let it go. I let go of any demand that I receive any further compensation. I have to regard it as “Paid in Full”, and that means that I make no further demands upon the guilty party to make it up to me. It is finished business; time to move on.

It is surprising how hard people find it to really receive forgiveness. Receiving forgiveness from someone I have hurt can be a demanding thing. This is more so when the hurt has been really significant, and the person is someone I care about, and the relationship is an important one.

What is demanding about receiving forgiveness from someone I have hurt is that it requires that I forgive myself. I have to let the forgiveness, rather than the guilt not stand between us. I have to let my guilt go, and let the forgiveness stand in its stead. Guilt demands that I make it up to someone; forgiveness demands that I let it go. When I refuse to receive forgiveness, when I cling to guilt’s demand that I “Make it Up”, I enter into the guilt-trap.

### **Getting off the Guilt-trap**

It is insufficient to receive forgiveness from someone else to get off the guilt-trap. What is required to get off the guilt-trap is that I forgive myself. The two most common emotions that keep us in the guilt-trap are regret and remorse. Getting off the guilt-trap by forgiving oneself requires that something is done about the regret and remorse.

The challenging thing about regret and remorse is that often they are correct. There are truly wrong things that I have done, that I wish for all the world, I could go back in time and undo it, so that it never happened. The tragedy of regret and remorse is the rueful recognition, that it is impossible. What is done cannot be undone.

All too frequently, it is not just the deed itself; it is the consequences. All those terrible consequences that I have to live with, especially when those consequences has resulted in a significant change to my life or a significant loss in my relationships. There are consequences I simply have to live with. My life is not different.

The regret and remorse is often a distressed response to these consequences that I wish were not there. But they are. What is done cannot be undone. And it is this brutal fact that makes forgiving oneself particularly hard.

### **Forgiving Oneself Requires Acceptance**

Forgiving oneself requires acceptance – acceptance of myself, acceptance of the fact of my deed, acceptance of the impact of the consequences. I have to let go of the anger at myself, make peace with myself, let go of the demand that I impossibly make it right and undo the consequences.

I have to adapt, make my present situation my new starting point, and identify what is the most constructive and creative way I can now move ahead. This may involve devoting myself to rebuilding my life. It may simply involve getting back on track. In either case, forgiving myself requires acceptance and letting go; only then can I move on.

# ***ELKANAH NEWSLETTER***

## ***Feedback & Change of Details***

We appreciate any information and feedback that can help us in providing our newsletter and other services to you. Please complete the following if:

- You wish to advise us of a change in your mailing details
- You have feedback or suggestions for the newsletter
- You would like copies of our brochure

### **Please complete your details as currently listed**

NAME:

POSITION/DEPARTMENT:

ORGANISATION:

ADDRESS:

POSTCODE:

TELEPHONE:

### **New contact details:**

NAME:

POSITION/DEPARTMENT:

ORGANISATION:

ADDRESS:

POSTCODE:

TELEPHONE:

Are the above changes for:      Address Change     Replacement Contact     Additional Contact

If you wish to be taken off the Elkanah newsletter mailing list please tick

### **BROCHURE REQUESTS - Number required:**

Each newsletter contains articles written by members of our team of psychologists. Let us know of any of topics that you would particularly like to know more about, anonymously if you wish. Most of our psychologists are also available to present talks and seminars. Please contact reception on 9817 5654 for enquiries.

Comments:

PLEASE RETURN THIS FORM TO: ELKANAH COUNSELLING, 1 WHITEHORSE ROAD BALWYN 3103