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Useful Tips for Survivors of Cults

1. **Understand** that it is **NOT your fault** and you are **NOT to blame** for being involved in a cult.
2. **Seek a registered mental health professional.** Mental health professional such as psychologist or counsellors, can help you assess and escape abusive situations. Abuse survivors can address their negative emotions and memories of the abuse within the 'safe space' during therapy sessions. If a child is the person needing treatment, then the child's age, mental health symptoms, and family dynamics can all affect the type of therapy used. The nature and duration of the abuse can also impact treatment. (ie. a child who was sexually abused for one year will likely need different support than a teenager who was physically abused for five years).¹
3. **Learn various coping strategies.** Mental health professionals are trained to teach you really helpful coping strategies. These coping skills will help you deal with negative emotions, painful memories, and reduce the impact of Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (P.T.S.D) triggers on your daily life (ie. Mindfulness techniques; Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing - E.M.D.R skills; Equine-assisted activities; Group Therapy; Play Therapy – for children; Family Therapy; Parent-Child Interaction Therapy).²
4. **Take gradual steps to rebuild your self-esteem.** Cultic abuse can break a person's confidence and their personal concept about identity and self-worth. Attempt the following therapy techniques which may assist in reconstruction your self-esteem: i) Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (C.B.T) – and its various therapeutic forms - can help you challenge unrealistic expectations of yourself;³ ii) Narrative Therapy can allow you to reframe your identity outside of your victimhood; and iii) Expressive Art Therapies can assist to boost your confidence.
5. **Start a journal.** Write all your thoughts, memories, hopes, fears – everything and anything. If your abuse experience does eventuate to a court trail, your journal may be used as evidence to account for the abuse, suffering, and the daily challenges you have endured while recovering post-cult group. It helps to keep a journal on your bedside table (or nearby while you have a nap), as painful memories have a tendency to emerge as the mind is trying to rest before sleep.
6. **Gather evidence of the cult's abuse.** As you become stronger and increasing confident while rebuilding your life, try to document a more detailed account of the abusive activities and behaviours that had occurred. Be specific in your details (people involved, person's occupation, dates, times, places, names, clothing, tattoos, phone call conversations, car make and models, vehicle registration numbers, secluded rooms, objects/items within the rooms, activities that had occurred, frequency of the activities that had occurred, etc.). If possible arrange the documentation of the abuse in chronological order. It must be **YOUR** personal witness account of the abuse that had occurred (do not write 'on behalf' of anyone), and it must be specific, accurate and factual.
7. **Rediscover your hobbies and/or interests.** You now have time to reconnect with things or activities that brings you joy. Engaging in hobbies is also a good way to distract your thoughts from painful memories. It also provides a means in utilising various coping strategies acquired during your therapy sessions (ie. bushwalking, pottery class, marathon running, photography, writing).

¹ 'Getting Help for Abuse', *Good Therapy.org*, (25 June 2018), <<https://www.goodtherapy.org/learn-about-therapy/issues/abuse/get-help>>.

² Tracey, N., 'Emotional Abuse Treatment and Therapy', *Healthy Place*, (24 July 2012), <<https://www.healthyplace.com/abuse/emotional-psychological-abuse/emotional-abuse-treatment-and-therapy>>.

³ 'Symptoms and Treatments', *ABCT: Association for Behavioural and Cognitive Therapies*, (2019), <http://www.abct.org/Information/?m=Information&fa=_Symptoms_Treatments>.

8. **Tell at least one TRUSTED individual about your experiences.** This person can be your relative, parent, long-lost school friend, or your therapist. The important thing is – you need to talk to someone about your emotions, frustrations and plans for the future. The person will help to guide you in your decision-making, regularly monitor your mental state, and act as a ‘sounding-board’ for your concerns. They will be your rock.
9. **Engage in some form of community volunteer work – but only when YOU feel that you are ready to do this activity.** This will help you learn to trust other people again. Your confidence will grow in the knowledge that you are a capable person learning new social and work skills. Also, the charity group benefits by having another willing volunteer to help their community and/or environmental group. It is a win-win situation. (ie. support worker for the disabled; a conservation volunteer).
10. **Avoid negative people and places.** Such people and places will not help in your recovery and only reignite painful memories or triggers. Choosing to be around such people/places will only impede all the hard work you have done throughout your recovery process. Best to avoid them where possible. NOTE: do not come to Toowoomba – it is a cesspit of paedophile supporters.
11. **Be kind to yourself.** You are a survivor – a warrior – a very important person. Thanks to your witness account, the police may be able to launch an investigation into the cult group and their criminal activities. This evidence could possibly lead to arrests and imprisonment of the perpetrators.
12. **Keep reminding yourself** - that it is NOT your fault and you are NOT to blame for being involved in a cult.

Guidelines for Choosing a Psychologist / Therapist / Counsellor

1. Ensure that the therapist is on an Accredited Register. This means that their training has met recognized standards and there is a proper complaints procedure available should things go wrong. Check if their name is registered on the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (A.H.P.R.A) and/or Psychotherapy and Counselling Federation of Australia (P.A.C.F.A) databases.
2. Ask about the Code of Ethics or ethical framework they have agreed to observe.
3. Make sure you understand how many sessions are available, how often and at what times they will be and how it will be decided when it is time to end.
4. Make sure arrangements for payment and cancellations are made clear from the start. Ask questions about the fees involved – and get the information in writing.
5. Ask about their religious affiliation or perspective, if any? Will they counsel you even if you are not willing to accept their religious belief system?
6. Bear in mind that your therapist cannot ‘cure’ you and should not claim that they can. Counselling is an opportunity for you to make use of and is likely to be hard work and challenging at times.
7. Remember that you do not have to stay with a therapist to whom you cannot relate or feel safe, or whom you cannot trust. If at all possible, though, try to talk to your therapist first about anything you are uncomfortable with. This can often be very helpful.

The most important thing is to be certain that the counsellor you choose is qualified and safe to practice.⁴

⁴ ‘Find a Counsellor’, The National Counselling Society, (2019), <<https://www.nationalcounsellingsociety.org/find-counsellor>>.

Difference between a Psychologist, Therapist, and Counsellor

Psychologist

- Require a minimum of a Bachelor and/or Master's degree in Psychology from a recognised University.
- They must be 'Registered to Practice' by a state board to provide Psychological therapy.
- Must adhere to high standards regarding ethics and confidentiality as provided by the state board.
- Can be involved in direct therapy with patients in private practice.
- Uses researched based psychological "behavioural approach" to treating clients.
- Can assess and make clinical evaluations of clients mental health and diagnose mental illness.
- Make judgments on the best course of treatments based upon current clinical research in the field.

Therapist

- Different University degrees offer various pathways to become a therapist including but not limited to: Master in Psychology, Master in Marriage and Family Therapy, Master of Social Work, Master in Counselling or a Doctorate in any of those fields.
- People who utilise Therapy work can include Psychologists, Licensed Social Workers, Counsellors, and Marriage and Family Therapists.
- Therapists use "behavioural approach" in their sessions.

Counsellor

- Counsellors do not require the same degree of advanced training or registration to operate.
- Counsellors have access to a much broader field of potential models for counselling.
- Counsellors work with the patient to determine the best way for the counselling sessions to provide preferred outcomes.
- Counsellors lack the in-depth understanding that is provided by clinical research found in Therapy and Psychology practises.⁵



⁵ 'Counsellor vs. Therapist vs. Psychologist', Human Services Ed.org, (2018), <<https://www.humanservicesedu.org/counselor-vs-psych-vs-therapist.html#context/api/listings/prefilter>>.

Useful Tips for Family, Friends and Loved Ones

Tips and guidance on how to deal with discovering that your child/relative/friend/loved one has joined a cult group.

1. **Continue to act naturally.** Adopt a “curious yet concerned” attitude with the person you suspect is in trouble. Don’t get hysterical in front of the individual. Don’t attack or confront. Don’t ask them if they are in a cult or use the word “cult” at all. As hard as this is, this part is very important!
2. **Position yourself as a possible “recruit”.** Try to extract as much information as possible about the specific cult. Ask questions in a friendly manner and insist on getting specific answers. However, do NOT attend the cult’s group meetings, workshops, or courses. Some people have become victims to a cult whilst trying to free a loved one due to the amount of manipulation, coercive persuasion and mind-altering techniques used.
3. **Educate yourself as much as possible about the cult group.** Learn about how they operate, their doctrines, their living facilities, and their recruitment strategies, etc. Try to gain an insight into the way your loved one may be thinking and internalising. Gain insight and knowledge about topics regarding: undue influence, mind control and thought reform.
4. **Utilise the B.I.T.E model.** The BITE model is a practical tool for assessing situations where undue influence may be occurring. It can be applied by anyone to any group they may have questions about. It is a way to promote critical thinking and the application of real criteria to relationships, whether with individuals or groups.⁶ B.I.T.E stands for (B = Behavioural Control, I = Information Control T = Thought Control, and E = Emotional Control).⁷ The B.I.T.E model is a simple yet effective tool which can assist people who wish to help their loved ones gain understanding and potentially an exit strategy from the cults, groups and beliefs, which have enslaved them. For more information, go to: www.openmindsfoundation.org/the-bite-model-of-influence



⁶ Hassen, S., 'The B.I.T.E Model of Influence', *Open Minds Foundation*, (5 August 2016), <<https://www.openmindsfoundation.org/the-bite-model-of-influence>>.

⁷ Hassan, S., *Freedom of Mind: Helping Loved Ones Leave Controlling People, Cults and Beliefs*, (2012), Freedom of Mind Press, USA, <<https://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/freedom-of-mind-steven-hassan/>>.

Australian Professional Health Associations

www.aabcap.org

Australian Association of Buddhist Counsellors and Psychotherapists

www.aaft.asn.au

Australian Association of Family Therapy

www.aasw.asn.au

Australian Association of Social Workers

www.ahpra.gov.au

Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency

www.anzacata.org

Australian, New Zealand and Asian Creative Arts Therapies Association

www.anzmfh.asn.au

Australian & New Zealand Mental Health Association

www.apacs.org.au

Australian Psychologists And Counsellors in Schools

www.apta.asn.au

Australian Play Therapists Association

www.arcapregister.com.au

Australian Register of Counsellors and Psychotherapists

www.austmta.org.au

Australian Music Therapy Association

www.ccaa.net.au

Christian Counsellors Association of Australia

www.pacfa.org.au

Psychotherapy and Counselling Federation of Australia

www.psychology.org.au

The Australian Psychological Society

www.theaca.net.au

The Australian Counselling Association

Specialist Cult Recovery Counselling Services

www.cultconsulting.org/contact-us

Raphael Aaron has been active in this work for more than 30 years. He appears regularly in the media and acts as an advisor to the government on these issues. He is located in Melbourne, Victoria and can be contacted via the web address.

info@cifs.org.au

Email Cult Information and Family Support (C.I.F.S) direct if you have an issue with cultic abuse and need support and further information).

www.m1psychology.com

Based in Loganholme, Queensland, the psychologists are experienced clinicians, offering tailored treatment plans based on the client's needs. Their methods are strengths-based focused, based on an education framework, and aims for clients to develop critical thinking skills, develop coping strategies, and gain personal confidence.

Trauma Recovery Counselling Services

www.actforkids.com.au

Act for Kids is an Australian charity which provides free therapy and support services to children and families who have experienced, or are at risk of child abuse and neglect. Act for Kids operates in Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria, and South Australia. In Western Australia and Tasmania they manage a 'Protective Behaviour Program' in primary schools. There is currently no Act for Kids in The Northern Territory or the A.C.T.

www.adelaidetraumacentre.com.au

The *Adelaide Trauma Centre* is a not-for-profit association which is managed by a group of South Australian therapists from a variety of professional backgrounds — social work, psychology, mental health, family therapy and yoga teaching. Their integrated trauma centre in Adelaide has been inspired initially by the ground-breaking work at the Boston Trauma Centre in U.S.A.

www.aheadpsych.com.au

The *Ahead Psychology* is Brisbane-based centre in Queensland. The psychologists practising at the clinic are all independent practitioners and are experienced in providing a range of a variety of evidence-based approaches and therapeutic services.

www.anxietyaustralia.com.au

Anxiety Australia is an anxiety clinic in Melbourne, Victoria and is managed by a clinical psychologist. The psychologist primarily focuses on treating anxiety disorders and stress management techniques to individuals by one on one consultations, group cognitive behavioural therapy sessions, and stress management workshops.

www.australiacounselling.com.au

Australia Counselling is an educational resource and a comprehensive directory where Therapists can be accessed anywhere, anytime, throughout Australia. The registered Therapists are located in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Adelaide, Perth, Tasmania and many regional areas.

www.broadening-horizons.com.au

Located in Perth, Western Australia, the *Broadening Horizons* centre provides Specialist Trauma (P.T.S.D) Counselling and assistance with Family, Marriage and Relationship support.

www.darwinpsychology.com.au

Based in the Northern Territory, the *Darwin Psychology Services* provides psychological services to children, teenagers, adults, couples & families. The centres' qualified team of health professionals provide psychological services, comprehensive assessments and treatments to help improve the mental health and quality of life and to provide to those living in the region.

www.enterprisingaardvark.wordpress.com

Enterprising Aardvark focuses on helping clients re-establish their own sense of safety and empowerment. They are a free, not-for-profit counselling service for people in Northern Tasmania who have experienced complex early childhood trauma and sexual assault, as well as those people who care for and support them.

www.gannahealing.com/workshops

Situated in the Northern Territory, the *Ganna Healing* centre works to address the social, emotional and mental health needs for Aboriginal people with a trauma informed approach. All programs are facilitated by experienced indigenous people of whom hold qualifications in Masters of Indigenous Health and Postgraduate Degree in Indigenous Trauma and Recovery.

www.hobartcounsellingcentre.com.au

Hobart Counselling Centre provides counselling, psychotherapy and psychological services in Tasmania for those experiencing personal, relationship, and work related difficulties. The centre offer specialist services for trauma (including childhood trauma).

www.lifesupportscounselling.com.au

Located in Melbourne, Victoria, *Life Supports Counselling* is a network of accredited counsellors and psychologists which provide professional, evidence-based counselling that is effective, affordable and client-centred. They also offer appointments via phone and Skype. Additionally, we offer counselling services in many languages other than English.

www.mandalacounselling.org.au

Operating from Sydney, New South Wales, the counsellors and psychologists of the *Mandala Counselling* centre volunteer their time so that disadvantaged people and clients who would not otherwise be able to access such services receive free ongoing counselling. They assist clients to become more resilient and find more options in coping with the difficulties of life.

www.mindandwellbeing.com

The *Sunshine Coast Counselling and Psychology Clinic* in Queensland provide counselling to adults, family members and their children from fourteen years of age. The Clinical Psychologists help with managing issues related to depression, anxiety and P.T.S.D. They will support and encourage clients to take an active role in therapy, develop practical skills, and learn coping strategies.

www.onlinecounsellor.net.au

The *Online Counsellor* service is counselling session from the privacy of your own home. The service is operated by qualified counsellors, psychologists, psychotherapist, and life coaches who use skype, whatsapp, telephone or viber to give therapeutic sessions. The online counselling sessions are protected and private, and use a various security and encryption techniques to ensure clients' information are safe.

www.au.reachout.com

Reach Out is Australia's leading online mental health organisation for young people and their parents. Their practical support, tools and tips assist young people and their families/guardians cope with life's stressors or crisis situations.

www.relationships.org.au

Relationships Australia is a provider of relationship support services for individuals, families and communities. They are a community-based, not-for-profit Australian organisation with no religious affiliations. The organisation offer services in every State and Territory around the country. The services include counselling, family dispute resolution (mediation) and a range of family and community support and education programs.

www.roseparkpsychology.com.au

The *Rose Park Psychology* centre is in Adelaide, South Australia. Many of their psychologists are trained and endorsed clinical psychologists experienced in a range of evidence-based approaches. The centre offers therapy for P.T.S.D, anxiety, depression, and trauma, among many other services. The *Rose Park Psychology* centre assists adults, couples, families, and children.

www.seachangepsychology.com.au

Based in Cairns, Northern Queensland, *Sea Change Psychology* works with individuals and families across a range of issues including personal wellbeing, interpersonal relationships, work, recreation and health. The centre has an experienced and qualified professional psychology team which assists people experiencing both acute and chronic life crises.

www.strategicpsychology.com.au

Strategic Psychology centre in Canberra, A.C.T, has highly trained psychologists and support staff that are can assist clients with a range of therapeutic sessions and educational services.

www.traumaticstressclinic.com

The *Traumatic Stress Clinic* provides cutting-edge, evidence-based treatments and research for posttraumatic stress disorder (P.T.S.D) and prolonged grief. The Clinic is an affiliation between a number of researchers, organisations and clinical psychologists, and is directed by Professor Richard Bryant. The Traumatic Stress Clinic is based at the Westmead Institute for Medical Research and the University of New South Wales in Sydney, Australia.

www.traumawise.com.au

Situated in Perth, Western Australia, the *Trauma Wise Counselling and Psychotherapy* specialises in helping people who continue to experience P.T.S.D and anxiety related symptoms after a life threatening event. The centre utilises a rapid trauma processing therapy known as E.M.D.R.

Cult Awareness and Support websites

www.awolfamongthesheep.com

A Wolf Among The Sheep website is an unauthorised biography of infamous Australian cult leader William Kamm and his behaviours at the 'Little Pebble' cult. This website is the result of three years investigation by journalist Graeme Webber.

www.beyondblue.org.au

Beyond Blue is an Australian company which aims to promote good mental health and ensure the public can get access to supportive services. They focus on creating change to protect everyone's mental health and improve the lives of individuals, families and communities affected by anxiety, depression and suicide. They provide mental health support via 24/7 Helpline, online chatroom, online forums, email support, and access to a wide range of relevant health services and educational materials.

www.beyonourken.com.au

Beyond Our Ken is an Australian film documenting life inside the cult group 'Kenja Communications'. The film teaches people the lure of cults, the techniques of manipulation and the dangers of organisations which appear benign at first, only to reveal their true colours when the individual is fully ensconced.

www.blueknot.org.au

The *Blue Knot Foundation* is the National Centre of Excellence for Complex Trauma in Australia . They focus on recovery and build resilience for adults impacted by complex trauma. They also have a Helpline which can be accessed every day of the week.

www.buddhism-controversy-blog.com

Buddhism Controversy Blog is an informal site addressing certain controversial issues related to Tibetan Buddhism, Tibet, the Dalai Lamas and Buddhism in general. The blog provides background knowledge or links to sources that offer factual information and legal concerns.

www.caic.org.au

The *Cult Awareness and information Centre* is a non-active site but has a lot of information on all cult groups.

www.CIFS.org.au

Cult Information and Family Support (C.I.F.S) is a group of parents deeply hurt by losing loved ones to destructive cults, with no one to turn to for help, information or comfort. They provide support, guidance, education throughout Australia and lobbying to the Government.

www.cultfaq.org

CultFAQ.org is a service of Apologetics Index. The website provides general information about cults, cult-related terminology, guidelines on selecting a counsellor/cult expert, a listing of recommended cult experts, organizations and ministries, and a range of counselling and research resources.

www.culthelp.info

The *Cult Help Info* is an old website but it contains a lot of helpful information and valuable data concerning a wide range of counselling techniques, coping strategies, psychological research articles, and links to other relevant cult-recovery websites. The culthelp.info can be accessed by the web address below.

https://web.archive.org/web/20170628140139/http://www.culthelp.info/index.php?option=com_content&task=category§ionid=16&id=96&Itemid=21

www.cultnews101.com

Cult News 101 website provides news, links and resources about cults, cultic groups, abusive relationships, movements, religions, political organizations, medical and related topics.

www.cultwatch.com

Cult Watch is a Christian based organisation dedicated to helping people who have become trapped in cult groups and to warn people about the dangers of cults before they are ensnared.

www.FamiliesAgainstCultTeachings.org

Families Against Cult Teachings (F.A.C.T) provides victim support services to individuals and families, investigates destructive groups and reports them to the proper authorities and legal entities, exposes cults both locally and nationally, educates the public and more.

www.FreedomofMind.com

Led by Steven Hasson, *Freedom of Mind* helps people with destructive cults, mind control, brainwashing, parental alienation, estrangement, unethical hypnosis, abusive relationships, human trafficking, multi-level marketing, violent extremism & other forms of undue influence. *Freedom of Mind* supports those affected by undue influence by providing coaching and consulting services as well as training and educational resources for individuals, families and professionals.

www.goodtherapy.org

Good Therapy is an American website that provides easy access to mental health resources, educational services, and support anywhere in the world.

www.ICSAhome.com

The *International Cultic Studies Association (ICSA)* is a global network of people concerned about psychological manipulation and abuse in cultic or high-demand groups, alternative movements, and other environments.

www.intervention101.com

Intervention 101 website is designed to help families and friends understand and effectively respond to the complexity of a loved one's cult involvement.

www.jwfacts.com

This is an Australian website on the *Jehovah's Witnesses* cult led by an ex-member Paul Grundy.

www.mahikariexposed.com

The *Mahikari Exposed* is an information site by managed by ex-members of 'Sukyo Mahikari' cult. Personal experiences and blogs, references to academic publications and other web sites, and newspaper reports.

www.myptsd.com

The *myptsd.com* site provides a public forum for people seeking quality P.T.S.D information and support. The site has a 'P.T.S.D hub' which provides a means of online communication for those who suffer P.T.S.D, support P.T.S.D, and family of affected P.T.S.D sufferers.

www.ncjrs.gov/app/publications

Established in 1972, the *National Criminal Justice Reference Service* (N.C.J.R.S) is an U.S.A federally funded resource offering justice and drug-related information to support research, policy, and program development worldwide. N.C.J.R.S services and resources are available to anyone interested in crime, victim assistance, and public safety including policymakers, practitioners, researchers, educators, community leaders, and the general public. These resources include statistics, research findings, program descriptions, congressional hearing transcripts, and training materials. The resources can be accessed online, via mail, through interlibrary loans, or in a local library.

www.OpenMindsFoundation.org

The *Open Minds Foundation* is a non for profit which educates on undue influence and manipulation, whilst bringing awareness to human predators and the techniques they use – from propaganda, to sales tricks, to thought reform and hypnosis.

www.ra-info.org

The *Ritual Abuse, Ritual Crime and Healing* website is an American-based website which provides a wealth of helpful resources for ritual abuse survivors, mind control survivors, their therapists, ministers, families, friends, and researchers.

www.survivingritualabuseaustralia.blogspot.com

The *Surviving Ritual Abuse Australia* website assist both survivors, and their supporters, of ritual abuse. It is for both Australian survivors and for people looking for support within Australia.

www.survivorship.org

Survivorship is an American-based organizations that aims to support survivors of extreme child abuse, including sadistic sexual abuse, ritualistic abuse, mind control, and torture.

www.trauma-pages.com

The *Trauma Pages* website focus primarily on emotional trauma and traumatic stress, including P.T.S.D and dissociation. It provides contains a lot of helpful information and valuable data concerning a wide range of counselling techniques, coping strategies, psychological research articles, and links to other relevant cult-recovery websites.

Recommended Reading

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- Bardin, L., *Coping with Cult involvement: A Handbook for Families and Friends*, (2000), American Family Foundation, U.S.A.
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