

One step at a time

A collection of voices
from and for women



We welcome all readers to join us on a transformational journey of overcoming fear and moving into a more empowered and trusting life.

This domestic violence survivors' handbook is here to share, inspire and support women from all walks of life desiring to find, strengthen and use their voice.

One Step at a Time reflects a six month journey of women living in Camden who attended a series of six creative workshops called Growing into Trust.

Each workshop enabled women to tap into various creative mediums, express themselves and find healing.

These were:

Growing into VISION

Growing into SELF-EXPRESSION

Growing into SELF-REFLECTION

Growing into YOUR INNER VOICE

Growing into POWER

CELEBRATING our work

Our hope is for you, the reader, to join us in these journeys embarked upon by the diverse and inspirational women who contributed to **One step at a time**. These journeys together with promoting healing allow us to process our experiences both positive and negative.

Real names cannot be presented in the handbook, because of the

issues surrounding people's safety, therefore all names have been changed.

The workshops have been sponsored by Camden Safety Net and facilitated by Charmaine Pollard of C P Counselling & Consulting Ltd and Julia Jeremiah (Pickroth) of Omshanti Journeys.

Camden Safety Net is the Independent Domestic Violence Advocacy (IDVA) service, part of Camden Council and co-located in Holborn Police Station.

Camden Safety Net acknowledges that domestic abuse comprises a range of behaviours and acts. These may be used in isolation or, more commonly, together in an attempt to harm or exert control over a woman. Camden Safety Net provides a holistic service which includes counselling, survivors group, and confidence building, allowing survivors the opportunity to recover from both the practical and emotional aspects of domestic abuse.

This handbook is the culmination of the efforts of the survivors to articulate and record their experiences of coping and surviving. They want to spread the word as widely as possible to inspire others whose life may be blighted by this abuse. We are grateful for their courage in allowing us to participate in their journey.

Growing into VISION

Being able to see who we are and learning to accept ourselves was the aim of this workshop. By discussing the meaning of masks we all wear in our daily life and how they are formed, we were inspired to create our own mask given the choice of expressing something we wish to move into or leave behind.

Memories and emotions were expressed and released a greater sense of self-awareness strongly present at the end of a productive, challenging and fun day.

Below are statements highlighting for us, how masks are formed.



'Emelda'
Essential to survive



'Nilgun'
Putting on a happy face
in the face of adversity



'Asra'
Sensitivity not to hurt feelings



'Yvonne'
Defence mechanisms



'Siobhan'
Feigning happiness



'Rose'
Educated to wear a mask



'Su Ling'
To suppress emotions

Growing into VISION

3 June 2009

Dear Diary,

Today was another eye opener for me!
Looking again at the woman I have become after
the pain and isolation of my violent relationship.
The mask I hid behind for years!

"Yes I'm fine thank you!" while I was dying inside!
"I know he loves me really", when inside I was
screaming in pain.

"I slipped over and banged my head,
Oh I'm OK, don't worry."

Hiding the truth behind my mask.
The mask workshop helped me see how I don't
have the pain of the masks anymore, I am free!
I don't have a dead mask of pain!

I have love, joy and happiness and the joy of
sharing that with other women in my group,
was another way for me to let go of some of the
past pain.

'Annie'

Growing into SELF-EXPRESSION

The focus of this day was entirely directed towards connecting to our inner world using words and creative writing as a means of releasing the real self. We used angel card sets, to set imagination free, poetry to allow personal memories and emotions to come into our mind and guided imagery to help us access our own personal worlds.

The workshop helped us identify inner resources and skills that had been either dormant or unrecognised. We left the workshop at the end of the day with feelings of pride in our creative achievements. We were asked to read a poem, spend some time reflecting on the poem, then write to the author.

Below is a workshop response, a few lines from each of us.

I was touched by your poem.

While reading through I felt as though I was drifting through my memory lane, but this time with my head held high.

I felt connected.

There are many lines of words that resonate inside of me.

Words that are powerful and instantly uplifting. I feel my posture rising.

All the steps I took towards being stronger inside out, placed me in a rising position.

Thank you for these profound words of inspiration.

In your poem you speak for women everywhere who have at some stage in their life suffered abuse.

You also speak for the down trodden, these for whom through no choice of their own have been victimised, bullied, abused, tortured, degraded.

You speak for the voiceless, the disempowered...

And you offer them hope and the realisation that like a phoenix they can and will rise from the ashes.

So I rise, I rise, I rise.

'Passage'

Even though the blue-black traces of trespass
Upon her hand long since faded
Reds and purples of harsh words and
Cruel images still lingered
Constantly tending these scars in heart and mind
Revived past sorrow
Unable to forgive, pain deepened to become
An everlasting companion, and so
Soured New fruits

Surly prison guards of Self-Pity, Revenge and Malice
Vigilantly paraded ever alert
Destroying and consuming all innocence or trust
Re-awakening within

Being cowed in spirit
And seeking freedom from a sentence of fearful memory and wounded vanity -
She tries to Forgive...
Beyond her lonely isolation, hope beckoned
A narrow passage buried within her
Fortress walls opens to emit a dim light -
With a glimpse of a richly colourful
Places ahead -
Stumbling towards this glimmer in the distance
She is willing to Forgive
She is willing to Forgive
She is willing to Forgive ...
Despite her struggle for freedom to forgive
And peace, she dare not forget!
But courageously she will let
Summon the strength to let go,
And let Be...

Hannah George

Growing into SELF-REFLECTION

This workshop allowed us to connect with our sense of touch. Using clay we spent a day gently exploring the material, looking at how it made us feel when touching it and confronting memories that were triggered by working with it.

The workshop forced us to remove our layers of resistance and at times felt quite raw. Most of us loved being able to freely create shapes without the pressure of a certain outcome.

In the afternoon together we created, from clay a TOWN called TRUST, which brought up many experiences and discussions around safety.

Impressions of the day

I would recommend that you continue with these clay workshops I can definitely vouch for their healing effect.

Thank you for all that you do for women like me.

A TOWN called TRUST



Growing into SELF-REFLECTION

“Working with the clay what struck me was how healing it felt, what a calming experience it was. I was totally absorbed in the process as were the other ladies who took part in the workshop.

I knew that clay is renowned to have many uses in promoting health in plants, animals and humans and other types of healing. Clays have been used by indigenous cultures since before recorded history.

I read that it was naturally absorbent and extremely gentle on the system. I had no idea that it would create such a calming effect. Touching it was like touching skin. Though I do not claim to be artistic, but I was surprised and amazed at the end result not just by me but the other women, their work was just incredible.

During the meditation you asked us to visualise a village or town called TRUST. Nothing appeared, yet when I began to work with the clay it took on a life of it's own and I found myself re-creating the place of my childhood where I spent five years from age eight in the clean air of the countryside, living with my aunt surrounded by beautiful nature. I created the house, tree, garden and mountains which formed

the beautiful landscape of my childhood and which helped rid me of the asthma I had suffered from childhood.

In the first part of the workshop I created an African village, perhaps it was the clay, the feeling of nature and back to basics and mother earth, and Africa being the cradle of civilization.

I also felt that Africa has been a victim throughout history, as women have been of violence. Africa has been exploited, colonised, raped by successive governments.

As a woman who was married to a vicious bully who subjected me to years of mental and physical violence I could relate to Africa's suffering so I created the African village from clay, going back to the earth, to nature. I felt an affinity with the African people. Just like them the victim of violence has to struggle to survive and raise her children on a pittance while being viewed as an outcast or parasite of society when you have no option but to raise your children as best you can while having to cope with the emotional effect of the abuse you have been subjected to.

I was pleased with my clay creation, not only was it a calming, cathartic experience for me, I felt the healing therapeutic effect of the clay on my mind as well.”

‘Emily’

Growing into YOUR INNER VOICE

The group had, at this stage, developed into a great team and everyone was able to push their comfort zones a little further. In this workshop we explored the voice in familiar and new ways. Chanting, singing, drumming and guided imagery revealed new dimensions of self expression, strengthening the voice. Emotions and memories came to the surface, some challenging others light and joyful - definitely a day to remember!



Impressions of the day

I learned to replace negative voices in my head with positive affirmations.

I felt so important and valued and realised how special I am, after our name realisation exercise.

The chanting touched me deeply, I felt connected to my inner being and the universe!

A very peaceful experience.

I felt very connected with all the other women in the group.

I enjoyed the challenge of the name realisation exercise; it brought memories back - even from childhood.

A journey down memory lane.

ENFIN ECOUTE, IL N'EST JAMAIS TROP TARD!

Toi, femme qui souffre,
Je veux te parler un peu,
Te dire qu'il y a de l'espoir.
Qu'à nouveau tu peux être heureuse.

Fais le premier geste,
Le premier pas.
Sors de ton isolement,
de ton silence.

Cherche de l'aide à l'extérieur: Une porte s'ouvrira:
une nouvelle amie qui a l'air de comprendre,
un coup de téléphone à une organisation de femmes,
un refuge, une autorité religieuse,
le bureau du citoyen.
La liste d'aide est longue,

Moi aussi, j'étais là ou tu es,
Dans un enfer personnel
Où ma personne elle, ne comptait plus,
Mon ex me torturait mon être,
Me piétinait sans merci.
J'avais si peur de lui, de tout!
Je vivais dans un monde à l'envers!

Pendant tant d'années,
J'ai cru ses mensonges, ses menaces.
Je cheminais vers un abîme.
Puis un jour, j'ai avalé ma peur,
Et ma honte.
J'AI PARLÉ!
À une dame qui m'a hébergé,
Pour que je réfléchisse,
Elle m'a sauvé.

Soudain, je n'eus plus de maison,
plus d'argent, plus de travail, plus rien, SAUF:
ma vie, mon Dieu, ma santé, mon enfant,
un toit si humble, ET
MA LIBERTÉ! NOUS ÉTIONS SAUVÉES!

Ma Liberté était cette opportunité de tout recommencer.
Ma Vie ne sera plus dictée par un tyran,
Je suis la maîtresse de ma destinée!

Petit a petit, avec beaucoup d'aide, de counselling,
de contact avec des organisations telles Solace Women's Aid et Camden
Safety Net,
et leurs supers workshops,
de rencontres avec des femmes merveilleuses qui,
comme toi et moi,
comprennent ce qu'ont vécu,
et nous soutiennent à aller de l'avant,
à reconstruire notre vie, et
à donner à nos enfants un environnement de paix et de stabilité.

Ma vie n'est pas toujours rose maintenant:
Mon enfant voit son père régulièrement.
Mais, grâce à ces groupes de femmes et de bons conseils,
J'arrive à nous protéger.

La seule chose que je regrette: c'est
de ne pas être sortie de là plus tôt!
Ah! Tant d'années mal passées!
ENFIN, ECOUTE IL N'EST JAMAIS TROP TARD!

Femme qui souffre et qui lis ceci,
Sors-toi de là!
Je te promets qu'en dehors de ton enfer, il y a de l'espoir,
Un nouveau chapitre de ta Vie t'attend, une nouvelle TOI !
ENFIN ECOUTE, IL N'EST JAMAIS TROP TARD!

'Kemi'

SO LISTEN, IT'S NEVER TOO LATE!

You, the woman who is suffering,
I want to talk to you a while.
Tell you there is hope,
That you can be happy again,

Take the first step,
Get out of your isolation,
out of your silence.

Seek help outside: a door will open:
a new friend who seems to understand,
a phone call to a women's organisation,
a refuge, a religious figure,
the citizen's advice bureau.
The list for help is long,

Me too, I was there like you,
In a personal hell
where, who I was as a person, didn't matter anymore.
My ex tortured my being,
Trampling over me without mercy.
I was so scared of him, of everything really!
I lived in a topsy-turvy world!

For so many years,
I believed his lies and his threats.
I journeyed towards an abyss.
Then one day, I swallowed my fear
AND my shame.
I SPOKE OUT.
To a lady who let me stay over at her place
To think things over
She saved me.

Suddenly, I had no home,
No money, no work, no nothing EXCEPT:
my life, my God, my health, my child,
such a humble roof over our head, AND
MY FREEDOM! WE WERE SAVED!

My Freedom was this opportunity
of starting everything anew.
My Life will never be dictated to by a tyrant again.
I am the mistress of my destiny!

Little by little, with much help and counselling,
With contact with Solace Women's Aid and Camden Safety Net,
and their super workshops,
with meeting wonderful women,
who like me and you,
understand what we have gone through,
and support each other to go forward,
to rebuild our lives and
to give our children an environment of peace and stability.

Now, my life is not always pink:
My child sees her dad regularly.
But thanks to these womens's groups and good advice,
I manage to protect us both.

The only thing I regret is
not having got out of this earlier!
Ah! so many years ill-spent!
SO LISTEN, IT'S NEVER TOO LATE!

Woman who is suffering and who reads this,
I promise you that outside your hell, there is hope.
A new chapter of your Life is awaiting you, a new YOU !

'Kemi'

Growing into YOUR INNER POWER

This workshop concentrated on power and empowerment - important themes in our lives. The new found confidence and skills developed over the last six months ensured that everyone was able to express opinions which they felt would be valued. Imagery was used to unlock our own inner strengths. The 'grand finale' of the day was a TV advertisement/commercial 'selling' personal power, written and played by us.

Impressions of the day

Finding your voice, having a voice, tapping into your inner power is so essential to our every day lives.

Power is not a thing, but a way, it is a process of becoming real.

We have power when we dare to live authentically, when we reach inside ourselves, and tell the naked truth.

The more we dare to take risks, to question, to resist the urge to go against our gut feelings the easier it becomes.

I realised that I am smart, and intelligent, and capable and worth of true love without conditions.

Power is the transition from the past to the future. Only with power can we move aside the obstacles that keep us imprisoned, enslaved and unconscious.

Power is the ability to determine my destiny and I am starting to realise mine now.

I can realise my dreams and goals.

I am standing in my own power.

I have many choices, many options.

I believe power is not money, not status; it's the inner voice the positive attitude.

It's all about confidence.

I believe in myself.

I can achieve anything.

The power is within me.

CELEBRATING our work

Today was our last session; we celebrated, we edited, we finalised and gave our handbook its name: One step at a time, we wanted to ensure other women became aware that you need just take one step at a time to grow into a new you.

We created a Group Mandala, a collection of our thoughts, images and shared experiences which is the front cover of our handbook.

There was a buzz in the atmosphere, albeit tinged with some sadness as the workshops had come to an end.

Our hope is that in our handbook we have captured and presented our journeys. The process of participating in the workshops has empowered us all, we have successfully tapped into our creative side, been on a journey of self discovery, awakened dormant skills, increased our confidence and have triumphed over our situation, knowing that we are helping other women, just like us.

Impressions

When I first came to Growing into Trust workshops, I saw the world in black and white, now, life is in full technicolour!

I am very grateful to the facilitators and to Camden Safety Net.

When I started the Camden Safety Net workshops, I was like a withered plant, now I am in bloom and I'm loving it!

BIG THANK YOU!



Life savers

We wanted to share what we found helpful, or would have liked to have been aware of when we sought support.

- It's not your fault
- Break the silence
- Everyone's experience is different
- You are not alone
- Share your experience with somebody you trust
- You're not going mad
- Take time for yourself
- Stay safe
- Talk to your doctor
- You have more than one option
- Connect with other people
- Bring someone with you to the police station or organisation
- Write in a diary and remember to keep it safe
- Access resources online and delete your 'history' on the computer
- Contact agencies such as Camden Safety Net and Solace Women's Aid

Seek help!

Useful contacts

Camden Safety Net

PO Box 64181
London WC1A 9DG
Tel: **020 7974 2526**
camden.gov.uk/domesticviolence

Solace Women's Aid

PO Box 51753
London NW1 0UJ
Freephone: **0808 802 5565**
Rape and sexual abuse support
centre national freephone
helpline: **0808 802 9999**
12pm to 2.30pm and 7pm to 9.30pm
every day of the year
www.solacewomensaid.org

Camden Victim Support

52 Hampstead Road
London, NW1 2PY
Tel: **020 7388 9550**

West Hampstead Women's Centre

The Old Kilburn Library
26-30 Cotleigh Road
London NW6 2NP
Tel: **020 7328 7389**
www.whwc.co.uk

C P Counselling and Consulting Ltd

Tel: **0845 071 1369**
www.cp-counselling-consulting.co.uk

Jewish Women's Aid

Freephone helpline: **0800 59 12 03**
www.jwa.org.uk

Samaritans

Tel: **08457 90 90 90**
www.samaritans.org.uk

Hopscotch Asian Women's Centre

42 Phoenix Road
NW1 1TA
Tel: **020 7388 6200**

Rights of Women

52-54 Featherstone Street
London, EC1Y 8RT.
Advice line: **020 7251 6577**
(Open Tuesday to Thursday
2pm to 4pm and 7pm to 9pm
and Friday 12pm to 2pm.)

Sexual violence legal
advice line: **020 7251 8887**
(Open Monday 11am to 1pm
and Tuesday 10am to 12pm.)
www.rightsofwomen.org.uk

National LGBT domestic violence helpline

Monday 2pm to 8pm
Wednesday 10am to 1pm
Thursday 2pm to 8pm
Tel: **08452 60 44 60**
www.broken-rainbow.org.uk

Freephone 24-hour national domestic violence helpline

Run in partnership between
Women's Aid and Refuge
Tel: **0808 2000 247**
www.refuge.org.uk

ARP - Women's Alcohol Centre

3-5 Cynthia Street
London
N1 9JF
Tel: **020 7226 4581**

184 - substance misuse

184 Royal College Street
London
NW1 9NN
Tel: **020 7485 2722**

Cowrie Yoga

www.cowrieyoga.com

Pet fostering

Dog Trust
Tel: **0800 298 9199**

Forced marriage helpline

Anybody who feels they need
help can call the helpline
on **0800 5999 247**

If you're afraid you're going to
be taken abroad and forced into
marriage, you can also call
the Forced Marriage Unit
on **020 7008 0151**

If you would like **One step at a time** in large print or braille, audiotape or in another language please contact **020 7974 3593**.

Camden Safety Net

PO Box 64181
London WC1A

Phone 020 7974 3593

Email camdensafetynet@camden.gov.uk
camden.gov.uk/domesticviolence

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