

HELPLINE

(01382) 201291

Women are always available, at the following times, to offer support and give information.

Monday 12pm-2pm

Tuesday 10am-12pm

Wednesday 7pm-9pm

Thursday 2pm-4pm

Friday 7pm-9pm

Saturday 2pm-4pm

24 Hour Answering Machine

At any other time, messages can be left and will be returned discreetly, as soon as possible.

ONE TO ONE SUPPORT

Alternatively, an appointment can be made, for day, evening or weekends, to meet, and speak with a worker at the Centre.

Sessions usually last about an hour and we can provide reasonable travel and childcare costs.

SUPPORT BY LETTER

You can access support by letter. A support worker from the Centre can write discreetly on a regular basis.

Alternatively you can receive support via email.

SUPPORT GROUPS

The Centre runs support groups for survivors. If you would like to join a support group contact the Centre for more details.

HELPLINE

- Bristol Crisis Service for women who self-Harm (0117) 9251119
- Samaritans (National Helpline) (08457) 909090
- Hearing Voices Network (01382) 223023
- Police (Family Protection Unit) (01382) 665117

LEAFLETS AVAILABLE

- Sexual harassment at work.
- Information for family and friends of survivors
- Information for women who want to volunteer
- Information on the police and courts
- Information for survivors of rape or sexual assault.
- Information for adult survivors of Child Sexual Abuse.
- Information for workers.
- Information on ritual abuse for survivors and supporters.
- Survivors and Flashbacks.
- Survivors and Self-Harm – Self-Injury.
- Resources and Contacts.
- W.R.A.S.A.C Service Information

HOW TO CONTACT US

Women's Rape and Sexual Abuse Centre
PO Box 83, Dundee, DDI 4YZ

Text-phone: (01382) 226936

Business Line: (01382) 205556

Email: wrasac@btconnect.com



**WOMEN'S RAPE AND
SEXUAL ABUSE CENTRE**



A free and confidential service

SURVIVORS AND FLASHBACKS

WHAT ARE FLASHBACKS

Anyone who has experienced sexual abuse, rape or any other traumatic event can experience flashbacks.

Flashbacks are a memory of a frightening or painful experience, which occurred either in childhood or adult life. It tends not to be like an ordinary memory, but more a sudden and unexpected intrusion. Flashbacks can be experienced as a single slide from a slide show, a snapshot or photograph that flashes repeatedly or like a video clip. A flashback can feel almost as real as when it originally happened and can also be as frightening.

Not everyone's flashbacks are visual. Some take the form of words and phrases or sounds that were heard in the past.

They can be accompanied by intense feelings e.g. shame, sadness, anger, or physical sensations known as "body memories", which may have been felt at the time of the original abuse.

Flashbacks can happen at any time, anywhere and often occur without warning. They can be triggered by, the time of year or day, TV programme, film, smells, words, phrases, a song, places, someone who reminds you in some way of your abuser, pictures, taste, a particular feeling such as fear or anxiety, having sex or being intimate with your partner.

These can occur instantly or sometime later. Sometimes a flashback can occur in response to hearing voices that tell you to do things e.g. harm yourself or someone else. Hearing voices can be very frightening.

IDEAS ON HOW TO COPE

Let yourself know that what you are experiencing is a flashback and that this is a normal reaction to the abuse you experienced.

Try to remind yourself that the abuse is not happening now it belongs in the past. It may be useful to look around you and take note of what is happening in the here and now.

You may find it reassuring or grounding to carry a stone or something familiar and comforting in your pocket that you can stroke, hold or rub when a flashback occurs.

Some women keep an elastic band around their wrist and "ping it" to try and bring them back to the here and now.

Try to breathe from your diaphragm (put your hand just above your navel and breathe so your hand is pushed up and down.)

This can help prevent a panic attack.

If the flashback occurs whilst you are out and about try to get yourself to somewhere that you feel safe and secure.

If you are wakened by a flashback, also known as a "night terror", try to write it down, then go and have something warm to drink, watch some TV, listen to music or do something else that you find relaxing. It's often best not to try and sleep until you have been able to relax for a while.

Keep a list of people you can contact in the event of experiencing a flashback.

It may be useful to write the flashback down or tell it to someone you trust - though it can be very painful to speak about, talking it over with someone can help your healing.

If you self-harm/injure in response to a flashback try to take some precautions to minimise the longer term harm that you might do to yourself (see our leaflet on Survivors self Harm/ Injury for useful information).

It may be useful to try and identify if there is anything in particular that triggers your flashbacks.

It may be useful in the short-term to avoid your triggers, although you can't always control when they occur. However be careful not to create "no-go" areas as this can lead to your world becoming smaller and smaller.

Sometimes feelings created by different places or situations need to be faced - again this can help with the healing process.

If you start experiencing a flashback while having sex with your partner you can stop and take time to relax. It's OK to take time out from the sexual side of your relationship to work through these memories if you need to. Your partner should respect your choice and support you.

Do something that helps you relax, e.g. have a bath, listen to your favourite music after you have had a flashback

Remember flashbacks are a normal response to what you have experienced.