

“WALK ON WALK STRONG”

WALKING TOGETHER TOWARDS FREEDOM

25 MAY 2022

STARTTS CLINICAL MASTER CLASS

CRYSTAL BROWN AND HEATHERGRACE JONES



NSW Service for the Treatment
and Rehabilitation of Torture
and Trauma Survivors

(02) 9646 6700
www.startts.org.au

CONTEXT

The STARTTS LGBTIQA+ Project

- Strong commitment to lived expertise and co-creation
- Anonymity and confidentiality are crucial safety factors
- Informed by collective narrative practice framework
- Inclusive practice training
- Peer- led group work
- Resource development
- Facilitating access to STARTTS counselling service

This presentation is co-created between Crystal and Grace

WHAT CRYSTAL LIVES WITH KNOWING EVERY DAY

- More than 70 countries criminalise same-sex activity between consenting adults – **twelve carry the death penalty.**
- Transgender people in thirteen countries live under specific laws that criminalise them, punishing them with prison, corporal punishment
- Where anti-gay laws are also used against trans people, even death.

Reference: Adam O .Hill ,Adam Bourne, Ruth Mcnair Marina Carman,Anthony Lyons in *Private lives 3the health and wellbeing of LGBTIQ people in Australia*

https://www.latrobe.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0009/1185885/Private-Lives-3.pdf.



41% OF LGBTIQA+ AUSTRALIANS CONSIDERED SUICIDE IN THE PAST YEAR



Image source:

<https://brocku.ca/miwsfpa/dramatic-arts/wp-content/uploads/sites/40/fist.jpg>

- Transgender people aged 18 and over are nearly eleven times more likely in their lifetimes to attempt suicide
- 54% of Same-Gender Attracted and Gender Diverse young people between 14 and 21 years who have experienced physical abuse self harmed
- Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual people are twice as likely to have symptoms that fit the criteria for a mental health disorders in the past 12 months

Reference:

Adam O .Hill , Adam Bourne, Ruth Mcnair Marina Carman,Anthony Lyons in Private lives 3the health and wellbeing of LGBTIQ people in Australia
https://www.latrobe.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0009/1185885/Private-Lives-3.pdf.

MULTIPLE OPPRESSIONS

LGBTIQ+ people from multicultural backgrounds (31.7%) were more likely to report high levels of psychological distress when compared to those from an Anglo-Celtic background (26.7%)

Reference: Adam O .Hill ,Adam Bourne, Ruth Mcnair Marina Carman,Anthony Lyons in *Private lives 3the health and wellbeing of LGBTIQ people in Australia*

https://www.latrobe.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0009/1185885/Private-Lives-3.pdf



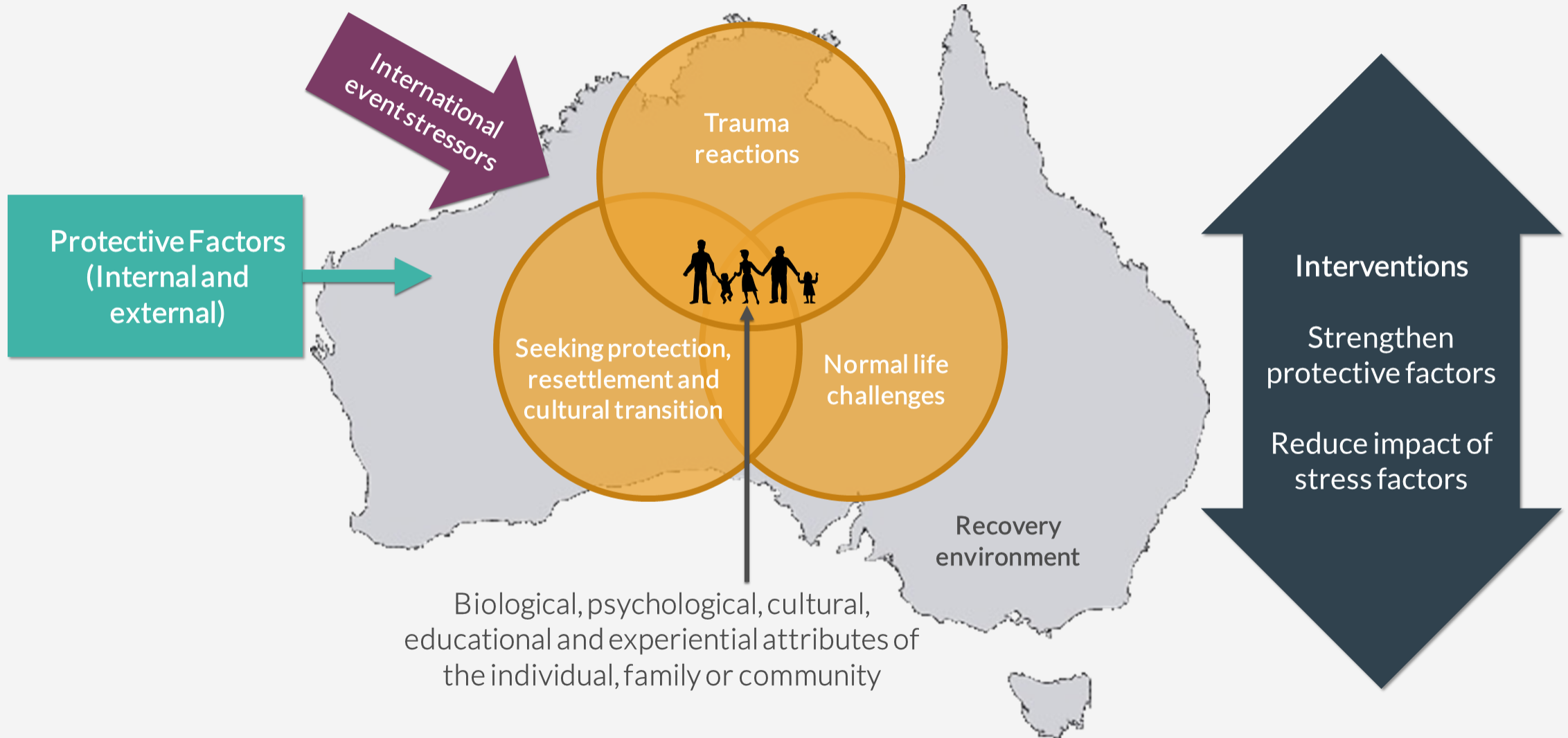
ABOUT CRYSTAL

- Trans women of colour
- Pronouns -- She Her Hers
- Pacific background
- Queer identifying "I don't like to be labelled"
- Diploma in Tourism Management, Certificate 4 in Business Administration,
- Certificate 4 in Disability -- Currently studying a Diploma in Community Service
- Fled country of origin in 2017
- Arrived in Australia in late 2017
- Began engagement with STARTTS in early 2018
- Reference group and Steering committee STARTTS LGBTIQ+ Project

VISA DETAILS AND ENGAGEMENT IN STARTTS

- Visitors Visa
- Bridging Visa A
- BVA = Allows a person to stay in Australia lawfully while they finalise their immigration matter. UNLIMITED WORK AND STUDY RIGHTS
- Permanent residency In November 2021 – Permanent Protection visa
- Involvement in STARTTS community development and training projects including Peer facilitator, networking and co-trainer
- One on One Psychosocial support

The complex interaction of challenges

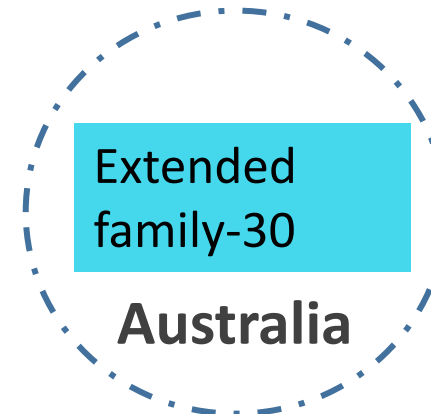
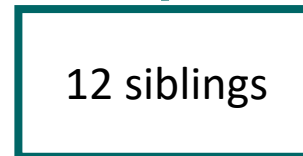
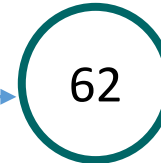


GENOGRAM

Pacific

Father
Deceased

Mother
Deceased



Father

He doesn't accept me as who I am even up until he passed away he treated me as a man

Mother

Strong bond
Supportive and accepting
She cannot protect me against non acceptance by my siblings and father

EXPERIENCES IN COUNTRY OF ORIGIN

- Regularly threatened and beaten by family members including father, uncles and brothers
- Excluded from gatherings both family and traditional and cultural occasions
- The family says “I bring a curse to them; and these words hurt me” --Ongoing shaming and banishing
- Attempts to have her surname taken from her so she is not identified as part of the family
- Forced to attend boys boarding school to “Make a man of her”
- Regular violence and abuse from strangers including rocks thrown at her on the street
- Friends and trans community members attacked and murdered

EXPERIENCES IN AUSTRALIA

- Transphobia in service provision including being routinely misgendered and dead named
- Racism in service provision including being left waiting or unattended despite being there before others
- Racism in LGBTIQ+ community including being excluded from clubs on the basis of skin color and accent – for example literally being told to leave because “this club is only for white people you’re not welcome here “

- Racism on dating apps – including personal attacks like “You don’t look like a woman or go back to where you come from”
- Assumption that she is a sex worker including in an a major queer organization she was attending for a HIV test
- Constant staring from people on the streets and on public transport
- Intrusive questions about her body and gender
- Re-traumatizing visa application process – particularly the interview

CRYSTAL'S CHALLENGES

- Struggled with depression
- Minority stress
- Suicidal ideation
- Self medication substance abuse and gambling addiction
- Prefers not to take anti-depressant medication

RESETTLEMENT DIFFICULTIES

- Difficulties in finding ongoing employment due to transphobia – unemployment is a huge challenge for trans people of color in this country
- Lack of recognition of educational qualifications
- Language difficulties –English is her second language and sometimes it can be difficult for her to express complex ideas in a way she feels she is understood
- Needing to learn Australian culture and systems
- Limbo and ongoing stress of the asylum seeking process

RESETTLEMENT DIFFICULTIES

- Difficulty finding permanent housing that is safe and comfortable and feels like home, including experiencing eviction, death of a house mate and rejection by family members if she has visible romantic engagements
- Conditional acceptance by family and community in Australia based on not coming out or being openly trans or queer
- Social withdrawal
- Covid 19 has increased social, financial and employment difficulties – lack of access to services. more alone and excluded. “it brings more loneliness”

PRESENTING ISSUES

Biological

- Sleep disturbances
- Low energy
- Headaches
- Stomach aches
- Access to HRT
- Access to PREP
- Hepatitis B
- Access to gender reaffirming procedures

Psychological

- Low mood
- Anger & irritability
- Hopelessness
- Self-medication

Social

- Wanting to combat Social isolation and withdrawal

WORKING TOGETHER

- Good insight and judgement and good engagement
- Ability to share ideas and feelings
- Strong commitment to social justice and community development
- Active listening skills and focus on positive outcomes
- Strong embodied presence
- “The way I see myself is I present according to the needs of the occasion – dress code matters and I am not only representing myself but also my communities”
- Very generous in sharing her life experiences in order to create safer spaces and build understanding

ONGOING ISSUES

- Intrusion symptoms (anger management and working on conflict resolution)
- Prolonged psychological distress and marked physiological reaction when triggered
- Use of substances to self medicate
- Persistent negative beliefs or expectations about oneself and the world –“I always question myself – Why am I going through all this – Why do all these things happen to me – What can I do about all these to become better in the future”

OUR GOALS

- Bring to light an alternate story of Crystal is and what she is capable of
- Empower Crystal to navigate systems and share her expertise
- Build safety and awareness of how to regulate moods and impact on others
- Conflict resolution skills
- Practical support for employment and housing

“We must polish the shell to become a pearl “

INTERVENTION FRAMEWORKS

- Collective Narrative Approach focusing on individual empowerment and connections, strengthening the protective factors within herself and within community
- Our practice aims to reduce re-traumatisation recognise the role trauma plays in impacting daily life for people with LGBTIQ+ and refugee background's
- Integrating trauma-informed practices, provides the opportunity to mitigate the intrusive and negative impacts of their experiences
- Practices include but are not limited to fostering safe environments for Crystal to retell her life story and develop trustworthy and collaborative relationships.
- Prioritising of co-creation, collaboration and trust in provision of the project's outputs

INTERVENTIONS

- Her feelings are a realistic response to these conditions
- Acknowledgment that there will be times when all the best intentions in the world that a person may not be able to avoid reactions
- Non- judgmental responses
- Consistency and transparency in the way the service is provided
- Provision of training and skill building-- capacity building
- Grounding strategies – breathing, progressive muscle relaxation, body activation, five senses
- Care not to re-traumatize
- Strengths based approach recognition of resilience and resistance

INTERVENTIONS

- Opportunity to build a preferred story through training, group facilitation opportunities, creation of meaning and leadership.
- Crystal has the absolute right over her own story – we only talk about what she wants to talk about including in this presentation
- Focus on resisting the problem and shared values
- Acknowledgment of expertise in her own life
- Acknowledgment and deconstruction of social and political realities ‘There is transphobia and racism, misogyny, homophobia and bi-phobia
- Prioritising of peer leadership and respect and acknowledgement of skills
- Case management, referral and support with immigration process
- Support with negotiating health system through the process of gender affirmation

WHAT'S BEEN IMPORTANT TO CRYSTAL

- “What I have learned here in Australia I would like to give back to the community
- Most importantly I know I can't stand alone and do it without the support of other people with lived expertise
- Even when I felt left out or angry I have been able to build friendships and to work together to create a group that watches my back
- My values include:
 - compassion
 - kindness
 - strengthening community
 - sharing energy and resources”

OUTCOMES TO DATE

- “I used to be a person who got angry and had to get it out quickly- now I think about my impact on others and can manage this.”
- Reduced levels of alcohol consumption and less frequent gambling
- Enhanced ability to stand up to her family and the stresses on community
- Building relationship with church members and community leaders in home country and in Australia

OUTCOMES TO DATE

- Better engagement with the community and improved social contact
- Currently completing diploma in in community service
- Ongoing peer facilitation, delivery of training and group work
- In her spare time she is running a handicraft business which produces beautiful cultural objects that have been traditionally produced by cis women. “This work becomes accepted it shows that all women are recognised as equally valuable.”

FUTURE GOALS

- To be recognised as a voice for LGBTIQ+ Pacific Islanders
- Continue to work with LGBTIQ+ people with refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds
- To manage moods and feelings without getting overwhelmed
- Full time employment
- To advocate for those who have experienced trauma
- To empower trans people of color to be included and break the silence of being labeled and excluded
- To overcome prejudice against trans people and people with diverse sexualities
- To love herself

THE REEF OF TODAY IS THE ISLAND OF TOMORROW

“I have overcome tsunamis and volcanoes in my life and I am still swimming towards the light.

there are no individuals heroes. we can't stand alone. only together can we make a difference.”

Presented on behalf of STARTTS LGBTIQA+ team by:
Heather Grace Jones
Co-created with Crystal Brown
[Heather.jones1@health.nsw.gov.au.](mailto:Heather.jones1@health.nsw.gov.au)

STARTTS
152-168 The Horsley Drive
Carramar NSW
(02) 9646 6700
www.startts.org.au
stts-training@health.nsw.gov.au



NSW Service for the Treatment
and Rehabilitation of Torture
and Trauma Survivors

REFERENCES

Adam O .Hill ,Adam Bourne, Ruth Mcnair Marina Carman, Anthony Lyons in *Private lives 3 the health and wellbeing of LGBTIQ people in Australia*
https://www.latrobe.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0009/1185885/Private-Lives-3.pdf access 20/05/22

Aroche, J, & Coello, M. (1994) '*Toward a Systemic Approach for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors in Exile: The Experience of STARTTS in Australia*'. Paper presented at the 4th International Conference of Centres, Institutions and Individuals Concerned with Victims of Organised Violence: Caring for and Empowering victims of Human Rights Violations, Dap Tageytay City, Philippines, December 5-9

Denborough ,D,(2004) *Collective Narrative Practise. Responding to individuals groups and communities who have experienced trauma*, Dulwich Centre Publications 2004