Working with women and trauma, WHOS New Beginnings
What is trauma?

An event where a person is exposed to:

- death
- threatened death
- actual or threatened serious injury
- actual or threatened sexual violence
What is PTSD?

Characterized by symptoms of:

- Intrusion/re-experiencing
- Avoidance
- Negative alterations in cognitions and mood
- Alterations in arousal and reactivity
PTSD, SUD and entry into treatment (Dore et al, 2011)

In the General Population – 57% exposed to trauma, 1% have PTSD
WHOS New Beginnings®

- Women only service, located in Rozelle, Sydney
- 24 Bed unit
- 3-6mth program with the option of re-entry housing
- Occupancy – 100% (current financial year)
- Seriously disenfranchised client group with significant mental health issues
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symptom</th>
<th>Lifetime</th>
<th>Last 30 Days</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anxiety / Panic symptoms</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>57%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Strong fears (e.g. agoraphobia)</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>44%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Taken psychiatric medication</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depressive symptoms</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nightmares / flashbacks from traumatic events</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional problems associated with sex life</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Given into aggressive urges more than once</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychiatric hospital admission</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attempt to kill yourself / themselves</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heard voices / saw objects others couldn’t see</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Mental health symptomology is typically worse (potentially due to initiation into drug use)

- 80% will have FACS involvement
- 52% will meet the criteria for Borderline Personality Disorder
- Mills et al (2012) clients experience a mean of 6 (range 2-10) different trauma types (e.g. domestic violence, child sexual assault, serious accident)

Harm associated with PTSD

- Poorer mental health
- Poorer physical health
- Higher rates of attempted suicide
- Higher levels of poly-drug use
- Poorer Psychosocial functioning
- Poorer SUD treatment outcomes
1) Acceptance and Commitment Therapy Mental Wellness Groups

- ACT is designed to help a person make life decisions and goals in-line with what they value most and to pursue these goals despite feelings of discomfort and/or distress they may experience.
- ACT aims to increase a person's resilience to unpleasant emotions.
- Six 1 hour, experiential groups were developed in consultation with ACT experts.
- Staff were comprehensively trained to deliver the intervention ensuring long term sustainability of the groups.
ACT Mental Wellness Groups Study Design

- The Mental Wellness ACT Group Intervention was delivered once a week, for six weeks, clients had to have completed 4 hours of the intervention to be included in the treatment group.

- Control group data was collected from clients who were in NB from 3 months to directly before the ACT was trialed. To be included in the control group, women had to have completed at least 4 weeks standard treatment. CBT groups were part of standard treatment.
Assessments Tools used

- K10 Plus - screens for mental health symptom distress, higher the score the more the distress
- PTSD Symptom Checklist - higher the score, the more the distress
- EUROHIS QOL- Quality of Life, the higher the score the more satisfaction a client is feeling about their life
- Qualitative data was also collected about what clients liked most, least, recommended changes and any other comments

4-6 hours of ACT group-work over 4-6 weeks,

*Minimal effort was required on behalf of the service e.g. 1 hour per week*
K10 Plus - mental health distress difference scores between control and treatment condition were statistically significant.

- **Control Condition (Including CBT Groups)**
- **ACT Group Recipients (Treatment Condition)**

- KesslerK10 Baseline
- Kessler K10 After 4 weeks treatment

Difference scores between control and treatment condition were statistically significant.
PTSD Symptom Checklist – intensity of trauma symptoms

- **Control Condition (including CBT Groups)**
- **ACT Group Recipients (Treatment condition)**

PTSD Checklist Baseline

PTSD Checklist after 4 weeks of treatment

difference scores between control and treatment condition were not statistically significant
EUROHIS Quality of Life - level of satisfaction with current life circumstances

Difference scores between control and treatment condition were statistically significant.
Client feedback

What was most valuable

- ‘Being made aware of what affects our decisions and how to live by our values’
- ‘How we have the power to choose our behaviour’
- ‘It was a new way of understanding and managing my life’
- ‘I walked in really uninterested. But I walked out very pleased I had heard what I heard and learnt’
What improvements can be made to the groups?

- 2\textsuperscript{nd} most common comment
- ‘Make the class longer as we could get more out of It’
PTSD and Anxiety Psychoeducation and Symptom Management Groups

- Four, 1hr groups (delivered in the first 4 week of program)
- Group information includes
  - Defining Trauma and describing common trauma exposure symptoms
  - Defining trauma disclosure boundaries
  - Describing and briefly practicing symptom management techniques
  - Provide direction on supporting a distressed peer
2) PTSD Information Groups

- To be included in the Treatment Condition clients had to have completed between 2-4 groups

- To be included in the control condition clients had to have been in treatment for a minimum of 2 -4 weeks

Minimal effort was required from the service to achieve these results (2 - 4 hours over 2 - 4 weeks)
PTSD Symptom Checklist - severity of PTSD symptoms

- Baseline PTSD Checklist
- At least 2 weeks treatment

NB Control Group: Baseline PTSD Checklist
NB PTSD group: Baseline PTSD Checklist

Difference scores between control and treatment condition were not statistically significant.
K10 Plus - Severity of Mental Health Symptom Distress.

- New Beginnings control group
- New Beginnings PTSD group

- Baseline K10
- At least 2 weeks treatment

Difference scores between control and treatment condition were statistically significant.
EUROHIS QOL - Level of satisfaction current QoL

- At least 2 weeks treatment difference scores between control and treatment condition were statistically significant.
Where to from here?

Current research projects

- Cognitive remediation – Research Partnership's Grant University of Wollongong
- Supporting clients with BPD – Project Air
- Social mapping – Turning Point