

# Newsletter

## Edition March 2020

£12 p.a. subscription for non-members  
or organisations

free for SURVIVORS  
who are Members  
of CIS'ters



www.cisters.org.uk

**CIS'ters IS NOT a therapy group:** it is an organisation run by survivors, for survivors:  
“we might be victim/survivors, but this is not all that we are, or can be”

# 2020 = Self Care

*Distribution of future newsletter will be via email and uploaded to our website*

CIS'ters is still operational, though for the time being we have ceased physical group meetings. Our intention is to remain in contact with our 500+ members, which is why we need you to ensure that we have your current phone number plus if you have one your email address too.

Please leave a clear message for us on our helpline: **023 80 338080**

Email us on: [helpme@cisters.org.uk](mailto:helpme@cisters.org.uk)

If you have internet access: look at the news alert page on [www.cisters.org.uk](http://www.cisters.org.uk) plus also our twitter account which is [@CISters\\_Standup](https://twitter.com/CISters_Standup)

It doesn't feel real, or is that only me ?

Am I in a dream, with no awakening

I fear for my loved ones, close colleagues and friends

For the children, for their future

As we all ask when will it all end

For years I have tried to explain derealisation

And now it is here, the current reality is that we all

Feel that life is not real

We will survive

Of that I am certain

With each step we take

We focus on the future

Step by step

Day by day

Tomorrow is in the distance

But I will be here

Battered and bruised

Reaching out to hold hands

## CIS'ters CONTACT DETAILS:

**HELPLINE** 023 80 338080 (which is an answerphone). Please leave clear contact details. Messages are monitored regularly during normal office hours and we will seek to call back as quickly as we can, and will take care when returning calls. Please note that our number is shown as 'withheld' when we are returning calls. Alternatively you might prefer to **Email:** [helpme@cisters.org.uk](mailto:helpme@cisters.org.uk)

[www.cisters.org.uk](http://www.cisters.org.uk) Registered Charity: 1123125 Twitter: [CISters\\_Standup](https://twitter.com/CISters_Standup)

# Feeling overwhelmed ?



## Covid19/Corona virus - What to do & how do I feel about it?

Hi. I guess like many of you I'm worrying about this Covid19/Corona virus pandemic and what any length of self isolation might do to me, or in particular what it might trigger as a survivor but also as an individual.

Loneliness, no matter what causes it, can and has had a massive impact on me since losing my husband almost 3 years ago. Now just as I'm starting to see a light at the end of the tunnel comes this pandemic!

Also loneliness/self isolation might cause us some anxiety and may feed/trigger those feelings of helplessness, depression etc. So what can I/we do about it, what can I/we put in place should we be stuck at home/indoors and have those feelings occur?

As I said to Gillian when she asked me to write this "I have lots of ideas floating around in my head but given my level of can't be arsed I'll probably end up on the sofa watching tv and doing f\*\*\* all! This has been my default/go to for the past 3 years!

However I think it would be better to write a "hit list" of things to do i.e clear bedroom, sort clothes, sort out craft stuff etc & even if I don't get round to it or feel like doing it, at least I have a back-up plan!

Even if you simply put in place a list of people you can call should you just need to touch base. In the meantime I'm trying to still go out, meet up with people and do as much as I can whilst I can.

Take care of yourselves and try to stay positive - Avril (43)

## Self-help resource guide



Thanks to Croydon Rape Crisis for alerting us to this fabulous publication produced by Women & Girls Network as part of the London Survivors Gateway.

It has some really helpful grounding techniques within it which can be used easily when you are feeling overwhelmed or panic

See link to online version below

To see full resource guide <https://survivorsgateway.london/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Self-care-guide.pdf>

## **1. Sensory grounding exercise 5,4,3,2,1**

- Describe 5 things you can see in the room.
- Name 4 things you can feel (“my feet on the floor” or “the air in my nose”).
- Name 3 things you hear right now (“traffic outside”).
- Name 2 things you can smell right now (or 2 smells you like).
- Name 1 good thing about yourself. You may well feel calmer and more at ease by the end of the exercise.

Repeat the 5 steps more than once if needed. Try out the technique in different situations.

## **2. Physical grounding technique**

- Place both feet flat on the floor.
- Lean back into your chair, and make note of the feeling of the chair under you and against your back.
- Cross your arms over your chest.
- Gently tap your shoulders, alternating one side at a time.

Alternatively, you can place your hands on your thighs if you are in public, tapping one leg at a time. Although not as effective as shoulder tapping, this technique can still calm you down.

## **3. Use the breath**

Put a hand over your heart and a hand over your belly and breathe deeply, following the breath into your belly, focusing on the connections of your hands with your body and the gentle rise and fall of the movement as the breath comes in and out.

## **4. Walk, or stomp if it helps!**

If you can, go outside and walk barefoot, or with shoes on, taking in each step to feel your feet make contact with the ground. If it is difficult to make connection, stomp around and really push your feet down.

## **5. Use an object**

Touch something that you enjoy the sensation of, a stone that is smooth, a crystal, a piece of wood – anything that feels solid and that you can use to remember where you are and that you are safe – you can carry this around with you all day and every time you feel nervous just throw your hands into your pocket to remember you are here and safe right now.

## **6. Water**

Wash your hands or take a shower. Feel the sensation of the water on your skin. Alternatively, drink some water or another beverage. Slowly drink it, feeling the sensation of the water in your mouth, tongue and stomach.

## **7. Make a list**

Think of a category and list all the things in this category; the dogs I like, musicians beginning with the name A or types of vegetables. Concentrating on this list will mean that you are not able to think about all of the things that are making you feel overwhelmed. Alternatively, count to ten or say the alphabet very slowly.

## **8. Physical grounding**

Stand against a wall. Physically push against it. Feel your feet rooting into the ground and your hands against the wall. Then feel your muscles. What does it feel like when they tense, what is the sensation of relaxing your muscles?

## **9. Self-care tools and tips**

Find a smell that you love, such as an aromatherapy essential oil, incense or a scented candle and diffuse the smell. If you need to access this quickly you can put the essential oil on some cotton wool and gently breathe in.

## **Flower Essences** - Background (from Gillian 00):

Sharon Keenan is a younger sister of Liz who I met in 1994. I often talked about setting up a self-help group at that time. It was, very much, with the encouragement of Liz that CIS'ters was eventually set up and became a member (Liz (7)) some months later. She was involved in the ongoing development of CIS'ters during those early years but her coping strategies eventually took over her life and unfortunately Liz died some years ago from health complications. Our Liz (7) is still hugely missed and we are fortunate to have Sharon on our 'Friends of CIS'ters' list. Sharon has attended many of our weekend workshops as an external facilitator, delivering sessions on flower essences and their use.

### **Flower Essences for Restoring Love,**

**With love from Sharon**



#### **What are Flower Essences?**

Flower Essences are extracts of Flowers, captured in water and used to treat emotional imbalances. Also known as Flower Remedies, one of the most famous of which is Bach 'Rescue Remedy', a popular remedy for shock, panic and upsets.

#### **What can they be used for?**

They are used to bring balance and harmony to our emotions. For every emotion we can think of, whether it's fear, anger, sadness, despair, guilt, insecurity, etc. there is a Flower Essence which can help bring us relief from that. They don't mask these emotions. Rather they give use the strength to move through them.

#### **Do they smell nice?**

They don't have any smell at all...? They are made from the nonphysical aspect of the plant, which is captured in water and preserved usually in alcohol. (There are non-alcohol based alternatives such as cider vinegar and vegetable glycerine for those who wish to avoid it).

#### **How are they different from Essential Oils?**

Essential Oils are highly aromatic extracts from plants, and have to be used with a level of caution, ie they have to be diluted before use, and should not be ingested. They work very physically on the body. Flower Essences are non-aromatic and are safe and simple for all to use. They work with the emotions.

#### **How do I use them?**

They can be placed in water or other drinks and sipped slowly. Or, placed directly under the tongue. There are no contraindications to taking them, so they can be taken alongside prescribed medication without causing upset. They can also be added to face and body care to bring an extra dimension of self-care to our daily rituals. They also combine really well with Essential Oils in body care or when used in a spray.

#### **What is your favourite Essence and why..?**

My favourite Flower Essence is one I made when I was living in Andalucia, Spain in 2007. It is Red Poppy, and was made in a beautiful Olive Grove on the outskirts of the remote village I lived in with my partner, Jake.

This Essence has a deeply relaxing quality, which helps alleviate feelings of anxiety and panic. It is an important one to relieve the effects of shock and trauma. It brings feelings of peace and profound security. A few drops of this in a glass of water can, over time, help alleviate the effects of feelings of abandonment, including self-abandonment.

# Open Garden Tea Party – Summer 2020

Fairy garden – find the fairies game

Other games

Craft table

**And tea and cakes served on fine bone china (coffee and squash)**

Profits shared between CIS'ters and Southampton Hospital Juvenile Idiopathic Arthritis

Venue in Totton, Near Southampton, Hampshire

For more information – please text or phone Lesley on 07767166638

*(events are obviously affected by Covid19 and weather, hence contact Lesley for start date !)*

*Lots of our members find adult colouring (books or IT based) really helpful and calming. Here is one sent in by Rosemary (1484)*



*Received from Rosemary (1484)*

**ALTHOUGH WE DONT KNOW THE END DATE FOR THIS CURRENT HEALTH SITUATION IT DOES MAKE SENSE TO POSTPONE THE ANNUAL WEEKEND WORKSHOP TO 2021.**

**ALL THOSE THAT HAVE CURRENTLY BOOKED WILL BE CONTACTED IN NEXT FEW WEEKS. WE ARE IN CONTACT WITH THE VENUE AND FOCUSED ON A REVISED DATE OF MAY 2021 AS OCTOBER FEELS TOO FAR AWAY.**

***We know that in stressful times individuals will often fall back on prior coping strategies.  
At a time like now, with Covid-19 and all of the increasing restrictions, it is a major worry, we  
need to find a way to remind ourselves that we can and have conquered many mountains.***

Dear Gillian, When I first came to CIS'ters in 2014 I had spent a lifetime since the age of 7 being obsessed with food. I have binge eaten all of my life and felt ashamed of it. My sister and brother had been very nasty about my reliance on food and my Dad called me "disgustingly fat" when I was 16.

When I attended the weekend workshop in 2014 I found it very difficult to avoid the puddings at various meal times and the Saturday Supper (9pm) was a nightmare as all the food was out for a long time and I was worried I would binge. I had to go to bed so that I didn't.

So when I attended again in 2015 I was really surprised when I discovered I could socialize amongst the food and just take a little. It was at this point that I realised my addiction to food that been eroded and I believe CIS'ters has made this happen.

I still overeat when I have very stressful periods, but I can manage to stop more easily than before.

Nicola (1125)

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<https://www.samaritans.org/>

Call free 116 123

Email [jo@samaritans.org](mailto:jo@samaritans.org)



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FINALLY – we wanted to get a newsletter to you and this one might not be as full as prior ones because the effort was to get something printed and posted before any final lockdown which we fear may come any day now. We are still operational but making plans to move to 'home working' rather than from our centre. Our intention is to ensure that we make contact with all of our 500+ members at intervals and provide some emotional support via the phone or by email.

For the moment we have ceased our group meetings but these will recommence as soon as the health crisis has passed. Meanwhile – we are aware, as survivors ourselves, how difficult this period is at the moment and that isolation and being overwhelmed can be triggers for many linking back to the past. We might not be able to fix the crisis but we know that we can help each other by doing what we can to let each other know we care.

If you have social media access please follow us on twitter @CIS'ters\_Standup or email us or ring us.

In the meantime, please do all you can to look after yourselves emotionally and physically and let us all focus on being able to clasp hands for real when we get to the top of this mountain ahead of us.

Love to you all, Gillian (00)

**Editorial Statement:** We welcome letters from Survivors and from those who support them such as friends/allies/counsellors/social workers etc. While every effort will be made to keep contributions complete and unedited we reserve the right to make amendments when necessary, and will note it as 'edited'. Decisions about the inclusion & amendment of contributions are the responsibility of the Editorial Team, and are final. Contributions do not necessarily reflect the views & opinions of CIS'ters, members of the Trust Board, or the Editorial Team. Inclusion of any reference to an individual, book list, or organisation resource is not a recommendation.

The contents of this newsletter are for information and support purposes only.

This newsletter is not a substitute for individual therapy or professional supervision.

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CIS'ters: an experience in learning, sharing, growing – individually and together

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