

Newsletter

Edition MARCH 2021

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

free for SURVIVORs
who are Members
of CIS'ters

Charity registration:
1184857
(previously 1123125)



www.cisters.org.uk

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

2021 = a step at a time

Email: helpme@cisters.org.uk

Phone: 023 80 338080 (answer phone)



It is 12 months since the pandemic was announced and it has been a roller coaster of emotions, distress, isolation, loss and ongoing uncertainty. Loved ones, liberty and financial losses have been devastating for so many.

There is no right answer. Decisions are often outside of our immediate control, which has been triggering for many survivors.

Fear continues to affect many. Others have found isolation not a burden but liberating. There is, really, only the uniqueness of each one of us, and how we have responded during the last 12 months, and will in the next 12 months.

There is no easy answer.

Only, where we are. Today. For now – and our hopes for future.

For some, the debate about vaccination has been complex and making decisions to accept or not, whilst others have felt frustrated at the wait 'until their turn'.



In our previous newsletter we let you know that Nicola, one of our small office team had been hospitalised with the virus. At that time she was very ill, in a coma and the outcome was something we dared not think about.

BUT we are really pleased to let you know that Nicola is now at home recovering, though it looks likely to be a long process.

For many of us, it was the speed with which our youngest and fittest team member became ill that demonstrated to the remainder of the office team, our trustees, and our pool of volunteers (many who have underlying health conditions) – how this invisible foe could strike anyone – and that we all need to remain vigilant and protect not only ourselves, but others too.

A message from Babs

I still love receiving the newsletter through the post.

Life is extremely difficult and during the first lockdown I suffered a serious breakdown and with CFS/ME my recovery is very slow indeed. Plus a full hip replacement in August 2020.

Life is unfair so it seems for people still carrying heart-breaking trauma etc. Oh not to be lonely. I take solace from my garden and the fresh air when my fatigue is less.

Thank you for all your insights and persistence. Love to everyone.

Stay safe and stay well, **Babs (937)**

I just wanted to say thank you to Gillian and everyone.

I am ok and still trying to integrate all of my wounded inner child. It is a long process but I have found peace and happiness and love along the way.

It is always lovely to receive the newsletter through the post as it helps me know that I am still part of CIS'ters.

Love to everyone at this incredibly tough time. **Helen (33)**

Friendship

True Friendship now is hard to find,

Knowing I have friends like you is a peace of mind.

Thank you all for being there,

Showing that you do care.

Friends like you make this world a better place.

Who knows one day,

I might say thank you to your face.

Until then thank you for everything you say and do,

But specially for being a true friend and being you.

Sent in by Rosemary 1484

COVER MY MOUTH

Cover my mouth
then there's no sound,
look in my eyes
see the scream locked inside.

Does it make you feel strong
or more powerful a man,
to inflict such terror
on a child so young?

So easy to hurt her
to ignore her pain,
she wants to please you
how can you bear the shame?

Terror is paralysing
in one so young,
no one to turn to
no-where to run.

So pack it away
in an old wooden box,
it doesn't exist
if you don't lift the top.

Drop it in a chest
and throw away the key,
whatever happened
didn't happen to me.

Sent in by Trina (1514)

Coronavirus (Covid-19)

When life really gets you down
That's when you need to keep your feet firmly
On the ground

Just like an elephant you need to stay strong
Even when everything in your life seems
To go wrong

Life is tough right now I know
But keep fighting even so

A long road ahead it might be
Who knows what's round the corner you see

But we all need to stay positive and bright
Till things turn out right

When you find it very hard to cope
We have always got hope

Wear a face mask when you're out and about
Even if you hate it and want to shout

By doing so you protect yourself
And everybody else's health

Follow the rules day by day
Sooner or later the virus will go away
Don't forget to wash your hands too
Every bit helps which is true

Rosemary (1484)

"I have received my 2nd newsletter which I find really encouraging and informative.

The poems I particularly like and one day I hope to find the courage to send one in of my own".

Stephanie (1605)

Hi Gillian,

Another impact from my handling by the NHS after disclosure which is really difficult as everything is currently virtual online communication.

Where the social workers that were running that group therapy I was sent to in Fareham in the 1980's videotaped all of us individually talking about each of our experiences, it left me too traumatised to be able to be videoed or use virtual video link.

It's meant that I can only join in, with support, on virtual meetings for my son's Educational Health Care Plan by audio, camera off.

Another example, I have been referred to the hospital therapy department for physio/occupational therapy treatment. But the initial appointments will be virtual via video link. I'm not doing that!!!

So it leaves me with having to do the initial appointment by telephone. Meaning that I have to verbally describe my physical problems in order to convince them to give me a face to face appointment.

These are just a couple of examples of how the social workers videoing me still negatively impacts now.

My abuser was an avid photographer and there's loads and loads of photos of me. So I have an extreme difficulty with being photographed or having any images taken of me.

Services need to factor this into their evaluation.

Carrie Ann (489)

Hi Gillian and everyone,

Family contact plus the lack of the usual distractions will have kicked off a lot of distress for many members. thank goodness we've got CIS'ters there to support us.

I'm coping fine, but thanks for your concern. I do look after myself these days which is good news.

I feel like I'm properly developing into a whole person now rather than the empty shell I was before - blossoming a bit. I've taken up painting & can't get enough of creating now. think it's a good sign of recovery & proper moving on.

Thanks again for all you & everyone at CIS'ters does for us all. lots of **love Deb (988)**

Lockdown has been extremely challenging for me especially in the beginning. Dealing with trauma from sexual abuse as well as from other aspects of my life was really hard at first. I could see myself falling into depressive episodes, and my anxiety had gotten worse! Having just exposed my abusers to my parents and sister in 2020, I was faced with a rush of strong emotions, both from myself as well as my family. I felt forced to not only deal with my mental health issues but theirs as well.

I felt as though there was no light at the end of the tunnel so wanted to give up! However, me being the strong-willed person that I am allowed me to take action. I am now in therapy receiving EMDR treatment as well as general taking therapy. Although my sessions are not face-to-face, having zoom calls still helps me to refocus every time I'm caught off guard by my mental health issues. I was recently diagnosed with Generalised Anxiety, Panic Disorder and PTSD, and although I don't adhere to such labels, my therapist has been helping me to both heal from these issues as well as understand them. In addition to therapy, I have found that daily meditation has helped me to take control of my mental health by centring my mind and body. Exercise helps me too.

I have been using this lockdown to one, focus more on my passions and two, learn more about myself. No one should put pressure on themselves to produce a "million dollar" business/idea, however, I do think it's very important for us to start putting our needs first - whether it's putting more energy into our mental health or doing something we never had time to do, or even just chilling for once! This is in no way an easy time but whatever you choose to do, do it for yourself. Peace & Love, **Member (1589)**

Please take care Gillian, and everyone else. Look after yourselves.
Stay safe and well, Love from **Patricia (698)**



Home Office Press Office, Peel Building, 2 Marsham Street London SW1P 4DF

NEWS RELEASE

www.homeoffice.gov.uk/media-centre

Nationwide call for views on tackling violence against women and girls – reopens

URGENT: Survey closes again on 26/3/2021 at 11.45pm

The government on 12 March 2021 reopened its nationwide Call for Evidence on tackling violence against women and girls for 2 weeks in recognition of the widespread sharing of experiences on social media in response to the tragic developments in the Sarah Everard murder.

The link to the survey is here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/violence-against-women-and-girls-vawg-call-for-evidence>

DO YOU LIVE IN HAMPSHIRE, IoW, Portsmouth or Southampton ?

Please note that the survey below will close on 9th April 2021.

The Office for the Police and Crime Commissioner, Hampshire County Council, Portsmouth City Council, Southampton City Council, NHS England and NHS Improvement are looking at the option of a jointly commissioned **Independent Sexual Violence Advocacy service (ISVA)** for the Hampshire districts, Portsmouth and Southampton. This could bring together all existing ISVA services into one contract with a single point of access. Following initial feedback from the market, they are considering a separate contract for ISVA services for people living on the Isle of Wight.

The current contracts for ISVA services ends on 31st March 2022 and they are seeking feedback to help them to decide what these contracts will look like from April 2022.

We have many members who have accessed ISVA services locally and are therefore seeking your feedback into their new process. The survey below is seeking feedback from local users of ISVA services, provider organisations and professionals working with clients who have previously used or are currently using local ISVA services in **Hampshire, IoW, Portsmouth and Southampton**.

SNAP Survey link: <https://healthhampshirecc.researchfeedback.net/s.asp?k=161417279745>



As part of going forward we have set up a POD CAST channel – which is called **HIDDEN HARM**.

Gradually we are working our way through a lengthy list of topics and themes, which will also include interviews with others.

Our intention is to upload a new podcast every week (on a Monday by noon) onto our website.

You can listen to those completed so far >

<https://cisters.org.uk/pocastsnewslettersurvivors-voices/podcasts/>

Thank you **Sarah (1411)** who sent this in >

A useful reminder to us all



On Thursday 18 March, the latest Office for National Statistics figures on sexual offences from the year ending March 2020 were released.

The latest estimates from the Crime survey for England and Wales (CSEW) showed that fewer than one in six (16%) female victims and fewer than one in five (19%) male victims aged 16 to 59 years of sexual assault by rape or penetration since the age of 16 years, reported it to the police.

Responding to the latest ONS figures, **the Victims' Commissioner for England and Wales, Dame Vera Baird, said:** ".....“The less faith victims have in them receiving justice, the less they will report, the less we prosecute, the more this insidious behaviour is allowed to carry on unchallenged.....”.

Comment from Gillian: The statistics are overwhelming and are focused on crimes committed against those aged 16 and above. Therefore, excluding the majority of sexual abuse/rape victims during childhood. Many, similarly, feel that the current justice process serves to benefit those who commit such crimes, rather than their victims. We with others continue to campaign for change, including the need to educate members of juries who hear sexual offences cases and for less lenient sentences.

The Government, in January 2021, released a new strategy focused on prevention of CSA.: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/tackling-child-sexual-abuse-strategy> which seeks to address a number of issues, but there remains a mountain to climb. Contents include:

This strategy is the first of its kind in setting out the government's vision for preventing, tackling and responding to child sexual abuse in all its forms, whether it is committed in person or online, in families or communities, here in this country or overseas.

The strategy is based on the following three objectives:

- objective 1: tackling all forms of child sexual abuse and bringing offenders to justice
- objective 2: preventing offending and re-offending
- objective 3: protecting and safeguarding children and young people, and supporting all victims and survivors

The strategy captures their long-term ambition to tackle this crime. It outlines the concrete steps they are taking now to step up a response and provides a framework for government to drive action across all agencies, all sectors and society as a whole to carry on strengthening a response to all forms of child sexual abuse.

If you do NOT have access to the internet and would like a copy of the CSA Strategy please ring on 023 80 338080 > (remember to leave your name and phone number).

WHAT DOES SELF (EMOTIONAL) CARE LOOK LIKE ?





THANK YOU to everyone who completed the member feedback survey that we sent out to members/others in Dec 2020/Jan 2021.

At the moment we are busy analysing all of the feedback which will then be incorporated into our BUSINESS PLAN currently being written. It has, as always, been important that members have had an opportunity to influence what and how services are delivered in the future.

IMPORTANT REMINDER: Were you sexually abused prior to 1 Oct 1979 and previously barred from claiming compensation because of the 'same roof rule' ?

Many victims of sexual abuse are still unaware that they can submit a claim for criminal compensation. But many were also then barred from what was called the 'same roof rule', which discriminated against victims who were living in the same household as their abuser. Following campaigning and also a 2019 IICSA report, this specific barrier was lifted – but there is a deadline for applying:

- *Where the crime took place between 1 August 1964 and 30 September 1979*
- *The victim lived within the same family home as the offender when these crimes occurred*
- **You have until 13 June 2021 to submit a claim**

<https://www.gov.uk/claim-compensation-criminal-injury/victim-lived-with-attacker-before-october-1979>

You can also contact your local Victim Support Service to ask for their help to complete the paperwork if you do not have access to the internet. <https://www.victimsupport.org.uk/help-and-support/get-help/support-near-you/south-east/hampshire-and-isle-wight>



Member Weekend Workshop > May 2022

One of the biggest impacts to us has been on the weekend workshop that we hold annually. It provides an opportunity for members, from far and wide, to meet within a safe and confidential space.

We had to cancel the event for October 2020 and had hoped to hold it in May 2021 which we have had to cancel because of issues at the venue, plus insufficient delegate numbers. Delegates who had been booked were asked if they preferred a new date in 2021 or wait until 2022. Preference was next year !

**21-22 May 2022
Weekend Wksp**

Trustees meet again towards end of April 2021 and high on the agenda is a discussion on 'when' and 'how' we can resume normal group meetings (in Hampshire).

Information will be sent out with the NEXT newsletter, or an advance notice if that is sooner.

Meanwhile – as always – we continue to provide emotional support to all of our members via phone and email – plus to the many many more survivors reaching out to us (who have been triggered during lockdowns).

RESUME OTHER MEETINGS ?



From a Child to an Adult by Rosemary (1484)

When someone is getting abuse it's not a joke,
The victim has nothing to hold onto but hope,
Abuse can happen in so many different ways,
Unfortunately, Abuse can kill and it happens night and days,
If you're going through abuse you need to stay strong,
It's not you but the abuser is very much in the wrong,
If you're going through abuse now then find your inner strength and make a stand,
Even if you are just a child – please tell someone even if you need to hold your best friends hand,
Abusers shouldn't kill and get away with it,
But together the truth can come out bit by bit,
The abuser took away our childhood,
But if you're strong you have your adulthood,
For those who are being abused now, it has to stop,
Please if it's you – tell anyone but stay strong inside like a rock,
A lot of lucky victims like myself become survivors at the end of the day,
You too my friend can have a good future and love life your way.

By Rosemary (1484)

Invisible Landscapes by Rosi (836) – 4th Feb 2013

I travel to invisible landscapes
The well-trodden paths of places explored
Terrain so familiar
Some yet unexplored

I go to these places but there's no adventure
No passport is required before gaining entry
Compelled by a force to return to wholeness
I delve into dark and forbidden crevices
Drowning in deep murky waters
I see the destruction; feel the pain and the anguish
Wrong actions have caused

My body, this map of invisible landscapes
Its history so taboo
Etched in place as if an intricate tattoo
So permanent a stain

Exploring the terrain
I become familiar with its pain
I reclaim my power
Making changes that empower
As I own my map; the power to change it
Rests solely with me

Autobiography in Five Chapters

By Portia Nelson

ONE

As I walk down the street,
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.
I fall in.
I am lost....I am hopeless.
It isn't my fault.
It takes forever to find a way out.

TWO

I walk down the same street.
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.
I pretend I don't see it.
I fall in again.
I can't believe I'm in the same place.
But it isn't my fault.
It still takes a long time to get out.

THREE

I walk down the same street.
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.
I see it is there.
I still fall in....it's a habit.
My eyes are open.
I know where I am.
It is MY fault.
I get out immediately.

FOUR

I walk down the same street.
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.
I walk round it.

FIVE

I walk down another street.

The Two of Me by Catherine (731)

There are two people that reside in my head,
They're there all day long and at night in my bed.
There's the 'outside' person that most people see,
Then there's the one that is hidden, is she the real me?

The one on the outside lives up to expectations,
She copes with everything, with all situations.
The one people rely on to be in control, on top and to cope,
The one to come for support, amusement and hope.

who becomes whoever people want her to be,
When others look at her they see what they want to see.
She's a daughter, a sister, a partner, a friend,
The extent of her acting really knows no end.

The one that people want is confident, brave, in full control,
They don't understand that she never feels whole.
They think she knows what she's doing, is focused, on top,
She has boundless energy seeming never to stop.

She listens, is supportive, sorts out all their woes,
When they need something, she's where they go.
They expect so much of her, she tries to provide,
They never imagine she's dying inside.

But what of the other one? The one that's inside?
What secrets of hatred is she trying to hide?
She knows that she's bad, disgusting, a whore,
The list goes on, there's always one more.

She's full of the evil that others don't see,
Afraid that one day the gunge will ooze free.
The one on the inside is full of dirt, filth and pus,
Has nothing to moan about, yet makes a fuss.

She's pathetic, she's empty, nothing makes sense,
Others say that she's 'bright', she knows that she's dense.
She loathes her body, detests the way it feels,
Is repulsed by each pore from her head to her heels.

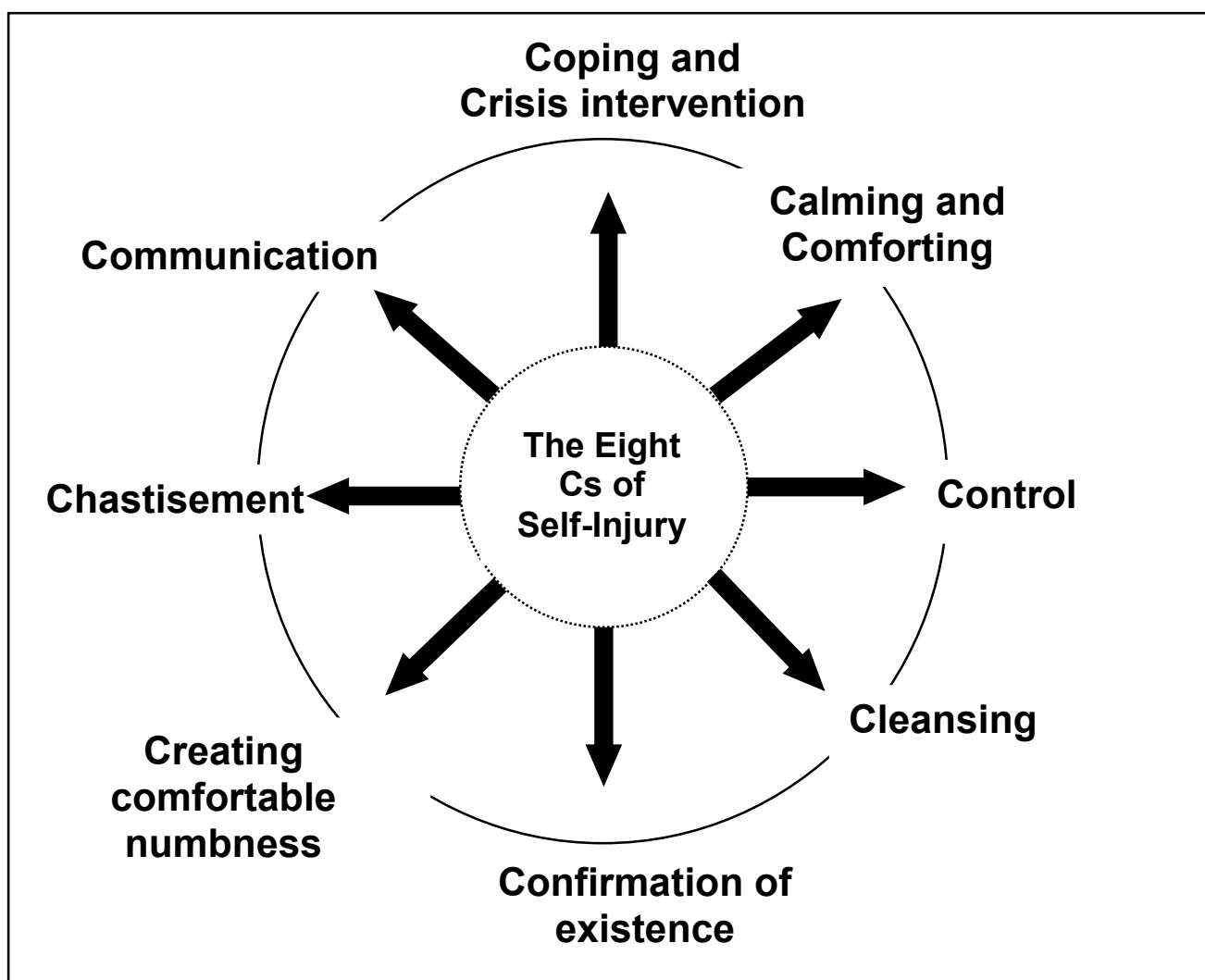
She deserves to be punished, her body must pay,
For letting her down, for giving her away.
So she burns, cuts and starves in an attempt to win,
Her way through the battle that rages within.

She harms to feel real, she harms to feel numb,
To dispense with the feelings she must overcome.
Maybe one day she'll do more than her body can take,
At least that will put an end to her being fake.

The gulf between the two is a chasm so wide,
A bridge couldn't join each distant side.
But maybe there's hope as a third raises her head,
And wonders if it's better to try living than ending up dead.

The Eight Cs of Self-Injury

Source: Sutton J. (2007) Healing the Hurt Within. p. 202



As child/teen victims of sexual abuse we adopt strategies to manage internal feelings, about self and about others. The list of strategies is as unique as the individual and their situation. There isn't one route, but to some degree many pathways include one or more of the following: misuse of drugs, alcohol, issues linked to eating, obsessive compulsive behaviours, including shopping and gambling - the list goes on.

These strategies can remain helpful but for many they escalate and become part of a larger issue during adulthood. Then we struggle with not only our past experiences of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) but also the way in which an adopted behaviour is now no longer helping, but is adding to the harm.

So, what do to ? There might be a mountain ahead of us, or a series of small steps. Some might be able to shake off or swop a behaviour for something less toxic whilst for others now might not be the right time. The right time, the right motivation, the right help – are all important.

Is now the right time for you ?



Thank You to James !

On 5th March 2021 James undertook a personal challenge 48 miles in 48 hours and nominated CIS'ters to receive donations from his supporters.

<https://uk.virginmoneygiving.com/JamesSeilo>

Picture: a very exhausted but celebratory James with Gillian (our founder) who met him at the finish line on 7th March 2021

Although we do manage to get some funding through variety of grants, there is a shortfall each year. This is why the regular donations from an increasing number of our members, and efforts by non members (like James) is appreciated.

Some really unexpected donations this year, like the one from **Nix (414)** and her mum, who earlier this year (following the death of Nix's father) sought donations to CIS'ters in lieu of flowers for the deceased.



It has been a really tough time with many triggers in the media all highlighting violence against women and girls as a critical issue.

Thank you to Cambridge Rape Crisis for this image (from their twitter page)

"CARING FOR MYSELF IS NOT SELF-INDULGENCE, IT IS SELF-PRESERVATION, AND THAT IS AN ACT OF POLITICAL WARFARE"

AUDRE LORDE

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.

CIS'ters, PO Box 119, Eastleigh, Hants, SO50 9ZF Tel: 023 80 338080 www.cisters.org.uk

CIS'ters: an experience in learning, sharing, growing – individually and together
Copyright©1995 (C.I.S.'ters & logo combined).ALL RIGHTS RESERVED