

FD Consultants

Psychosocial Support and Trauma Specialist Services

The Healing Power of Community



'I find working with trauma inspiring, not only because of witnessing the human spirit to survive, but also because of the privilege to travel such difficult terrain with an individual who is suffering to a path of greater resilience, self-compassion and traumatic growth.' (Dunkley, 2018)

The nature of the human spirit is resilient and strong; we thrive for survival against all odds. Trauma impacts our mind, body and spirit; it invades our internal and external world. Critical incidents, whether man-made or natural disasters, are becoming more prevalent and assiduous. Traumatic experiences can unite us or tear us apart, depending on how they are managed, and the support individuals receive. Having supported emergency first responders after the Grenfell Tower Fire (2017), where 71 people lost their lives, the healing power of community was evident. The community came together to support one another, people opened their doors, community centers offered support to families, religious centers

offered all faith services, and there was an overwhelming amount of donations given by the local community and local businesses. A tribute wall was created, which represents a real expression of how people were feeling. The statement *'bonds formed are difficult to break, our community will stand together'* highlighted the power of people wanting to come together and support each other during adversity.

Those that have experienced trauma often describe themselves as broken, as if parts of them have shattered and become fragmented. Specialist trauma care unites the fragmented parts within an individual, so they start to feel 'whole' again. As much as an individual is fragmented by trauma, so can an organisation and community be. As much as healing from trauma is about uniting broken parts within an individual, so it is about uniting community, locally and globally. Coronavirus is teaching us that we need to work collaboratively and unite as one human family to combat this virus.

The core principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality, and independence are more necessary than ever. To heal from trauma we need a supportive trauma informed community. As Martin Luther King reflects, *'we are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality... whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly.'* (Ramalingham, 2013). I strongly believe healing communities and countries suffering from trauma will lead to a more cohesive, inclusive and peaceful world. At FD Consultants we are training organisations and communities to become trauma-informed. We are also training peers to become psychological first aiders/focal points to create a resilient organisational culture.

During a training on vicarious trauma awareness, which I facilitated in Nairobi I referred to the word, *'Ubuntu'* (a Nguni word and Southern African philosophy) – *'I am, because we are'*. Healing from trauma can't be done individually; we need support from trauma informed organisations, communities, teams, and families, to truly heal from trauma. Van Der Kolk, a psychiatrist renowned for his work on trauma, also refers to the word Ubuntu: *'my most profound experience with healing from collective trauma was witnessing the work of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which was based on the central and guiding principle of Ubuntu.... that denotes sharing what you have, as in "my humanity is inextricably bound up in yours."* Ubuntu recognises that true healing is impossible without recognition of our common humanity and our common destiny.' (Van Der Kolk, 2014, p. 349). Ubuntu underlines the importance of working collaboratively and respectfully, working with local communities, and encouraging community engagement.

Dalia Lama wrote some words of wisdom about the Coronavirus 'For the Call to Unite' (May, 2020). *'We need to reach out to each other with compassion. As human beings we are all the same, we experience the same fears, the same hopes, the same uncertainties... This crisis and its consequences serve as a warning that only by coming together in a coordinated global response will we meet the unprecedented magnitude of the challenges we face. I pray we all heed the call to unite.'*

Find a way to connect to your local community; watch out for colleagues that may be struggling in the workplace; join a specific group supporting the vulnerable, so as to really embrace the healing power of community.

About FD Consultants

For organisations looking for employee psychological support, FD Consultants are the trauma specialists and well-being service who will best deliver a reliable, quick, and bespoke support system in the workplace. FD Consultant's team of accredited specialists will offer ongoing support to help manage stress, prevent burnout and provide specialist trauma care where required, enabling your staff with the tools to cope, and recover more quickly.