

WELCOME...

...to the second edition of the Aurora Equinox and a big thank you to all those who sent in their contributions. It was enjoyable looking at clients' personal experiences of trying something different and moving to read the articles they had written about their own healing experience. The openness and honesty of each contribution is much appreciated.

The monsoon season appears to be over and Spring is finally on its way. The fundraising event in November 2013 proved to be a resounding success and Aurora raised £2000 which was absolutely brilliant. Thanks to all the clients, team members and supporters who came along to support this wonderful evening of music, song and poetry.

The Harry Potter Day was well attended by a number of clients who all got into the spirit of things and weaved their own magic – more about that later.

We hope you enjoy this issue of the Aurora Equinox.

Aurora Newsletter Team

You can follow Aurora on various social media platforms at the following links:

 www.facebook.com/AuroraHealthFoundationUK

 www.twitter.com/AuroraHealthUK

 www.linkedin.com/company/aurora-health-foundation

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Thank you for taking time to read our Newsletter.

*If you know of a person abused in childhood that could benefit from our help
or could benefit from the content of this Newsletter please feel free to pass it on.*

*If you would like to donate to the Aurora service, raise funds on our behalf (by running, cycling etc)
and/or you feel drawn to work at Aurora please visit our website for further details.*

MESSAGE FROM SUSANNAH

Hi Everyone,

I hope you enjoy this issue of Aurora Equinox.

I am the Founder CEO of Aurora. You can see more about my story of my own childhood abuse and what services Aurora provides on YouTube. Just click on the video on the front page of our website www.aurorahealthfoundation.org.uk or look at www.youtube.com/watch?v=nD7n3pO1V5A

To those of you who may be thinking of coming for therapy at Aurora have a look on our website or just ring/email to ask us for more information. And if Aurora is not for you then we wish you well with your recovery.

I believe it is possible to heal from childhood abuse and all of us are a work in progress. Whilst there is unfortunately no magic formula and healing can be different for everyone there is still hope although it can be so hard at times to find a light at the end of that tunnel of fear and despair. What might be helpful to you is to just try to do your best, try to keep safe and hold your flame of hope sacred as much as you possibly can. Keep going and it really will and does get better. I still have my bad days but they are nowhere near as terrifying and devastatingly painful as my life once was.

I am often asked how I have come to where I am now and to be honest I'm not entirely sure! I don't see myself as recovered but in recovery – a work in progress – pretty much how I see everyone. We are all on a journey whatever our experiences as human beings we've all known suffering. I look after myself much as I would if I had a health condition. I notice when I have to take better care of myself, times when I cannot watch certain films or television or listen to certain music that may trigger me. I also know from my own therapy (talking, bodywork and complementary therapies etc.) – and my own self-help (books, artwork, walking, meditation, reiki, writing etc.) where my trauma comes from and with that knowledge came power for me to heal. I have a deep belief in a benevolent force for good and all this kept me going as I tried to hold my belief in my healing even when it was dark and I could see no light. I am still a work in progress but mostly I am very happy to be here to bring Aurora into the world.

Take care and honour your own recovery.

With all good wishes.

Susannah



Ziggy (one of Aurora's cats) snoozing



Waiting Area in Aurora Centre

LATEST NEWS

New Aurora Members

We are pleased to welcome new team members and new Trustees to Aurora.

These are:

- Georgie (counsellor)
- Chantal (counsellor)
- John (Trustee and new Chair)
- Brian (Trustee and new Vice-Chair)
- Claire (Trustee)

Changes to website and new logo

The website now contains a lot of new information including multi-media material. New video and audio clips are being regularly added to the site so do check it periodically to see this new material. It includes interviews with team members and clients who give their useful views on abuse issues.

Aurora has also has a new logo which was created in the summer of 2013. The logo contains Aurora's Mission Statement which is "Helping People Abused in Childhood".

Steering Committee

The Aurora Steering Committee is always looking for new members. Meetings are held every two months and it's a great opportunity for clients to find their voice by expressing themselves, and shaping and influencing Aurora services for the future. If you are an Aurora client or an ex-client and wish to share ideas to help Aurora flourish do get in touch.

Meetings are held on a Monday evening from 7.15pm and includes refreshments. Travel expenses can be payable on request. There is also the "Aurora Golden Rule" that your healing comes first so if you have to miss some meetings because you're not up to coming along that's absolutely fine.

Aurora Library

Due to the generous donations of books and tapes that we have received from Team members and clients Aurora now has its own self-help library consisting of inspirational stories, books that others have found helpful to them during their healing process and also relaxation tapes.

Client Care Meetings

One of the latest things that has emerged from Aurora are the introduction of client care meetings. These meetings are about discussing how best to help clients develop and grow during their healing journey.

The meetings give therapists an opportunity to look at further interventions, which is also very useful if clients see their main counsellor/psychotherapist and a complementary therapist for bodywork for example. Clients at Aurora can request meetings - even if they are seeing their main counsellor/psychotherapist only - and are themselves also invited to attend.

Production of Aurora Business Plan

Under the expert guidance of Brian, a Cranfield Trust volunteer and now new Trustee, Aurora has produced a 4-year Business Plan which we hope will help guide the charity to its vision of:

1. Developing and expanding the organisation to set up day therapy services in other parts of the UK
2. Developing a short stay 24 hour residential facility to provide intensive therapeutic services for people in crisis
3. Developing a training consultancy to equip other agencies and individuals with the necessary knowledge and skills for working effectively with people abused childhood.

The Business Plan will be soon be available to download from the Aurora website.

WEDDING CONGRATULATIONS FOR SUSANNAH AND NICK



One of Aurora's best kept secrets was revealed when Aurora's CEO and Deputy CEO (Susannah & Nick) slipped away in October of last year and got married. Everyone at Aurora was delighted and thought it was about time. We would all like to wish them well for the future.

PROFILE ON.....MALCOLM

Malcolm first came to Aurora as a counsellor in training when he was in his final year of his counselling diploma. He is now a qualified counsellor and agreed to be interviewed by a volunteer client to give his personal reflections on working at Aurora.



What was your first impression of Aurora?

I really liked the building aesthetically and thought it was very warm, welcoming and comfortable, not overly clinical. I really warmed to the therapeutic value of that definitely and it reminded me of a homely family environment when I was greeted by Nick and Susannah. I remember seeing the little notice board with all the team pictures on and seeing a couple of people in the waiting area and it appeared to be very inclusive.

What kind of family environment do you think Aurora portrays?

I really get the impression of a therapeutic community/ family environment that strives to be healthy and over time it has become clearer and how diligently and carefully each person is considered and if there is someone who is unhappy there is a process we can all follow and it does feel like we are all valued promoting a healthy family way with a therapeutic environment rather than a traditional family environment with Mum, Dad and children.

Did you imagine yourself working in a place like Aurora or did you have other ideas about the different types of work that you could do?

I have to admit that I kind of pigeon-holed myself into working with addiction as it was part of my own family background that's part of who I am and it felt natural for me to do. I wanted to avoid it because I wanted to do other things that I was not comfortable with so I could stretch myself and grow further. When the opportunity arose to work at Aurora and coming from a background of emotional abuse, although challenging this was the ideal place where I could connect with people and do some really rewarding work.

Did you have any visions or thoughts about Aurora before you came to visit?

If I did it was nothing like I expected it blew away any vision or expectations that I had. If I am honest at that time in my life I had just being promoted at work and I was in my final year at counselling school - even when I arrived for the interview I was on a very tight deadline but as soon as I sat on the sofa in room one I suddenly thought what a beautiful therapeutic space. The size and the lighting it all felt so natural and just felt right. I felt really nervous but began to become aware that I really wanted to work here.

Aurora offers an holistic approach using both complementary, bodywork and counselling therapies to all its clients within the service. I just wondered what your views on this are?

One of the things that attracted me towards Aurora especially after seeing the website was its holistic approach because I believe the body stores memories as well as the mind so to work with both of these aspects it feels like Aurora offers a soul connection interweaving and uniting these three aspects under the umbrella of Aurora. In my view that is the optimum therapeutic environment. Personally I would like to see more of this as I feel these are beneficial and contribute to the therapeutic environment.

As you are part of the Aurora Team if you were to choose a character how would you describe yourself within the team?

My character would be Hong Kong Fooey who was a cartoon favourite of mine when I was a kid. He was a bumbling detective who had a side kick who solved the mysteries and he got all the credit for it. He was a very colourful character full of energy and full of life and Aurora is my side kick that solves the problems and I take some credit for them in the process. My inner child is saying that.

How do you see Aurora evolving in the future?

I would like to see it get busier maybe bring some holistic therapies like art therapy, reflexology and acupuncture on a monthly basis with a minimum of four clients attending to reduce disappointment and maybe make the groups more concrete and consistent.

(cont)

PROFILE ON.....MALCOLM (CONT)

What sort of message would you like to convey to clients at Aurora who are walking the talk and doing the journey?

They have my utmost admiration. I see them as incredibly courageous people each individual and collectively a courageous group of people that come here. The hope is that whatever happens to people that they can heal. The variety and levels of healing will all be different so I would urge everyone to stay with their process, to be individual and not be affected by how others are doing, to value the work that you have done today and not get caught up in ideas of where you should be because it is a journey and its not for the faint hearted.

Thank you to Malcolm for his valuable contribution.

HARRY POTTER HERE I COME

In January a group of clients, along with Susannah and Nick, visited Harry Potter World in Watford. This is part of Aurora's therapeutic community style to help clients to build confidence in social situations whilst Team members are on hand to help if needed.

We hired a mini bus so that everyone who wanted to go, but who might have had problems using public transport due to distance or anxiety, could come along. The following is one client's description of the day.

"Words rise off paper and float away into thin air. I can make different types of snow. Mythical creatures adorn the shelves. A staircase moves mysteriously as soon as I put my foot on it then welcome to the magic that is Harry Potter and it certainly cast its spell upon me as I was enthralled by the whole experience.

I had seen brief film clips of the series but had never felt inclined to watch the movies. However having visited the various sets etc I fully enjoyed the fantasy and came to understand why adults and children are so attracted to it. Magic is such an intriguing subject.

I loved every minute of it and so did everybody else who had attended the day including one brave client who had decided to try her hand at riding a broomstick.



Susannah and Nick by the "Night Bus"

There was just so much to do and see. One of my favourite items was the clock. I remember feeling quite memorised by the pendulum swinging, so much so that I lost track of everybody else and wandered away to explore further into this magical work. I remember walking down this very quaint old world type of street which felt very atmospheric and I do so love looking in shop windows but this was a different type of window shopping but equally just as pleasurable.



Susannah outside Hogwarts

It was good to see everybody enjoying themselves and having such a good time and know that everyone has a little bit of a wizard inside themselves. It's every child's joy. I wonder what kind of wizards or spells we could make as we grow and take on new learning and achieve mastery over our own development."

MESSAGE FROM THE HEART

During my personal journey in recovering my true authentic self I became aware of body psychotherapy and how the body holds the memories of our lives and remembers things. I was intrigued to know more and decided to have some biodynamic body psychotherapy sessions at Aurora. During one of those sessions I felt compelled to write this poem which came from my heart the seat of all emotion and feelings. It was also a place where my inner child resided.

Body psychotherapy is teaching me to have more respect for my body and listen to the wisdom of its messages.

*I am all heart
Nothing more nothing less
I play my part
And I'm a great success*

*Pulsating with energy and love
I let you know that I'm alive
Radiating with energy from above
Loving support that I can survive*

*I let you know when you feel sad
I ache; I hurt, I quiver with many fears
Such deep yearning for what I never had
The un-gushed spring of unshed tears*

*Heart strings pull at my baby's heart
A quickening felt - always in a hurry
I know the place where hurt has marked
And darkened the breath with affluent worry*

*Heart I feel you - I know of your history
I will beat one more time - gently just before
sleep
Softened by age and silenced by mystery
A brave heart crossing over to Warrior Creek*

Jean (Survivor at Aurora)



ARTS AND CRAFT WORKSHOP

Everybody's inner child came out to play at the recent art and craft workshop in February and there was much talk and lots of laughter throughout the afternoon.

Colour was the order of the day – you could either be a budding Picasso or just scribble away until your hearts content whereas in the other room you could either try your hand at crocheting or a bit of embroidery.

It was a lovely day and everybody really enjoyed themselves.

Workshops are great opportunities to learn something new about yourself, learn a new skill, a chance to meet with other survivors and practice being yourself in a social setting and a safe environment and they are great fun too. Why not give it a try and we look forward to seeing you all at a workshop soon?

ANDREW SAYS GOODBYE

A message from Aurora's ex-Chair of Trustees to everyone connected with the charity.

Dear All,

My name is Andrew Law and I was Chair of Aurora's Trustees. For those of you who are unsure of the role of Trustees, their duty is to:

Accept ultimate responsibility for directing the affairs of their charity, ensuring that it is solvent and well-run, and delivering the charitable outcomes for the benefit of the public for which it was set up.

I have been privileged to be involved as a Trustee with Aurora and to have served in its best interests since Aurora was first launched in 2006 and since I took over as Chair in March 2009. I was recently made redundant and am now in a position to realise a long-held dream of moving from London down to Cornwall, where my wife comes from.

(cont)

ANDREW SAYS GOODBYE (cont)

By the time you read this, I will have stepped down and handed over to a new Chair – John Berg. I have known John for many years (he was previously the Chair of Trustees of Tulip Mental Health Group, where I was the Deputy Chief Executive). I know that John will do a fantastic job and I am relieved to be handing over the reins to such an accomplished individual.

It has been an extraordinary and humbling experience to have been involved with Aurora for such a long time. I have never ceased to be amazed by the courage shown by clients in dealing with unbelievably traumatic and painful experiences, many of which have been hidden and unresolved for many years. Your courage, determination and perseverance is truly humbling.

I am also in awe of the incredibly high levels of dedication and commitment to clients and the organisation, shown by volunteers and staff. I have been involved with many organisations in health and social care over 25 years and rarely have I come across such high levels of commitment and dedication and a real belief that with working together in partnership with clients, a real difference can be made to people's lives.

The commitment and vision from Susannah and Nick particularly has been astonishing. Without their drive, dedication, passion and commitment, none of this would have been possible.

I am profoundly grateful for having been given an opportunity to be a little part of Aurora's life.

Please Note

Aurora is run mainly on a volunteer basis and although we do our very best to answer phone calls there are times when we have to rely on our confidential answer machine. If a message is left we reply as soon as we possibly can.

We treat all enquiries by phone and email with the utmost care and respect as we recognise how very difficult it can be as to ask for help. We look forward to hearing from you.

What neither Susannah nor Nick knew when they first approached me to become a Trustee, was that I am a survivor myself. I was sexually abused by my violin teacher, when I was aged between 12 and 15 (I am now 54). Although, at the time, my father confronted my violin teacher (who admitted the offences) and also told the school, no-one told the police (as they should have done) and the violin teacher was allowed to slip away and go to another school. I was deeply traumatised by these events. My self-esteem, my self-confidence and my ability to form relationships were all deeply damaged. Through hard work, dedication, perseverance and many years of psychotherapy, I was able to resolve these experiences and move from a victim to a survivor. The climax of my recovery was a decision I took some thirty years after I was abused, that someone had to take the role of the responsible adult in this abuse, as neither my father nor the school had the courage, responsibility or decency to do so. After some careful consideration, I went to the police and told them I wished to charge my abuser.

To cut a long story short, he was charged, went to court, pleaded guilty and was given a three and a half year prison sentence (reduced to one year on appeal). It was a cathartic, healing experience for me and I have no doubt, contributed immensely to my recovery. However, what really helped me to take control of my recovery was the love, support and care of family and friends and the skilled psychotherapy I received. I only wish there had been an Aurora around when I needed it. I have no doubt had I been able to access the type of support and belief in the individual, on offer at Aurora, that my recovery would have been massively helped and supported.

I wish everyone at Aurora – clients, volunteers and staff – peace, happiness and joy. Thank you for allowing me to be a small part of your lives.

Perhaps we can set up an Aurora in Cornwall?!

Andrew

Disclaimer

The content of this Newsletter reflect the views of individuals and are not necessarily the views of the Aurora Health Foundation.

USEFUL WEBSITES

Aurora Health Foundation (www.aurorahealthfoundation.org.uk)

Aurora is a unique therapy centre exclusively for people abused in childhood. We are a survivor-led therapeutic community situated in a peaceful and respectful homely setting where you are warmly welcomed and accepted just as you are. If you were abused in childhood and it is negatively affecting your adult life and you feel we could possibly help take a look at our website, email us at info@aurorafoundation.org.uk or ring us on 0208 541 1951. Whatever path you choose we send you our very best wishes for your recovery journey. Take good care.

dabsbooks (www.dabsbooks.co.uk)

The specialist book and information service for people who are overcoming childhood abuse, sexual abuse, or domestic violence, and for those who live or work with us.

Heal For Life Foundation (www.healforlife.org.uk/)

The Heal For Life Foundation provides residential healing programmes for survivors of childhood trauma and abuse. These take place in a remote, safe and peaceful setting in the south of England.

I'm Just a Little Girl in the Rain (littlegirlintherain.wordpress.com)

Blog from a survivor on "Healing from Childhood Sexual Abuse".

Let Go...Let Peace Come in (www.letgoletpeacecomein.org)

Adult Survivors of Childhood Sexual Abuse (CSA) Working Together To Heal, Recover, and Enact Change and Understanding to Confront the Effects of CSA Throughout An Adult's Life.

National Association for People Abused in Childhood (www.napac.org.uk)

NAPAC is a registered charity that provides support and information for people abused in childhood.

One in Four (www.oneinfour.org.uk)

One in Four is a charity providing support and services to adults who've been sexually abused as children. We provide one to one counselling, groups and workshops, a helpline and an advocacy service based in London UK.

Stop in Now (www.stopitnow.org.uk)

Their aim is to stop child sexual abuse by encouraging abusers and potential abusers to seek help. They provide adults with the information they need to recognise worrying behaviour in themselves or others, and with the confidence to take responsible action when they suspect that something is wrong.

Survivors UK (www.survivorsuk.org)

For over twenty years, they have been providing information, support and counselling for men who have been raped or sexually abused. Thousands of men contact them each year.

This Tangled Web (www.thisangledweb.co.uk)

This Tangled Web was established in February 2010 when one survivor of childhood sexual abuse made it her mission to let others know that you are not alone. More so that there is help, support and understanding available to them. The website offers a wide selection of information, links and support on many topics which surround CSA.

Unity & Hope (www.unityhope.co.uk/)

This grass roots project seeks to address the lack of appropriate long term, specialist support services for adult survivors.