

Broken Branches

"Take courage! God has healing in store for you; so take courage" (Tb. 5:10)

ISSUE 142 – April/May 2021

25th Anniversary year!!!!

An Abridged History of VOA

In this 25th year of my work I want to share with you the journey that we have taken together and it's appropriate to do so because coming up it will be 25 years since I registered the name Victims of Abortion Trauma Counselling and Info Services. Now known as Victims of Abortion or VOA.

Prior to that I had worked with another similar organisation for a short time but ideological differences saw me looking else.

I have recently been asked by some new supporters to say a little about myself and my work. This comes from new readers of newsletter and those who were not with me when I began this work and when some years back, I spoke a little about my work. So here goes.

Several years before the revelation of my own two abortions in early life (suppressed) I had gone to university and studied for Bachelor in psychology (counselling) with a second major in Religious Studies. I didn't know why I did this course of study as I had never been interested in psychology or counselling but I had thought I would've loved to lecture in Old/New Testament history and theology. However, I did the psychology and it was OK but just OK and in due course began to nearly enjoy it.

The lead up to my own healing was amazing. Yes, there was a triggering event (loss through death) and feeling that I didn't deserve that child. This led to an emotional collapse but also led to being invited to attend a holiday retreat place "just to get away and rest for a while" I did attend and heavens above how well planned this had been. Meeting a priest who "shone" when he uttered the word Jesus. During prayer time a long deeply held memory of

abortions clearly surfaced. An answer to nightmares relating to dead infant etc.

Those who prayed over me (Catholic Charismatic group) gently led me to speak to the priest who shone.

After sessions of counselling with him and then as a Catholic a reconciliation he led me to really believe I was healed.

I began VOA (following a short stint with another pro-life ministry) following the words of my priest who shone after my own healing when he said to me memorable words "now you go and do for others what the Lord has done for you." I at first felt I didn't know what to do but then doors opened and individuals came and the psychology counselling degree made sense.

This is a very very edited version of my reluctant entry into this work.

My priest friend also helped me in the early days of speaking with girls/women who came to me for counselling regarding their abortion experience/s. I did (in my own words) replicate and then slowly added more to Father's programme for healing and reading the small amount of literature available by other overseas individuals who had begun to write about this earlier until slowly, as I understood, grief, pain, regret, intent, understood and developed my own personal programme which included saying goodbye ceremonies both religious and non-religious

When I began this work in Australia there was not much in the area of post abortion grief and recovery so I didn't really have much reference and America (where voices of grief had begun to speak out) was so far away, so I set about learning all I could about post abortion grief from both my own experience when I began to understand why nightmares of dead babies, breasts which throbbed at the sound of newborn cry, disassociation when the word abortion was heard, leaving room when others spoke about abortion and other triggers. It made sense.

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I was then given (By my then Archbishop who is now Card. Pell) two rooms to work from (no rent) but no financial support from anywhere. To counter this lack of funds I began the newsletter which would relate my work to my readers my counselling work, discoveries, learnings about abortion grief and indeed a slow public education about what abortion does to woman. Not only kills her baby but forever changes her because the difficulty she had in being with child would result in life long longing for the one whom she led to the death.

At first the newsletter brought no financial support. I began with 37 names and my husband and I paid for all expenses incurred in running of office.

However, slowly there were small donations (God bless them so much and later a supporter, bless him (P.B & family NSW) which eased my anxiety.

Today I have now nearly 2000 recipients including hard copies and email (many others came and went and some over the years have passed away) including about 50 overseas recipients. I used to have 230 overseas recipients but it was too expensive (postage) to maintain. Donations eventually came and when I needed to leave the office given to me to use because the new Archbishop wanted the rooms for other purposes, there were sufficient donations to pay for a tiny tiny (shoebox size) office in the city of Melbourne, and for the ongoing expenses. Rent, stamps, printing, electricity, phone and others as they came.

I have in these year 25 years never written an invoice to charge a fee of anyone. Not because I'm angelic but because when I began, I lost two young clients because they couldn't afford \$10 per visit so I had a discussion with my BOSS (the Lord) and the arrangement was/is that he supplies the funds needed and I will do the work and when he wants me to retire, I will know because donations cease, and indeed, He has been so generous that He has kept me going all this time. Never wealthy or flushed but enough to keep going.

I studied further, (after B.A Psych with Rel Studies second Major) and further was awarded 2 Masters degrees one in Theology and one in Education, a Post Grad. diploma in Secondary Education, Post grad. Diploma Trauma Grief and loss, and so far over 133 hrs trauma studies, learning the meaning of grief and trauma and along the way learned/discovered the very real link between multiple abortions and early childhood abuse. This relates to control issues and self-harm which is a further symptom of the internal hidden pain.

I then added a programme for post abortion grief recovery. I continue to study because I enjoy it but also because I can help my clients and contribute to the body of knowledge for sexual abuse and abortion grief.

Following this, slowly slowly I proceeded to develop a beautiful programme for healing of sexual abuse of child (at home) but

now an adult, who has carried the wounds into adult life and negative painful decisions and lifestyle lived as a result of the abuse.

I have written two books, one on abortion grief (Redeeming Grief) and another on sexual abuse in family (Hidden Pain) and a small manual for counsellors which I give away to them to help them in the area of abuse and abortion grief. A third book is on way but very very slowly.

I have spoken at many, (31) international conferences, and conferences, schools and groups here in Australia, but mostly in Europe and Malaysia/Asia/Oceania. The only major country I haven't been invited to has been USA. I have spoken on radio programmes, and even many years ago on Vatican Radio. I think I've even done a TV interview however I can't really remember but I know that my book on abortion grief was spoken about on Catholic TV programme and it's in many countries.

I have helped to set up a permanent children's memorial garden in South Melbourne, Victoria with children's name plaques on it.

I have spoken to Parliamentarians overseas and some in Australia. Even met a Prime Minister. I have met special people at Vatican and enjoyed so much speaking and being with them.

I even met a European Prince!!!! Imagine someone from the suburbs of Australia doing all this.

Just over a year ago we moved from Eastern Australia to Western Australia (family reasons) and have now set up office here in Perth, though I still maintain my Eastern states Melbourne office with ongoing clients whom I see (when not CV19 restrictions) every 6-8 weeks and who are happy to wait for me. They don't want to go to other therapists. Now because of border closures we speak by phone or zoom.

Today I have 5 university degrees but I have never drawn a salary from the Victims account, just small amounts when I travel, though a supporter (a priest) pays for my travel when those who invite me (other pro-life small groups) can't afford the expenses. VOA does pay for my ongoing

professional development (Points needed to satisfy registration requirements and insurance requirements) as required by my Counselling peak body The Australian Counselling Association (I am now a level 4 specialist counsellor)

I don't have a need to empty the VOA account especially as donations have dwindled to less than I ever thought and by very much, but my husband supports when needed and has always supported what I do.

Added to counselling, and book writing (am trying for book 3) and public speaking I write articles (*apart from Newsletter which goes as far as Iceland, Russia, Hungary India, Rome, Italy, Germany, Papua New Guinea, New Zealand, Solomon Islands, Canada, Israel, Spain, Ireland, Ukraine, and other places I have forgotten*) for publishing, usually on my two topics and

occasionally a short paper on theological topic. and I am published and still am invited to speak publicly both here in Australia and overseas.

I absolutely still love theology and use my knowledge about the creation of woman and her fabulous role as life bearer. This when it's possible. I enjoy writing about healing of woman for the healing of society. Occasionally I also write on contemporary issues.

I am not only qualified but a specialist clinical counsellor (Level 4-highest level) and deal only with abortion and sexual abuse grief as these are still not well represented. The sexual abuse counselling takes up much time but I can humbly say, with some success.

I've also dealt with few clients with domestic violence issues which surfaced with abortion. And several clients with dark occultic/abortion religious issues. (guilt/grief)

I now have a beautiful office near home in Perth city (I can walk there daily/epilepsy no driving) and think/hope I will continue for a little while yet (if God permits and helps with funds of course) then slowly withdraw and give my heart, emotions and head a break. Unless of course something different happens. After long ago having passed the three score

years and ten. In the meantime, I continue to see clients both here in Perth and when possible to get there in Melbourne. Or by electronic methods.

Over the years my supporters (readers) and those who attended my talks have supported me through breast cancer, late diagnosed petit mal epilepsy, (seizures) the tragic death of my son Mark, and spinal fusion surgery. And of course, other colds, flus, etc. With so much love and support and encouragement. And of course, not forgetting the huge move interstate and its effects.

Through all these things I have been held up in prayer and with love and understanding to take as long as needed to recover and come back. This has helped me through some difficult moments.

...Indeed God is good...very good..

Over the past 25 years, together with the help of my readers and supporters I have dealt with several thousand women and much fewer men and hope that I've brought peace into their hearts and a reconciliation with their babies. It's a most rewarding work seeing a mum reconciled with her lost child. Not forgetting or remembering with ongoing pain but remembering her child who passed by in her life and left quickly but with the hope of meeting again one day.

Whilst I will continue to counsel and write, there are several "things" I still want to do before I retire walking into the sunset. However, these I cannot do during these difficult days we are living through. I believe that these two are very important things which are meant to be done and then I will know that I will have completed the task given to me. Then I can really say "It is finished"

So, there it is. Nothing amazing. Just a work which I believe that the Lord in his infinite Mercy gave me to do. I know this because it was not what I had hoped to do as a career but in asking me to do this he has been so generous in His support and took me to places I had longed and hoped to go to but never expected to (Rome/Fatima/Lourdes/Israel.) He has supplied funds to keep this charism going and at times when stressed and doubtful He, through someone, always came to rescue.

God is good. Indeed, very very good.

Dear friends, since the last newsletter and recent weeks I had the opportunity to go to Melbourne (Victoria) to my other office and see my clients there for the first time in a few months. It was so good to see them in person rather than that colourless zoom or phone. Over 2 weeks I gave 32 sessions of counselling and felt happy with the way things are. Hopefully I will have at least one or even two plaques for the children's memorial garden for these babies coming up soon.

Whilst in Melbourne I was also there for the birth of my beautiful grandson Kai. OH, how much I didn't want to leave. It was so hard leaving him behind. But I am grateful that the Lord provided the way for me to be there when he was born. I held him tight to me. I smelled that beautiful baby smell and made all the gooey noises that adults especially nannas make.

Now I have two reasons to go to Melbourne semi regularly. Not only for clients but my two sons and Kai's mother Kirsty and grandson Kai.

Speaking with one of my clients there (Chris) she talked to me about a friend who not long ago had an abortion because of foetal challenges and after the abortion her friend has "gone very strange" her friend is distant, stares blankly, doesn't want to talk, doesn't want to eat, doesn't want to meet up with friends and so on. (all abortion denial grief symptoms.)

Further, according to the speaker (Chris) her friend shops for the new baby clothes. For the coming baby. She's begun to prepare a nursery. Buy baby outfits. Indeed, prepare for the homecoming of her child.

Chris is very very concerned for her friend and asked would I see her if she can get her to come to me.

Of course, I would see her however, it did not happen because according to her "there's nothing wrong with me I'm just preparing to bring my baby home after its born."

Of course, alarm bells went off, denial, complicated grief. A grief too difficult to accept as grief.

With "problem grieving," as in the case of grieving following abortion for foetal abnormality, or abortion to please another, the grieving process can become so confused and complicated that resolution seems impossible. Miller, (1992) posits that the cause of the complicated grief can be found in the psychological attitudes pre-existing in the woman at the time of the termination of pregnancy. These attitudes, ambivalence, deep sense of loss, stress, were present during the decision-making time and in the actual decision itself.

However, there are those who would disagree (Speckhard, 1997) with this, and see the problem found not in the decision-making but in the meaning that the pregnant woman has attached to her pregnancy. Speckhard (1997) states: "the meaning of any given experience can vary greatly not only from one individual to another, but significantly over the duration of a given individual's life" (p 68). Speckhard perceives that there are several different meanings possible pre and post abortion. Pre abortion, no meaning given to pregnancy. Post abortion, meaning given is death of "foetal child" or "loss of pregnancy" and whilst both terms are understood as the same, the meaning is intrinsically and profoundly different.

When abortion trauma is seen as “pregnancy loss” the grief attached to it may be due to the loss of future, hopes, dreams and expectations that were part of this pregnancy. Therefore, seeing abortion grief in this way, the grief experienced could possibly be thought of as being regret over loss of what might have been, that is a possible future, and possibly also grief over the person I could and should have become but will not be.

In the seeing of abortion trauma as “death of a foetal child” (Speckhard, 1997) the meaning of the abortion takes on a whole new meaning. In this view there is an experience of deep sense of loss. With this view there was a relationship; an attachment with the child, and the loss of the child has produced trauma and ensuing grief.

DSM-IV states that “trauma is apparently more severe and longer lasting when the stressor is of human design” and Speckhard adds that it is this very aspect “human design” which complicates the grieving process. The abortion decision always has the “human design” aspect attached to it.

In a study by Boss, (1985) it was found that when a member of the family is physically absent yet psychologically present the dysfunction within that family structure was strongest. It was also found that ambiguity and congruence were resolved through the function of “grieving or closing out” the absent member. By doing this the dysfunction decreased significantly.

Boundary ambiguity is the explanation for the ongoing relationship between those members present and those absent. The family member can either be an existing or pre-existing member, or a member to be, but not yet.

Pregnancy is a good example of boundary ambiguity because a new member of the family exists (in utero) but is not independently here yet.

Attachments are formed with the unseen member yet are potentially at risk due to the vagaries of existence. Boundary ambiguity, where the woman’s psychological attachment to the foetal child continues at the unconscious level, is more likely to occur and yet be less likely to be open for resolution. Further, Speckhard adds that when attachment to the foetal child has occurred and the accompanying role transitions begun, which are then abruptly ended (abortion, stillbirth, miscarriage) then the disruption experienced within the family unit can be excruciatingly stressful.” (p 79).

Where abortion is concerned and specifically where the abortion is of a “wanted child” the inner conflict of the couple or woman who wanted the baby is more difficult to bring to resolution because much of the emotional impact of the procedure is disassociated due to its traumatic nature and conflict persists until acceptance of the death

occurs. This is the reason why abortion needs to be first seen as a death experience and mourning can begin and before progress towards resolution and healing can occur. Incomplete mourning results in impacted grief, which has the potential to be negatively expressed in family structures well into the future. (Transgenerational grief).

Complicated grief can also result because of the need for the parents of the baby to have to make the decision to end the life of their foetal child. The medical profession’s counselling towards early termination of pregnancies where abnormalities are found can be found to be insensitive. Usually counselling for a newly shocked and bereaved couple, towards terminating the pregnancy, and generally there is no counselling to keep the pregnancy going until the child is born contributes very much towards the beginning of complicated grief. This because of the shock of the diagnoses but also because the first option offered is death of their child and often to facilitate a speedy decision are told that their child would suffer in utero or even die in utero so it’s best to terminate before there is more attachment. as parents who had looked forward to the birth of their child, they then were called up to make the most awful decision a parent can ever have to make. The time that their child would die.

Getting past that decision is often the very thing that will break a previously loving couple to the end of their relationship, marriage.

I believe that this is because either one or the other did not agree with the decision but went along with it because of the words spoken by their medical people and as one of my long-ago clients said “we didn’t fight for our baby, we just went along with what was expected of us.” (Diane)

Communication between a couple is of utmost importance. Sharing of grief. Consoling one another. Speaking of their son/daughter doing all things possible to remember this little one who passed by their lives even for just a short time. Giving their baby a name because in doing so makes his/her presence very real and a dignity accorded to him/her and due to him/her.

Journeying with such a bereaved couple or even single person ensures that their loss and subsequent pain does not turn into complicated type of grief which will become traumatic thus leaving its terrible imprint. But is also validated.

Sharing and participating in this most sacred life event. Sharing of feelings and allowing the supporting the grief of the couple will eventually complete the “work of mourning” (Freud, 1917). However, Beverley Raphael, (1984) says that this openness in communication is “difficult to achieve at the time of loss because each fears setting off the other’s grief” and this also applies to family and friends, the fear of further hurting the young couple whose little infant left them too soon.

Letters

Dear Anne,

I know that I have said to you in the past but your last bulletin (issue 141) was by far the best that you have produced.
I liked your assessment of the American Elections.
I very very much liked your article about the throw away culture you seem to have nailed it. And I was so much astounded with the figures of nearly 43,000,000 babies who died by abortion.
When you say it quickly it doesn't make sense 43 million it sounds just like a number and I cannot possibly even imagine how much that is.
When I think about it the population of Australia in nearly 26,000,000 so imagine all of Australia then another 17,000,000 more million. And then we wonder why the world is in such a dreadful state.

I often think how did we get to this place?
Anyway, dear Anne, thank you for all you do and your really good bulletin which I look forward to very much

God bless you,
Sarah K. (WA)

*Hi Sarah, thank you for your email and like you I am also left shaking my head at the state of our world and the fact that it can't be seen what the cause might be. We can see the effect but don't want to acknowledge our part in it. Glad you like newsletter. I like hearing that it is liked and appreciated,
Anne*

Dear Anne,

I enclose for your work a small donation. I wish it was more but as a widow it's not possible
God bless you my dear and please keep going its an important work you are doing.

Anne W, (Qld)

*Dear Anne, thank you so much for your kindness. I very much appreciate your care for my work.
Blessings in abundance
Anne*

Dearest Anne,

Thank you for your latest issue of the newsletter as always, I appreciated it very much.
I don't know where you get your numbers for the world abortions but they are staggering. Living in a quiet little place in Australia those numbers seem so far away from anything that touches us.
Not long ago I read that the number of deaths in WWII were approximately 75,000,000 and in our day we read about 43,000,000 million babies dead in a year.
What has happened to human beings/ have we lost a sense of humanity? Have we forgotten the dignity inherent in each human being?
Has our memory been impaired and confused with modern life benefits? I don't know I cant make sense of it.
Keep going as long as you can dear.

God bless you

Marie L (Qld)

*Dear Marie,
Like you I have thought the same about the numbers and how related they are between WWII and our annual intentional death numbers. I think the only thing we can do is say "Lord have Mercy on us"*

Anne

Dear Anne,

My deepest apologies for not responding to your call for help much sooner. It's been a difficult nearly two years. This CVd19 has affected our family very much. But we are managing but we do hope that the end is in sight before much worse happens.
Best regards

Sue T (NSW)

*Dear Sue,
Don't worry please. a lot of my readers and friends have been affected by this unseen monster.
We pray that the Lord intervenes and helps us.
Keep well and bless you.
Anne*

Death of a foetal child for abnormality clearly has different dimensions of grief that is *Anticipatory Grief*, a type of grief, which begins in anticipation of a definite loss. *Non-finite grief*. A grief whose imprint remains lifelong.

Complicated Grief. A type of grief, which is obstructed and incomplete. *Disenfranchised grief*. A grief which remains unacknowledged. *Dysfunctional grief*. A grief in which boundary ambiguities are strong. *Chronic grief*. A grief made more difficult because of depression, guilt, anger, blame. *Multiple loss grief*. Losses never exist alone. This grief can be the trigger of past-unacknowledged losses, which because of this last loss have been brought to the surface and now demand attention. Indeed, the nature of the trauma experienced by a couple of whom is demanded this decision to terminate the life of a much-wanted child is not surprising and at the various grief types which are manifested when this type of death visits.

The aspect of the “human design” (DSM IV) which at times complicates the grieving process is the love infused into every human being. Each called to onforward that same love and when love wounded there is a damage to the process of loving.

Dear friends as I come to the end of another newsletter, I would like to thank you for being with me during all these years. Imagine! 142 issues of newsletter generally sent out every 6-8 weeks.

I would like to thank all those who have prayed, donated, sent encouraging words, picked me up when I needed picking up and for all that has been done to help me to continue this work.

For me it’s been a work of both joy and sorrow. Joy at happy endings and much sorrow at the wounds, hurt, pain I have encountered over the many years of listening. There have been times when I have thought that I have heard it all but not so. Something uglier emerged.

Looking into the abortion/sexual abuse connection there have been times when I needed to take time out and go to a huge shopping centre and take out my credit card. I think it’s called retail therapy.

When story too was ugly to even think about, I have taken myself off into hills and just sat there. Nothing else but sat there or have even taken myself off and sat in Church near my office. Not pray because I couldn’t pray at that time just sat there.

However, there have also been beautiful moments when someone said to me “thank you Anne without you I would have ended it all” or “I would be in mental hospital” etc etc etc.

I have encountered both positive and negative.

Please pray for me (health not so good) and my clients both in Perth and Melbourne that I may continue to do well by them.

Marg, Barbara, Toni, Helen, Bec, Matt (lots) Julie, Chris (lots) Thea, Belle, Sharyn, Jill, (Jo)

Finally thank you especially to Tim, Mary P, Margaret, Paul, Carol H. and all those who have carried me.

Till we meet again

Thank you and bless you.



Anne Lastman

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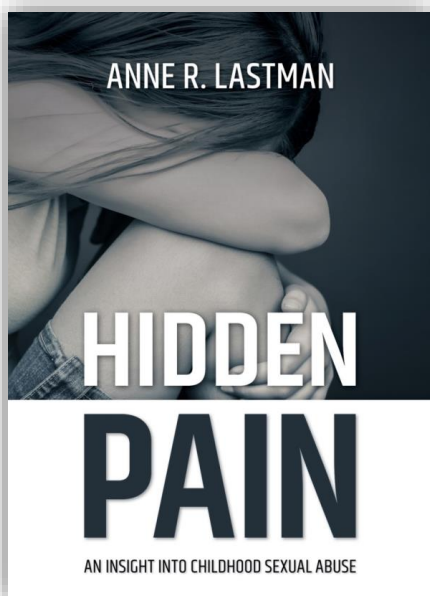
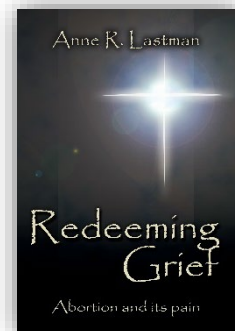
Contact Anne via email for international orders. anne@victimsofabortion.com.au

CLEARANCE!

There is a limited number of the first edition of Redeeming Grief to be cleared at a reduced priced of **\$10.00** including postage within Australia.

If you or anyone you know may be interested, please pass this on to help me clear them.

AUD **\$10.00** (Including free postage within Australia)



HIDDEN PAIN is written about memories which are hidden and cannot be spoken out loud. It is a book about shame, pain, sorrow and lives which have gone wrong both for victims, families, and perpetrators. Sexual abuse of children is common in all communities, in all societies, and yet it's still one of the last remaining taboos. It is something which cannot be spoken about because it's so awful, so inappropriate that it cannot be discussed. Yet discussed it must be, because the children are crying and pleading to be helped.

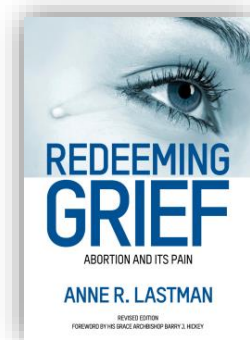
This is not a step by step guide to dealing with abuse. It is the result of my engagement with those who have come to me originally for post abortion counselling and on further investigation it was found that abuse (especially in cases of multiple abortions) existed in their history. It is my hope that **HIDDEN PAIN** can be of help to those who read it and more so be vigilant and not to turn away when a child is suffering.

AUD **\$20.00**

(Including free postage within Australia)

NEW REVISED EDITION! **REDEEMING GRIEF** is a reflection of over 17 years of counselling and study of abortion grief, which is experienced by some women who choose to undergo this elective procedure. These reflections are the result of listening to over 1500 personal stories and listening to the expressions used by the women as they speak about their decision to abort the life of their child. These reflections then attempt to reconstruct the meaning that this procedure has had for the aborting woman and how this one procedure has been the catalyst for life changes.

AUD **\$20.00** (Including free postage within Australia)



To order your copies of **Hidden Pain** or **Redeeming Grief**, please complete the form (right) and send with Cash, Cheque (made out to Victims of Abortion) or Money Order to:

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