



Help is at hand ...

HEALING TRAUMA *in Children*

A practical guide for foster and kinship carers

Sonia Kennedy

Foster and kinship carers play a vital role in our community. Their task is not an easy one.

Most children in care do not settle quickly and can become disruptive, affecting the entire family. Many carers are unprepared for the level of support and intensive focus and effort that these children need. Research tells us that children with traumatic and chaotic backgrounds have difficulty regulating their emotions. They lack the cortical capacity to efficiently process their thoughts and feelings, making it hard for them to change their behaviour to fit into their new life. Typical parenting strategies may not work.

But help is at hand.

This book aims to help carers understand trauma and its impact on the vulnerable child they are caring for. A carer's role is not just parenting; it is about having the ability to teach children the skills to manage their

reactions. As opposed to a text heavy on theory, this book is designed so that you can access information quickly when you need it for specific situations that arise. Most importantly, it offers detailed solutions and strategies for day-to-day emergencies as well as more long-term solutions. It is not about medication; it's not about behaviour management plans, punishment, judgement, or diagnosis. It is about developing a carer's awareness, kindness, compassion, patience, strength, and education.

It is difficult to understand how much trauma some children have suffered. No-one can take away the traumatic experiences a child has lived through. What carers need to do is teach the child how to live with their memories and their symptoms — it is their story. Help them manage their future, so the past trauma doesn't take over and control their life.

Sonia Kennedy is an Australian clinical social worker with over 20 years of private and public clinical and training experience. She is an accredited mental health clinician and an approved counsellor with Victim Services NSW and has worked with adults, adolescents, children and adults. Sonia has experience in a range of settings, including child protection, corrections, education, and veterans and family counselling. Her professional work experience includes eight years at the Department of Family and Community Services and seventeen years in her own rural-based private practice contracting to a number of government and non-government organisations. She has provided clinical supervision to patient/client care staff and has extensive experience in cancer counselling and support, workplace and relationship issues, traumatic events, grief and loss, sexual assault, and family violence. She has significant experience in treating post-trauma stress reactions, complex PTSD, anxiety and depression. Sonia uses Trauma Informed Therapy, CBT, DBT, Systems Theory, Sensorimotor and Cross-Cultural Psychotherapy to help clients gain symptom relief and improve their general life quality.

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