

Treating addiction by being trauma informed

Working through the past as part of the treatment process offers hope of recovery to many who live with addiction.

When trying to persuade ourselves and others to let go of people or situations impeding our lives, we may loosely declare, “the past is behind us” and “yesterday is history”.

Yet such cliches could not be further from the truth for many people living with addiction, for whom working through the past offers hope for the future.

Understanding how trauma can shape and guide addiction is the cornerstone of one of Australia’s leading addiction and treatment centres.

Focusing on recognising the impact of early childhood trauma on the development of adult psychopathology, South Pacific Private (SPP) has seen thousands of people emerge from its doors on a trajectory to recovery, says consultant psychiatrist Dr Bruce Lachter.

The gamut of mental health and addictions is treated at SPP: alcohol and problem drinking, drug and substance abuse, prescription medication abuse, depression, anxiety, mood and adjustment disorders, post-traumatic stress disorder, bipolar disorder, sex addiction, gambling addiction, and dual diagnosis.

“Many addictions stem from childhood trauma, emotional deprivation and neglect,” says Dr Lachter, who has more than 20 years of psychotherapy practice.

“And the way we are treated from birth



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Dr Bruce Lachter

The gamut of mental health disorders and addictions is treated at South Pacific Private.

will affect how we manage stress throughout our entire lives.

“In addiction, we can often identify a time or an event early on in someone’s life that clearly influences or is enacted in the present.”

Based on a model pioneered at The Meadows treatment centre, Arizona, a high-profile facility renowned for treating A-list clients, SPP was founded by Lorraine and Bill Wood in 1993, as part of the couple’s own healing process.

Having confronted their addiction and mental health issues, the Woods introduced The Meadows’ model to Australia at a time when evidence-based methodology was not

widely known. Lorraine Wood has only recently passed away.

“We follow a model of trauma-informed practice, allowing patients to articulate their experiences in a safe environment,” says Dr Lachter.

“But it is also important to work on the compulsive or addictive behaviours ‘up front’, often entailing a detox under medical supervision, so that the underlying emotional struggles can then be addressed.”

Dr Lachter says the strict program means there are no mobile phones; no caffeine. Even rigorous exercise is discouraged, so as to restrict avoidance of emotional struggles.

“In the interests of promoting under-

standing rather than blame and fault, we will often also consider intergenerational trauma. After-care may mean involving family members in the healing process,” he says.

SPP’s inpatient program is run by a multi-disciplinary team and in many cases is followed by a day program which provides a step-down between in-patient care and a return to community life.

“South Pacific Private sets many patients on a course for recovery, by providing a robust psychological approach,” Dr Lachter says.

A range of day programs is also offered to those who have had prior group therapy or are former patients or family members.

SOUTH PACIFIC PRIVATE

Australia’s Leading Treatment Centre Since 1993

South Pacific Private treats addiction, substance abuse, mental health disorders and PTSD within a trauma-informed therapeutic framework.

As experts in psychiatric and medical care, intensive group therapy, psychoeducation and other evidence-based modalities, South Pacific Private enables clients to develop emotional regulation for the best chance of Recovery.



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