



Survivor Guide
Developed by Survivors for Survivors
By the Break The Silence Focus Group 2017

Break The Silence
Registered Charity in Scotland SC036263
Company Ltd by Guarantee SC341157



Survivor Guide

You may be reading this because you were raped or sexually abused. We hope the information helps you to make some sense of how you are feeling and to encourage you to seek support if you haven't already done so. You don't have to go through your trauma alone - there are people who want to help and support you. You may not feel that you will be believed – perhaps you weren't believed in the past, but **you will be believed** in the present.



What's Happening to Me?

Many children and adults bury away their pain as they feel there is nothing they can do about it.

If you have been abused or raped and haven't told anyone, perhaps it's because you didn't feel you could trust anyone with the information, you may have been too young to speak about it or you couldn't put it into words, perhaps you felt threatened or too frightened, felt guilty, responsible or perhaps you felt ashamed or were afraid of not being believed.

As a Survivor, it is important for you to recognise that the feelings you may be experiencing eg. blame, guilt and shame are part of being a victim of a personal violation. Many Survivors report the following and more. Read through the list and tick or think about the ones that you feel might be relevant for you ...

Addictions		Guilt	
Agoraphobia		Interpersonal problems – lack of trust	
Anxiety		Low self-esteem, low confidence	
Blame yourself for abuse		No self-worth	
Eating Disorders		Phobias	
Fear		Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)	
Fear of medical procedures		Relationship problems	
Fear of parenting/abusing own children		Sexual problems	
Feelings of persecution		Shame	
Flashbacks		Substance abuse (alcohol, drugs)	

BLAME!



Regardless of what has occurred, rape and childhood sexual abuse is never the fault or responsibility of the individual experiencing it. **Don't Blame Yourself – it was not your fault.**



If you imagine that you wake up one evening and find someone has broken into your home - your safe sanctuary. How would you feel?

You may feel some fear, some anger that someone had violated your home – your safe sanctuary, that they had taken your possessions or belongings. You may possibly be outraged that they broke into your home. You will probably call the Police to report the crime.

You would possibly tell others about the break-in - this violation of your safe sanctuary, and others would feel empathy and understanding for you and tell you how sorry they were that this had happened to you.

They would show your compassion and understanding as you had been the victim of a crime – something someone committed against you that wasn't your fault.

However, when abused or raped, many people tend to blame themselves. They don't speak to others and they hold this trauma within themselves burying their pain and distress. They may feel that it was their fault, or that people might think they deserved it in some way, or that people wouldn't understand or believe them.

Rape and childhood sexual abuse are personal violations. They are crimes committed against you - something which was done to you by someone else.

It is absolutely not your fault.

Self Harm

Survivors often experience self-harming behaviours, particularly when you may have felt unable to express feelings such as rage, guilt, sadness or when you are remembering details of the sexual abuse/rape.

Healing from the effects of sexual abuse/rape often involves painful and difficult memories resurfacing.

Whilst self-harming can cover alcohol and drug misuse, it can also cover a whole range, from cutting, burning, biting, pulling hair out, eating disorders, over exercising can all be covered as self-harm.

The reasons for each are very individual- some people may cut their arms to feel physical rather than emotional pain, some people may cut so that they can feel cleansed when they see blood, for others it might be to punish rather than relieve. If you decide to engage with Break the Silence we will help you to look at past coping mechanisms and enable you to find less harmful ways of dealing with your pain.

Night Terrors

Night Terrors are a sleep disorder that affects people who have experienced a trauma and in dreams there may be certain events being re-lived or horrendous nightmare and the terror and fear can cause you to wake up screaming or shouting, your body may be rigid with fear and you might be paralysed with terror.

The night terrors will also cause high levels of distress and may feel like a panic attack.

Insomnia

Stress from a traumatic event can often lead to a variety of sleep problems. When the body is overstimulated, the brain is flooded with neurochemicals that keep us awake, such as epinephrine and adrenaline, making it difficult to wind down at the end of the day. The neurochemicals remain present in the brain and can interrupt your normal sleep cycle. The result can be bad dreams, and daytime fatigue caused by sleep disturbance.

Coping Strategies

Many people affected by trauma develop coping strategies that may be negative to their physical and/ or emotional well-being such as self-harm, addictions to or dependency on drugs (both prescription and recreational drugs) and alcohol can be misused. These coping strategies may numb emotions and blank out memories that are distressing however, they don't necessarily deal with the underlying issue of trauma and can contribute to more issues.



Be Kind to Yourself

Please care and be kind to yourself. Something bad may have been done to you but don't deny yourself pleasure, or punish yourself. Try to care for yourself by treating your body with respect and kindness – help yourself to heal.



Flashbacks

Flashbacks are vivid memories in which a person feels they are re-experiencing past events. The flashback produces a vivid recollection or picture of this incident and includes the intense emotional reaction and physical pain experienced at the time and visual, auditory and tactile memories of the rape/abuse itself. At times, you may experience such intense flashbacks and it may feel as if the abuse is happening again. Flashbacks are one of the ways in which blocked-off feelings and memories can surface.

Dealing with Flashbacks

Remind yourself that this isn't happening now, even if it feels like it. You are remembering something that may have happened years ago. Try to breathe slowly, focus on your breathing and ground yourself. Re-orientate yourself to the present by becoming aware of your surroundings. Identify what triggered the flashback and write it down. Remind yourself that you are not in that situation, try to calm and reassure the part of you that is frightened.

Triggers

Triggers may involve general reminders of childhood and/or trauma. A trigger is anything that reminds you of your abuse/rape or brings up feelings associated with the abuse/rape. Triggers often operate out of our awareness and can come through any of our senses. Identifying your triggers may, in itself, lessen the effect they have on you.



After the Flashback

Flashbacks can be emotionally and physically exhausting. Take time to recover. Rest and be kind to yourself.



Don't Despair – Help is Available

Although you can't change the past, with time, care and support you can make sense of what has happened to you and work towards a better, brighter and healthier future.

It can be hard to find the courage to seek support. Break The Silence will make the process as simple as possible for you. You will have access to professionally qualified Counsellors and a range of professional support options for you to choose from.

There is no fee/charge for the services as funding is secured to cover the costs of services through local authority contracts, trusts and foundation grants/awards, fundraising activities and donations to the charity.

Their service is completely confidential and personal information held is done so securely and in accordance with Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) data protection regulations.

Break The Silence also provide four professional counselling sessions for partners and family members of Survivors (13+).



WILL BE BELIEVED!

- ♥ become less isolated as you deal with the secrecy and shame of rape/abuse
- ♥ join other Survivors who possess the courage to give voice to their suffering
- ♥ create the possibility for receiving help and compassion and to feel liberated
- ♥ participate in ending child sexual abuse/rape by breaking the silence that sustains it
- ♥ can acknowledge the reality of the abuse/rape
- ♥ gain awareness of your feelings – the child that you should have been
- ♥ open yourself up to healthy relationships
- ♥ can view your experience and yourself from the perspective of an understanding supporter
- ♥ become a model for others who have survived abuse/rape
- ♥ make changes that promote inner pride and strength
- ♥ situate yourself as a person in the present as past issues are dealt with

You can refer yourself to Break The Silence for professional support when you feel ready. Don't allow other people to pressure you to seek help - you will know when the time is right. When you do engage with Break The Silence, if at any time during the process you feel you need to take a break, you can. As an organisation established by a Survivor for Survivors, they will support you on your recovery journey regardless of how long it takes.



Client Journey

The journey through counselling will go at your pace and Break The Silence will treat you with respect, dignity and courtesy. You will not be judged.

Many of their Clients have reported that they never spoke out about their experiences as they felt ashamed, that somehow they believe it was their fault or because they had a bad experience elsewhere. It is important to say that this personal violation is a trauma that happened to you, not because of you.

Break The Silence have worked with Clients who may have boxed away their trauma, or not even been fully aware of what happened. Clients often speak of relationships being an issue, they could be unable to start or maintain a relationship, being in other abusive relationships or simply not feeling an emotional connection with others. This is common for Survivors.



As people cope by boxing away their traumas, or letting it out by different behaviours, some people also don't really understand what happened in their childhood. This can be as a result of how your memory processes a trauma. It may be fragmented, it probably won't be in any sort of chronological order and at times you might have viewed it as not making sense.



When this starts to seep out, it can have triggers such as sounds, smells, visual images or memories that are intrusive and you have no control over or they could be flashbacks where you feel that you are re-living the experience as it feels it is happening now. Again, these are very common for traumatised Clients.



In counselling you might start off feeling that things are getting worse as more memories open up and you may find your mood initially gets worse. However if you stick through the process, once you are able to process the trauma, you may find great benefit and better able to deal with the overwhelming emotions you experience.



Who Are Break The Silence?

Operating since 2004, Break The Silence provide a range of tailored, holistic support options for Survivors of rape and childhood sexual abuse, aged 13 years and above.

Options for support include; one to one professional counselling using qualified psychotherapists, outreach counselling, couple support, complementary therapies, advocacy, group activities, volunteering opportunities and a befriending service.

All support is designed to assist Survivors to work through their trauma, move forward and improve their social well-being and psychological health, enabling and supporting Survivors to achieve an attainable standard of living, health and family life.

Break The Silence was founded by Kate Short, a Survivor of childhood sexual abuse as she wanted to help others and had a vision to establish "a centre that was easily accessible, offered a holistic approach to meet the needs of Survivors, all genders, their partners and their families. It would offer a range of support services in one place to address many issues, not just one. It would be welcoming, non-threatening and safe. It would be Break the Silence."



RECOVERY JOURNEY



It's not always a straight road - Sometimes it takes a little longer.



VOLUNTEERING

Explore other opportunities to help you in the next phase of your recovery journey.

COMPLEMENTARY THERAPIES
Try reiki or hypnotherapy to aid relaxation, reduce stress, improve sleep and aid the healing process.

GROUP ACTIVITIES

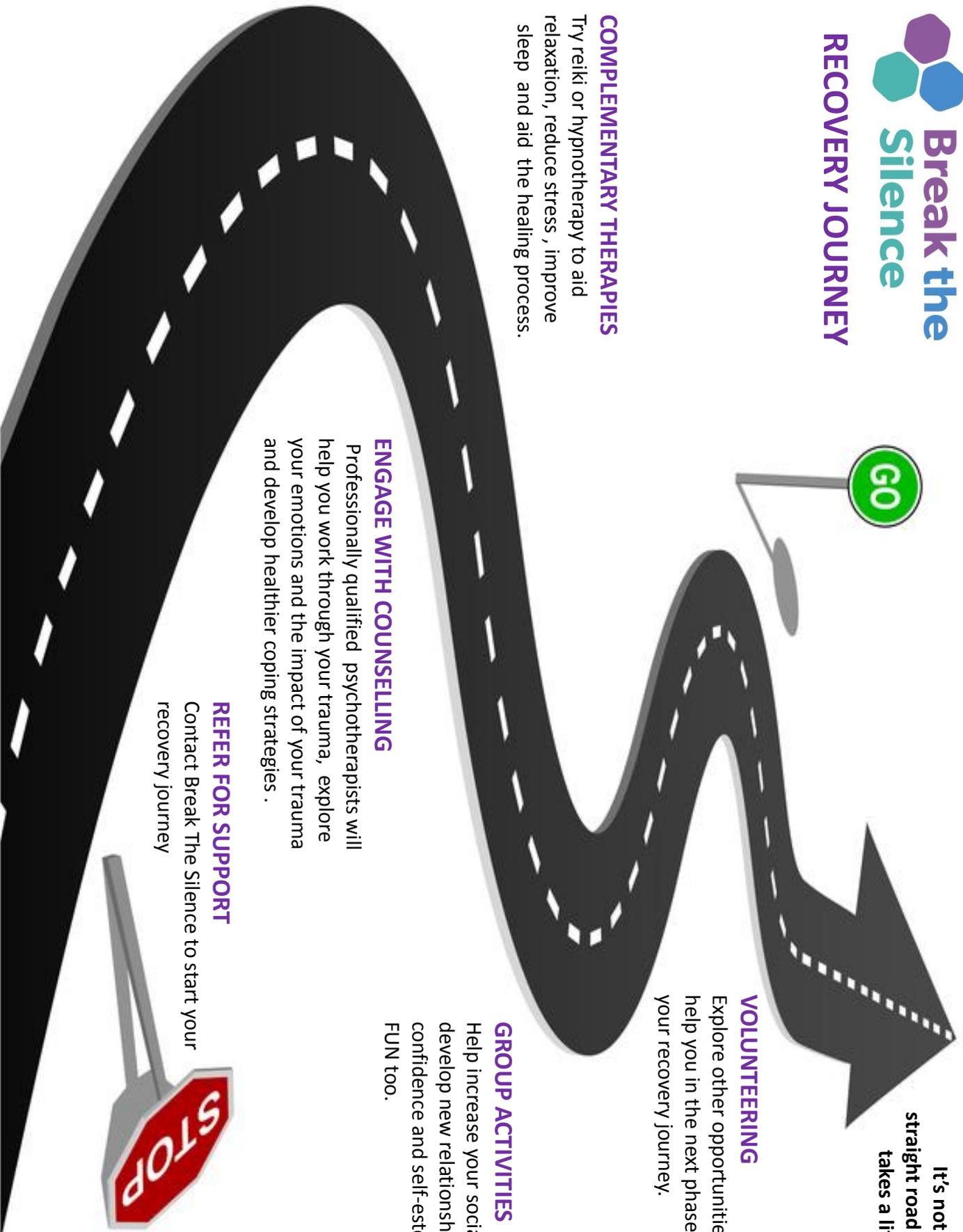
Help increase your social interaction, develop new relationships, increase confidence and self-esteem and have FUN too.

ENGAGE WITH COUNSELLING

Professionally qualified psychotherapists will help you work through your trauma, explore your emotions and the impact of your trauma and develop healthier coping strategies .

REFER FOR SUPPORT

Contact Break The Silence to start your recovery journey





Am I Eligible for Support?

Break The Silence provide support for residents in East and North Ayrshire (aged 13+). In addition we can provide support for people who were abused/neglected as children while living in care in Scotland as we are the pan-Ayrshire provider in partnership with Future Pathways.

Rape and childhood sexual abuse issues can affect family members as well as the victim. Finding out that a family member has experienced rape or sexual abuse can have a devastating effect and they may experience overwhelming feelings of distress, anger and guilt. We offer to see any family member or partner over 13 years of age who feels they need to speak to someone. These sessions are free and are limited to 4 appointments.

Break the Silence welcomes people of all genders without prejudice and supports equality and diversity. However we are unable to support people who have a charge, conviction or committed any sexual offence.



Where Can I Get Support?

Break The Silence provide support from our offices in Kilmarnock, East Ayrshire. We also provide support through our outreach programme across East and North Ayrshire from the following locations:

North Ayrshire clinics include; Ardrossan and Irvine

East Ayrshire clinics include Kilmarnock, Dalmellington and Cumnock.

If you have a specific challenge or barrier preventing you from accessing support through our main office in Kilmarnock or through any of our outreach locations, or if you live in a more rural or outlying area and cannot access our existing clinics, please contact us so that we may discuss and address your needs.



How Do I Refer Myself for Support?

You can telephone us on 01563 559558. You can refer yourself or a friend or family member (with their consent) for support, or you can use our on-line referral facility by visiting our website: www.breakthesilence.org.uk or you can write to us.

Whichever communication method you choose, Staff and Volunteers at Break The Silence understand that the first step to accessing support is often the hardest. Be assured that when you contact us you will be treated with courtesy, dignity and respect.

Once you have referred yourself for support, our administration team will review appointment availability and contact you within 7 days to schedule an information session (please note this may be longer in peak/holiday periods).

Telephone Enquiry to Break The Silence regarding accessing support for rape/childhood sexual abuse for self, family member or through a third party (referral partner) with consent.

Admin Team member will provide some information about our support services and ask if the caller wishes to **make a referral for support** in order to access Break The Silence services

If a self-referral or on behalf of a family member, or through an organisation,
the caller will be asked to provide;

Client Name, Date of Birth, Address, Contact No, Email address
Preferred contact method, How they heard about Break The Silence
Advise us of any additional support needs
Reason for referral: CSA/Rape/Both
Preferred location for support, Preference for Male/Female Counsellor
Other Relevant Information

If referring on behalf of someone else,
you must ensure that you have the individual's consent to do so.

Communication from Break The Silence using the individual's preferred communication method will be made to confirm the Date, Time of the **Information Session**. The Information Session is not a counselling session but is carried out to confirm our terms and conditions of support, and to discuss what support best suits individual needs.

Communication from Break The Silence in preferred communication method will be made to **confirm your first appointment**.
Counselling appointments are provided on a fortnightly basis at your preferred/available venue.

If you are unable to attend, please notify a member of the Administration Team so that the appointment can be offered to another client in need, and to ensure that if you wish to re-schedule that an alternative appointment is arranged for you.



Service User Agreement Explained

At your information session, you will be asked to sign our service users' agreement. The purpose of the agreement is simply to let you know what you can expect from us and what we need from you. Detailed below are some explanations around our Service Users Agreement for your reference and a copy of the agreement is on the facing page for your reference.

- We secure funding to pay for all the costs associated with our services so that finance isn't a barrier to accessing support. However, we do need to ensure best use of our resources and therefore it is really important that when you are unable to attend an appointment for what-ever reason, that you let us know with as much advance notice as possible. We do understand that things happen and appointments sometimes have to be cancelled but by notifying us, we can use the time in a positive way.
- Sometimes people regularly miss their appointments without giving notification. If you have commenced counselling and encounter other life events or need to simply take a break for a while, please let us know. We can suspend your support and you can re-engage with us later when you feel more ready.
- If you miss a number of appointments without contacting us, we will offer the appointment slot to other Clients waiting for support, but if you contact us and wish to continue with your counselling support we will endeavour to find another appointment slot, however you may have to wait for availability.
- We do not carry out any counselling/other activities with Clients who appear to be under the influence of alcohol, prescription, non-prescription drugs, or any other illegal substances. It simply wouldn't be ethical for us to work with you when you have reduced capacity and it's against our health and safety protocols.

Break The Silence are bound by law to comply with legislation, therefore there may be instances where we are unable to protect your confidentiality. For example: where Break The Silence has to comply with Local Authority Guidelines for Child Protection - Workers may have to break Client confidentiality if they receive specific information concerning a child who is at risk of physical, sexual or emotional abuse. We would advise you of any action required to be taken at the point of disclosure.

By registering with Break The Silence, I agree to and understand the following;

- *I have not committed or been charged or convicted of a sexual offence.*
- *I am aged 13 years+ and a resident of East/North Ayrshire.*
- *I will endeavour to attend appointments and will provide as much advance notice as possible should I need to cancel an appointment.*
- *I understand that if I am late for my appointment, I may only be seen for the remainder of the hour, at the discretion of the Counsellor.*
- *If I fail to attend an appointment and have not provided advance notice, I may not be allocated another appointment immediately.*
- *I understand that where appointments are regularly being cancelled or being missed, I will be given the opportunity to take a break from counselling but I can re-refer for support in the future.*
- *If my appointment has to be cancelled or amended, Break the Silence will contact me in advance, wherever possible.*
- *Break the Silence operates a zero tolerance towards aggressive or violent behaviour. I understand that any such behaviour may result in termination of support/activities.*
- *I understand that my session may be cancelled if I am under the influence of alcohol, prescription, non-prescription drugs, or any other illegal substances.*
- *I agree that Break the Silence may collect health statistics at each session.*
- *I agree that Break the Silence may hold my personal information on their confidential database and that data held will be done so in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.*
- *Break The Silence will respect my right to confidentiality, however there may be times when they have to share information that has been divulged e.g. where Break The Silence has to comply with Local Authority Guidelines for Child Protection - Workers may have to break Client confidentiality if they receive specific information concerning a child who is at risk of physical, sexual or emotional abuse. Break The Silence would advise me of any action required to be taken at the point of disclosure. Copies of Break The Silence confidentiality agreement are available on request.*
- *I understand that information shared with other relevant agencies will only be given after it is discussed and agreed by me beforehand, unless under special circumstances as described above.*
- *I acknowledge that Break The Silence have a complaints procedure that can be used to address any complaints I may have regarding services/support.*

Signed: Please print name:

Date: