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**From:**  
**Sent:** Tuesday, 27 October 2015 6:05 PM  
**To:** Advocacy and Support  
**Cc:**  
**Subject:** What has worked for me as an incest survivor

Hello,

I am writing in response to your press release requesting information about therapy etc that has worked for sexual abuse survivors.

I am a survivor of sexual abuse perpetrated by my older brother. I am now 54 years old and recognised that I was an incest survivor when I was 30 years old. Shortly afterwards I attended a 16 week incest survivors program [REDACTED] but it did little to help my recovery. Since then I have graduated from university, become a registered psychologist, worked for 20 years and experienced a lot of mental illness. I have spent many months in psychiatric hospitals and many years in individual and group therapy. I have been diagnosed with Borderline Personality Disorder, Complex PTSD and Depression and taken medication since 1990. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] My abdomen and left arm are heavily scarred from self harm inflicted over 20+ years. I have been using drugs since I was 13 years old to try to manage my distressing emotions, but have finally managed to put them aside and am now proud to be drug free.

There have been three services that have been really beneficial in my healing journey:

1. I attended a Trauma Group run by Central Coast Health, facilitated by [REDACTED] for a number of years in 2003 -2005. In the initial 10 weeks of the program I was introduced to basic concepts related to trauma such as triggers, distress tolerance, boundaries, etc, which really helped. After this they offered ongoing weekly Process Groups where people who had received the basic education were able to process their life experiences. This was very supportive and gave me my first understanding of the impact of trauma on my life and a safe and supportive environment to heal.
2. I have received excellent psychotherapy from Consultant Psychiatrist [REDACTED] for the past 5 years. This therapy has given me a constant source of understanding and support and complemented the work I have done with Heal For Life (see below). [REDACTED]
3. Last year I was introduced to Heal For Life Foundation in the Hunter Valley. I attended 3 Healing Weeks there in 2014 and then completed the volunteer training program in February this year. At Heal For Life I was taught how to connect to the damaged parts of my psyche and learnt strategies to assist myself to deal with the sequelae of the trauma I experienced as a child. Although this has not stopped me from experiencing emotional problems this year in response to losing my job, it has given me a sense of self pride that I have never experienced before in my life. I now have hope that my life will continue to change in a positive direction, that I will overcome my interpersonal and emotional difficulties and have a happier life in the last few decades than I have experienced to date. Heal for Life provides strategies that work, genuine empathetic support and opportunities to give back to other survivors on their healing journeys. I am no longer waiting to die, but looking with anticipation to the coming years.

I hope this information is useful to you.