



Evaluation of Trauma Release Exercises (TRE) Workshop for Bushfire Affected Communities

Saturday October 26th, 2013

Yarra Glen, Victoria

SPONSORED BY SWBZA INC

(Skyline & Wallace Road Bushfire Zone Alliance Inc.)

Richmond Heath (B.Phys)

Trauma Release Australia



SWBZA INCORPORATED / SWBZA LANDCARE GROUP

11 November 2013

To Whom It May Concern

The Skyline Road North and Wallace Road Bushfire Zone Alliance (SWBZA Incorporated) Group wish to express our thanks and support for the Trauma Release Exercises (TRE) workshops presented by Physiotherapist Richmond Heath from Trauma Release Australia.

The aim of the workshops were not only to provide community members with a practical resource to assist their specific recovery from the Black Saturday bushfires, but also to minimise stress and maximise wellbeing in all areas of life to help reconnect local communities.

To this end, all community members from Christmas Hills, surrounding areas and additional bushfire support and community networks were invited to participate in the workshops regardless of whether they had been specifically fire affected.

The two 1 day TRE Workshops, conducted during October and November 2013 attracted approximately 80 participants from all walks of life including people that had been impacted by bushfires, floods, victims of car accidents, deaths in the family, domestic violence and childhood trauma.

The additional 2 day workshop provided community members an opportunity to deepen their personal experience and understanding of TRE, as well as teaching them how to safely support family and friends through the TRE process.

The positive feedback and heartfelt thanks we have received from people who attended these TRE workshops has been overwhelming. We have been inundated with requests to host further workshops next year and are planning an additional workshop in March 2014.

We fully support Trauma Release Australia and the provision of TRE workshops, not only as a practical and effective recovery resource for communities affected by natural disaster, but also as an efficient method of pre-incident education for emergency services and communities members alike to help minimise stress and maximise wellbeing in all areas of life.



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

TRE is an empowering self-help process that teaches people how to intentionally use their body's innate shaking and trembling reflex in a safe and controlled way to release the physical impacts of stress, tension and trauma without having to recall or discuss past events.

The Skyline and Wallace Road Bushfire Zone Alliance Inc (SWBSA) sponsored two 1-day TRE workshops during October 2013, providing free attendance to all members of Bushfire Affected Communities within the Yarra Valley and surrounding areas. The cost of delivery was approximately \$80 per attendee for 64 participants across the two 1-day workshops.

An evaluation questionnaire consisting of 6 questions using a 9-point rating scale was provided to attendees of the 2nd workshop held in Yarra Glen on October 26th 2013. 30 of the 39 participants completed the questionnaire after attending either the full day or the morning session only.

100% of respondents rated the 'the effectiveness of funding if this workshop was funded through community recovery grants,' as extremely effective. (24 out of 30 rated the effectiveness of this funding at 9 out of 9)

100% extremely agreed 'other areas affected by natural disasters would benefit from TRE workshops,' (26 out of 30 extremely agreed at 9 out of 9)

100% stated they were likely to continue the TRE exercises after the workshop, with 29 out of 30 rating it as extremely likely (rating 8 and above.)

100% found the information about the body's response to stress and trauma helpful (all ratings above 7) and 28 out of 30 found the information about neurogenic tremors as extremely helpful. (rating 8 and above)

28 out of 30 felt immediately calmer after doing the TRE exercises. 56% felt extremely more calm (rating 8 and above,) 37% felt more calm (6-7 out of 9) and 1 person noticed no change. 1 person felt less calm after the exercises but was still extremely likely to continue the exercises and rated 8 and above on all other questions as to the effectiveness of the workshop.

The results of this evaluation clearly demonstrate *the provision of TRE workshops after natural disasters is viewed by community members as an extremely effective and efficient use of recovery grant funding.*

By focusing upon education and training, TRE provides access to a practical, self-empowering and extremely cost effective process that can then be used on an ongoing basis to help community members feel immediately more calm and relaxed at no cost for the rest of their lives



About TRE

Trauma Release Exercises (TRE) is an empowering self-help process that uses simple exercises to intentionally invoke the body's innate shaking and tremoring reflex in a safe and controlled way to release the physical impacts of stress, tension and trauma.

While current approaches tend to pathologise shaking and tremoring as a *symptom* of stress and trauma, these involuntary movements are theoretically one of the body's natural reflexes to discharge unresolved trauma responses and restore the neurophysiology of the body to calm relaxed state.

While the involuntary movements are not consciously created, they can be consciously stopped and started allowing the process to be entirely self regulated so people are always in control of the process.

TRE was developed by Dr David Berceci PhD to address large-scale trauma following natural disasters and in conflict zones. It has been taught to more than 1 million people around the world including defence force personal, emergency responders, recovery workers and trauma therapists, as well as the general public.

TRE was reviewed in the report 'Mind Body Techniques to Regulate the Autonomic Nervous System' conducted by the US Defence Centres for Excellence in Psychological Health and mild Traumatic Brain Injury in 2011. TRE was identified in the report as one of the 5 most promising techniques for its "ease of use, reduction of hyper-arousal and reports of immediate benefits."

TRE is not a psychological or psychotherapeutic technique and does not involve or require the recall or discussion of past events or a past experience. This allows the process to be cost effectively taught in a workshop or large group setting and also makes it potentially more accessible to men as a recovery resource.

TRE is not designed to replace existing counselling or psychological support services, but rather is an adjunct process to address the neurophysiological responses of the body in order to help survivors regain a sense of self-mastery in the aftermath of trauma.



About the SWBZA 1 day workshops

The Skyline and Wallace Roads Bushfire Zone Alliance Inc (SBWZA) is a community-based organisation based in Christmas Hills that was formed after the Victorian Black Saturday Bushfires in 2009.

SWBZA sponsored two 1-day TRE workshops held in the Yarra Valley during October 2013, providing free attendance to all members of bushfire-affected communities throughout Victoria. The 2nd workshop allowed participants to choose to attend for the full day or the morning session only, after feedback from community members some would prefer to attend a half-day only.

The 2 workshops were offered 3 weeks apart in order to maximise publicity through word of mouth from attendees attending the first workshop, resulting in an increase in attendees from 25 at the first workshop to 39 at the second.

Total costs per workshop day were approximately \$2500, consisting of \$500 for promotions, venue hire and catering with presenter fees and online registration services of \$2000 per day. Substantial time and effort involved in the organisation and promotion of the workshops was donated as a volunteer by SWBZA project officer Glynis Gordon.

With a total of 64 participants across the two 1-day workshops, the cost per attendee at these 1-day workshops was approximately \$80 per person. Prices to attend similar workshops for the general public range from \$170 - \$210 per person. This suggests a significant cost benefit in this sponsored format with even greater cost benefits available for workshops with greater numbers of participants.

As part of the series of workshops in 2013, SWBZA will be sponsoring a 2-day follow up workshop in November 2013 to strengthen participants ongoing personal use of TRE, as well as teaching them how to support family and friends to learn TRE using publically available materials including a pamphlet or self guided DVD.

Due to community feedback, SWBZA will be sponsoring an additional series of workshops in the Yarra valley in March 2014. These workshops will trial a different format of delivery using a ½ day workshop followed by two shorter 2-hour review sessions. This model of regular follow up review groups was found to be extremely beneficial by participants in similar workshops in Kinglake sponsored by Firefoxes Australia and delivered by TRE Trainer, Jelka Slapar.

Results of Evaluation Questionnaires

Evaluation forms were completed by 30 of the 39 participants at the second 1-day workshop held in Yarra Glen on Saturday October 26th. The evaluation questionnaire consisted of 6 questions using a 9 point rating scale from extremely disagree or extremely ineffective to extremely agree or extremely effective.

Of those completing the evaluation, 7 out of the 30 respondents had attended the morning session only and 22 out of the 30 identified as being from a bushfire affected community while the other 8 identified they were not.

Q 1. How helpful was the information provided about the body's response to stress & trauma?



100% of respondents found the information provided about the body's response to stress and trauma was helpful (average rating 8.5 out of 9) with all responses rated 7 and above and 25 rating it as extremely helpful (rating 8 and above)

Q 2. How helpful was the information provided about neurogenic tremors & shaking?



28 out of 30 (93%) found the information provided about neurogenic tremors extremely helpful (8 and above rating) with one person finding it helpful (7) and one neutral. (5)

Q 3. What change has doing the TRE exercises made to how calm and relaxed you feel now?



28 out of 30 felt immediately calmer after doing the TRE exercises. 56% felt extremely more calm (rating 8 and above,) 37% felt more calm (6-7 out of 9) and 1 person noticed no change.

1 person felt less calm immediately after the exercises (3 out of 9) but was still extremely likely to continue the exercises after the workshop (8 out of 9) and had rated at 8 and above on all other questions as to the effectiveness of the information provided and the workshops effectiveness.

Q 4. How likely are you to continue to do the TRE exercises following this workshop?



100% stated they were likely to continue the TRE exercises after the workshop, with 29 out of 30 rating it as extremely likely (rating 8 and above) and the other person rated it as likely at 6 out of 9

Q 5. How would you rate the effectiveness of funding if this workshop was funded through community recovery grants?



100% of respondents rated the ‘the effectiveness of funding if this workshop was funded through community recovery grants,’ as extremely effective, with all respondents scoring it at 8 and above on the 9 point scale. 24 out of 30 rated the effectiveness of this funding at 9 out of 9.

Q 6. Do you believe other areas affected by natural disasters would benefit from TRE workshops?



100% extremely agreed ‘other areas affected by natural disasters would extremely benefit from TRE workshops,’ rating 8 and above. 26 out of 30 rated the benefits of TRE workshops for other areas affected by natural disaster at 9 out of 9.



Suggestions and feedback

Respondents were asked if they had any suggestions to improve the effectiveness of this workshop:

"I found this experience amazing, and I can definitely feel how it would benefit anyone suffering from trauma or even everyday stress. Can already feel it will make a difference in my life. So simple and effective."

"Perhaps gender specific workshops or one for kids."

"Run a second 1 day workshop after the first so that people come to the second one through word of mouth from 1st batch of participants, (would love to recommend this to a couple of people I know)"

"Suggestion: Getting the information out there that this technique is available and can be easily learnt"

"It is all about timing. Not straight after disaster but after some time has passed. People need to be ready."

"Much sooner after disaster!!"

"Excellent, thanks. Lots to consider."

"It was good, a long day though"

"Have people who have previously attended give testimonies – to reassure people about how the environment is non-threatening and supportive – as many people may feel apprehensive about this type of workshop. Thank you to all that helped, it was great."

"I thought it was conducted efficiently and extremely well. I am very appreciative."

"Brilliant, thanks."



Summary & Further Suggestions

While this evaluation is limited by small the number of respondents, (30) the results follow almost identical outcomes from similar evaluations conducted after workshops following the floods in Brisbane, Ipswich and Toowoomba in 2010, and the Christchurch earthquake in New Zealand in 2011. The results are also in accordance with clinical outcomes reported from workshops all around the world over the last 20 years.

This evaluation shows TRE was unanimously identified by members of communities affected by the Black Saturday bushfires as extremely beneficial for people following natural disasters, and an extremely effective and efficient use of recovery funding.

The delivery of the workshops themselves was extremely cost effective at approximately \$80 per person, with further potential reductions in per person costs available for groups with more participants in the future.

By focusing upon education and training rather than providing a direct therapy or service that requires ongoing funding, the long term cost benefits reach far beyond the price of the actual service delivery itself>

TRE provides a practical and self-empowering process which can be used by community members on an ongoing and regular basis to help themselves feel immediately more calm and relaxed at no cost for the rest of their lives

While obviously limited in scientific research strength, the results of this evaluation and similar feedback from workshops in the Kinglake community, clearly suggest significant potential benefits of further funding, research and evaluation of TRE workshops in areas affected by natural disasters.

Suggested focus areas for further research could include:

- Most effective format of delivery (1 day workshop / ½ day workshop / regular 2-hr groups)
- Most efficient format of follow up group sessions to maximise the ongoing use of TRE
- Most beneficial timing of TRE workshops after natural disaster
- Clinical research of stress, tension and trauma outcome measures over time



Contact details & more information

Richmond Heath is a Physiotherapist and Level 3 TRE trainer who introduced TRE to Australia in 2010. He is the national co-ordinator of TRE and presents public workshops and professional training all around Australia. He has presented specific recovery workshops for survivors of the Black Saturday fires in 2009, the Queensland floods in 2010 and the 2011 earthquake in Christchurch, NZ.

Richmond can be contacted at treaustralia@hotmail.com or on phone 0409 357 964.

More information including interviews, articles and videos of neurogenic tremors is available at www.treaustralia.com.au or on TRE founder Dr David Berceles' website www.traumaprevention.com