



Donna Fitzgibbon –  
Manager Specialist Services  
Victim Support

**If you could have dinner with three people, current or historical – who would they be and why?**

Amy Winehouse because I just love her (listen to Lioness her posthumous album). She was funny and vulnerable—a total original. She could also do my make up before dinner and provide the music.

Nigella Lawson, because she loves food as much as I do and she could cook dinner when she arrived. She could also relate to Amy and some of her struggles.

My Mum Chris; for being the hostess with the mostest, her effortless style (she could arrange the table and sort the flowers) and her ability to make everyone feel nurtured, comfortable and looked after, because she doesn't judge people.

**What do you think is the most useful invention and why?**

Sunscreen - because even the skin and face of a reformed baby oil slatherer can be saved by sunscreen! And you can carry it with you wherever you go!

**Who do you consider to be a person of great influence and how have they inspired you?** It may seem lame (but at least it's not Oprah) but I do admire Obama. His strength, his influence, his oratory skills and speeches, his sense of humour and leadership are so inspiring. He has the ability to be an 'everyman'; there is a genuineness about him and he is married to Michelle! He displayed dignity and integrity in the wake of the American election and all the racist dialogue and 'alternative facts' that were spread.

**What is the most important focus for Victim Support in the next year?**

For me it's about being consistent. Continuing to ensure we say what we do and do what we say by collaborating internally and externally. Focusing on our values: Manaaki Tangata; embracing people with warmth, care and support. Putting victims at the forefront of all we do by advocating for their rights and doing all we can to demonstrate VS relevance and effectiveness in this current environment.

## Homicide Support Worker Newsletter January 2017

From the Homicide team..... 2016 is a distant memory and we start 2017 refreshed and raring to go. Thank you for all your work and the difference you have made to the lives of victims. A special thank you for those who have given time over the holiday period, a time for those you support can be eased slightly just knowing you are there. We are grateful for this, and your continued commitment to families affected by homicide as well as the many other victims you support in your work. The highlight for many of us was the Homicide Support Worker Conference for volunteers trained prior to 2014. It was great to have so many of you in attendance and also provide some opportunities to form friendships and learn together. Kathryn Berkett was a standout and helped us understand the function of the brain in trauma. Hearing of Ann's experience and how appreciative she was of her support worker and the difference that made was really inspiring. Alistair Speirling delivered an entertaining and informative session on the Parole Board. The group participation was fantastic and it was great to hear new ideas, different perspectives and laugh together. A thoroughly enjoyable conference! Don Searle (HSW Palmerston North) said that the conference was *"A great opportunity to meet other people who are volunteers and learn that most of the issues we have are the same for others. I was fascinated by Kathryn Berkett's presentation on neuroscience and I was inspired by her. I could apply her information in my work with victims but also personally. It was great to be able to visit the Contact Service at National Office. I found that Alistair Speirling's presentation about the Parole Board gave me a better understanding of their role, what constraints they have under law and how hard they work to come to their decisions as often the general public have a poor opinion of the Parole process. The whole weekend was really good."*

We hope that these conferences will be biannual and can't wait to see you at the next one!



## 2017 DATES

**April:** 6 & 7 New Service Co-ordinator Homicide Training

**May:** 5/6/7 Auckland & Northland initial Homicide Support worker training – Manukau

**June:** Next edition of Homicide Support worker Newsletter

**July:** Support worker Webinar

**August:** 11/12/13 Wellington/South Island initial Homicide Support worker training – Wellington  
We welcome ideas and topics for newsletters and our webinar so please contact us at:

[homnews@victimsupport.org.nz](mailto:homnews@victimsupport.org.nz)

### SELFCARE SUNDAY

*"I have decided to practice selfcare Sunday – it's time for me, and I deserve it. It might be a walk on the beach, getting organised for the week ahead or spending time with friends".*

Sarah - Volunteer

A Sunday  
Well spent  
brings a week  
of content.

### Volunnesia

(noun)

that moment when you forget you're volunteering to help change lives, because it's changing yours...

## Kathryn Berkett – ENGAGE

For those of you who attended the ENGAGE workshop in Wellington, I hope you are finding that some of the material continues to be helpful. It was an immense pleasure to present to you all. What you do is so incredibly valuable, it was a privilege to be able to support you in your supporting roles!

You may remember I referred you to some short animated videos that I produced. They describe the role of the managing brain (the cookie story), and the process of activating the stress response (losing the keys story). The link is provided again below if you wanted to refresh your memories and/or share them with those you support.

To further refresh your memories, let's recap on the main points that we talked about in the session. We discussed how everyone goes into stress response at times. And when we activate a high level of stress (as in the 'losing keys' story) we become less able to over-ride impulses; are more likely to verbally or physically lash out; have difficulty understanding time, sequence and yesterday/tomorrow; alongside many other behaviours that make us seem very much like a two-year-old! It happens to all of us, and is activated when a STRESSOR is detected.

There are such things as *primary stressors*. These are stressors that will send almost all of us into stress response. They can include things such as real threats to our safety; hunger; or when our status is affected. Then there are stressors that are unique to each person. This makes life difficult, because if I have a unique stressor such as a pink jersey, and you are wearing one, you automatically send me into stress response with little recognition of what you have done, because a pink jersey is not a stressor for you...

This idea of individual stressors is something you will likely be dealing with when supporting those who have experienced the stress of losing a loved one. During the time that the stress response is active, if they have been in the presence of something they notice – such as a pink jersey – the activation of the stress response might become linked, and now the pink jersey alone can activate stress. The real difficulty for you and those around them is that you (and at times they themselves) may have no idea what those stressors are. This makes support very difficult.

Another difficult situation that can arise from major stress, is the negative effect prolonged stress can have on our physical health. This is important to remember for both those you are supporting and yourselves. Our bodies have developed a very effective short-spurt stress response, excellent for increasing our chance of survival in the face of imminent threat. However, this same stress response activated over long periods can be maladaptive and tax other energy sources in our body, leading to possible outcomes such as fatigue; nausea; weight gain/loss; tachycardia etc.

So remember, your job is a stressful one, and you are supporting people in high levels of stress. Take care of yourselves and of them! What you do is extremely important. Thanks for doing what you do!

[http://www.engagelearning.co.nz/store/c1/Featured\\_Products.html](http://www.engagelearning.co.nz/store/c1/Featured_Products.html) (link to animated videos)

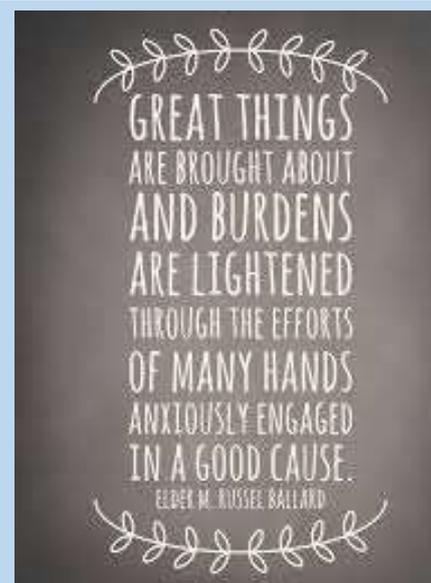
## Inside Story: Court Support

One of our long serving Wellington Support Workers, Barbara Halliwell had a chat with Janice Coldicott (HSS Central/Wellington) about her thoughts of court support. As she is a Wellington resident she is often called on to provide Court support at Wellington High Court. Cases may be relocated from the local High Court (as sometimes happens for security reasons or striving for independence of jury selection) or when the homicide occurred in Wellington but family are from other areas.

This acknowledges the different type of support required for court support, and the importance of getting it right as also evidenced by the imminent re-establishment of a court assistance team in Auckland High Court.

Barbara has been with Victim Support since 1998 and has for many years supported victims of homicide. Her skills and knowledge are apparent with her engagement with victims and very much valued by the families she supports during court hearings. She is much valued by the Wellington VS team.

Janice Coldicott



### **Why is court support important?**

*Because for a lot of people the environment is totally unfamiliar even though they have been told what to expect. So when they get there it is a bit of a shock. So it's easier when someone from Victim Support is there for them.*

### **What does "good" court support look like?**

*Being familiar with how the court works and knowing where things are; location of toilets, water, where the nearest café is, and location of the victim room. Knowing the protocols of the court, i.e. when the sign is up "closed court", it relates to everyone, including family. Knowing what area in the court room the family should be sitting in. Knowing how things function within the court room and environs.*

**Often the family will meet different SWs during court hearings as it will be away from their own locality.**

### **What preparations do you make prior to providing court support in these instances?**

*If the family has come from another district I try to ensure that I am aware of the facts of the case either through our own VS contacts or Police - it is good to get the background which makes it easier when talking with the family. Also knowing who the OC is and introducing myself to him/her.*

*I get the phone number of the main person who is coming, (or others if needed). I will then phone them prior to their arrival to advise I am providing court support when they come to Wellington. I will find out where they are staying and offer to meet them at their hotel earlier on the first day of Court (particularly if they are unfamiliar with Wellington). If they know Wellington then I would generally arrange to meet them prior to start of court. This enables us to meet, to do introductions and to show them around the court building and where facilities are, where the victim room is, etc.*

**We generally think about court support for trial and sentencing.**

### **Do you think that court support is needed for earlier hearings and why?**

*It depends on what the case is. The Court Victim Advisor or Police will have talked with family about what the hearing will entail. This will include if it is an administrative hearing, papers being lodged, likely length of hearing, whether the offender will be present. This information may then determine whether the family want court support or not. I will ask the victims I support if they are intending to be there and if they would like me to be there. If not, I will follow up with a phone call after the hearing to check with them on how it went. Often victims will take advice from CVA to decide whether to attend or not.*

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### **How do you gauge what is needed by family during court support?**

*Normally I will ask them the question if there is anything I can do for them at this time.*

*I make sure the practicalities are taken care of. At Wellington High Court – when the 15 minute breaks are scheduled, if they want a hot drink, I will duck out a few minutes early to boil the jug. These breaks may be time for the family to gather in private so I can gauge that by their body language.*

### **How do you determine when you might be needed during trial?**

*It depends what is going on. If there is Police evidence coming up – I use my gut feeling if they may need me. I keep track of who the witnesses are coming through, especially for forensic evidence, pathologist reports. I will say to victims these witnesses will be explaining what happened to their loved one and suggest they may not want to be in the court room, and I will be outside to sit with them.*

*I will let the family know when I will not be there so they know in advance.*

### **What interactions do you have with Police and Court Victim Advisors during court hearings?**

*I find out who the Family Liaison Officer (Police) is as they are a key link with the family. Otherwise it depends on the existing relationships with the Police officers. In Wellington we have a good relationship with Court Victim Advisors and as I am often at Court the CVAs and I will work together with on-site support. Also being aware of each of our roles, aware of the boundaries between each of us helps reduce the confusion that may exist with victims.*

### **What do you enjoy about court support?**

*Being there for people. Being familiar enough with the system to feel relaxed in it, which helps people be relaxed in it. Establishing trust so the family know what I say can help them through the court process.*

*Family dynamics can sometimes dissipate when in this environment as everybody is in the same situation in a totally different environment to usual.*

### **If you are mentoring other SWs in court support what do you consider are key points in providing effective support?**

*To know how the court system works, the basics – starting at 10 am, break times, where things are in the court. Be aware of protocols within the court room, such as when the Judge arrives and leaves – stand up.*

*Understanding that when I acknowledge Court staff including lawyers it is courtesy and I take care to keep my distance to avoid alienation with the victims I am supporting. Also explaining that the lawyers know each other and if they see “their” lawyer talking to the Defendant lawyer that doesn’t affect the job they have to do. The Crown Prosecutor’s role is to represent the state.*

*Have strategies around dealing with different family members. It is important to get the names right and relationships of the people – know who is who.*

*I make a point of introducing myself... and you are...(shake hand). If I need to be reminded of their name later I will ask again.*

*Don’t get involved in disputes between families. If different factions of family are in different rooms, I go to each room for the same amount of time. I make sure each room is the same, and stocked with refreshments the same. I talk with all parties for the same amount of time. It’s about being equitable in support for all family members.*

*The day to day support tends to be smaller number of people, one on one or maybe two people. Court support is different to other support. At court times you are dealing with lots of family, and maybe others at the same time. It is also in a different unfamiliar environment during a highly stressful time for victims. Be calm, knowledgeable, approachable and practical.*

## CELEBRATING VOLUNTEERS: PHIL GROCOTT



A volunteer with Victim Support, Grocott said the city notification of his award came as a big surprise and reflected well on his fellow volunteers and supporters.

A homicide support worker, "Phil's ability to connect with people at a most vulnerable, critical and traumatic time of their lives is truly extraordinary", Guppy said.

"He has supported over 100 homicide victims in the five years he has been with Victim Support and is greatly appreciated by all of them."

Grocott volunteers over the wider Wellington district. He works closely with other coordinators and mentors new workers coming into the role.

The Upper Hutt Civic Awards have been presented annually since 1985. More than 60 local contributors have been recognised since Mary Richardson, a community services volunteer, received the first civic award from the then mayor, Rex Kirton

\*Edited article retrieved from [stuff.co.nz](http://www.stuff.co.nz/life-style/well-good/inspire-me/84776134/upper-hutt-city-honours-community-volunteers) – for full article please see <http://www.stuff.co.nz/life-style/well-good/inspire-me/84776134/upper-hutt-city-honours-community-volunteers>

Congratulations Phil and the Wellington team!

