

CHRISTMAS 2024 NEWSLETTER



Dear friends

With the festive season upon us, please accept a our warmest greetings and a word of support to those with mixed feelings about the holiday break.

We're mindful that some will spend the season alone or far from home, which may trigger memories of past abandonment. Those lucky enough to be celebrating with friends and family might still a feel a sense of disconnection, or anger that their pain is belittled or denied.

Yet, in the wise words of Anne Michael (whose novel 'Held' was shortlisted for this year's Booker Prize)

"To acknowledge ones pain is not self pity."

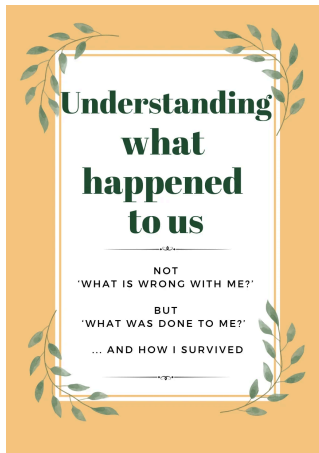
The Boarding School Survivor's Journey

Acknowledging our pain is a vital first step to in our eventual recovery - but it's important we don't get stuck there. At our Boarding School Survivor's conference in November, our team outlined four stages of

the Boarding School Survivor's Journey as a way of reflecting on our experience and development as survivors:

1. **Understanding** what happened to us
2. **Reconnecting** to the damaged child within
3. **Finding compassion** - and help - for the task
4. **Reframing relationships** with self & others

For most, 'the journey' is not linear but these four stages are a very useful tool for evaluating where we are in respect of our healing, our relationship with ourselves, and our relationships with others - especially at Christmas or other times when old wounds may surface.



1. Understanding what happened to us

Not 'What is wrong with me?' but 'What was done to me?' – and how I survived

This initial stage can arise from a triggered memory, after a conversation with a friend, when our child gets to a certain age, or when we realise that we keep repeating the same 'mistakes' in our relationships. The realisation dawns that 'something is not right' - and so the journey of exploration and healing begins.



2. Reconnecting to the damaged child within

Rediscovering and connecting with the abandoned one

As we begin to understand the impact that separation from our families had on us, we begin to acknowledge the price we paid for that loss. Feelings of grief, sadness and anger are not uncommon, and a growing tenderness towards the young child that we were when we were sent away.

It is at this point that many of us feel the need to find support somewhere, be it from a trained therapist, a therapeutic workshop or from more informal support groups.



3. Finding compassion – and help – for the task

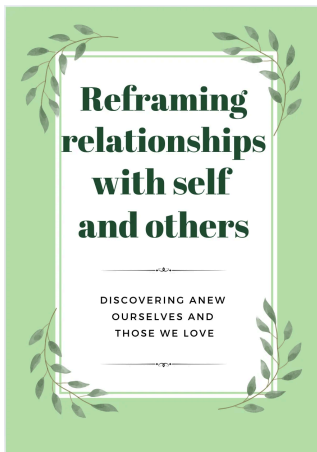
Learning to treat ourselves kindly & finding help for recovery

Guilt, shame and anger towards ourselves and others are common experiences for survivors. Finding ways to understand the source of these feelings and to begin to treat ourselves more kindly is a key part of our recovery.

What seems to help many survivors is connecting with others who have been through the same experience. Whether joining the deeply transformative therapeutic workshops run for many years by [Boarding School Survivors](#), or the more informal online connection

groups such as those provided by newcomers, [Seen & Heard](#), there are increasing numbers of opportunities for survivors to come together with others to tell their story, and share their recovery experiences.

Of course, there are many other practices and approaches available to that help us develop self-compassion and a renewed love of life, such as yoga, mindfulness, being in nature, being with our loved ones, expressing ourselves through art or music, and much, much more.



4. Reframing relationships with self and others

Discovering anew ourselves & those we love

As the personal work we have undertaken and the insights gained from the previous stages become part of us, we find that we are able to respond differently - and more flexibly - in our relationships and in life generally.

As we reach stage 4 of our journey, we notice more often and more quickly when we fall back into old ways of responding. And when we do become withdrawn, irritable, depressed or anxious again, we try to remember where we've come from and treat ourselves kindly.

A useful tool for navigating the holidays

If flashbacks, painful feelings, anger or disassociation surface over your Christmas period, viewing your feelings through the lens of 4 journey stages can be useful - to both understand the present, and provide hope for a different future.

Boarding School Survivors Support is here to help you navigate your healing journey. Check our support services on our [website](#), find dedicated Boarding School survivor resources on the reading list

below, or search the Boarding Recovery [directory](#) to find a boarding school trained therapist.

Useful reading with links to publishers

[The Making of Them, Nick Duffell](#)

[Boarding School Syndrome, Joy Schaverien](#)

[Finding Our Way Home, Simpson, ed](#)

[Men's Accounts of Boarding, Laughton et al](#)

[Stiff Upper Lip, Alex Renton](#)

[A Very Private School, Charles Spencer](#)

Wishing you all the best for the season

This newsletter comes from the directors of BSS-Support, a not-for-profit Limited Company, who's aim is to guide and support former boarders on their healing journey.

All our Directors give their time as volunteers, without remuneration.

Any income, whether from events, sale of books or donations, is used for the sole purpose of staging our annual conference, providing individual bursaries for therapies and participation, or financial support to organisations that share our agenda and aims.

This newsletter is brought to you with very best wishes for a wonderful Christmas, and a bright start to 2025.

from Allison, Caroline, Mike, Paul, Pippa, Tim and Sam.

[Back to top](#)

Boarding School Survivors - Support

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