Brighter Life

HOLISTIC THERAPIES

ACC SCS FUNDED TRAUMA-SENSITIVE YOGA & CREATIVE ARTS THERAPY GROUPWORK

Gentle Movement. Real Choice. Body-Based Healing in Community.

With Jessica Dziwulska & Amy Benjamin

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Kia ora from

Brighter Life

JESS & AMY

Kia ora koutou, we're Jessica Dziwulska and Amy Benjamin, the dynamic duo behind Brighter life. We share a deep commitment to healing and, together, bring over three decades of experience in whole-person, client-centred care across a range of therapeutic modalities.

Jessica leads our TSY sessions. She has been practicing yoga for nearly 3 decades and has trained in Trauma Centre Trauma Sensitive Yoga (TCTSY), Expressive Art Therapy, Somatic Movement Therapy, Dance Movement Therapy, and Restorative Movement Psychotherapy for survivors of trauma. She is currently working toward her Master of Dance Movement therapy and is writing her thesis on body-based/somatic approaches to working with trauma, PTSD, and Complex PTSD.

Jess has enjoyed working with trauma survivors for the past 7 years, both 1:1 and in group settings. She is passionate about creating and facilitating in trauma-informed spaces where diversity, choice, and agency are held in the highest esteem.

Amy Benjamin is an NZAC registered holistic counsellor and a Sensitive Claims provider, offering online and in-person sessions. She blends relational counselling ('talk therapy') with body-centred practices including mindfulness, breathwork, and gentle movement to help kiritaki build self-awareness and regulate their nervous system.

A unique aspect of Amy's practice is ecotherapy, where stepping outside and connecting with the intrinsic healing power of nature can significantly enhance the therapeutic process.

Amy looks forward to walking alongside you and your clients on their path to recovery, growth, and empowerment.

WHAT IS TRAUMA-SENSITIVE YOGA?

TRAUMA CENTRE TRAUMA-SENSITIVE YOGA (TCTSY) IS AN OFFICIALLY RECOGNISED THIRD-WAVE PSYCHOTHERAPY THAT CONSIDERS THE POTENTIAL IMPACT OF TRAUMA ON PHYSICAL, EMOTIONAL, MENTAL, AND RELATIONAL WELLBEING.

A trauma-sensitive yoga session focuses on creating a safe and supportive environment and empowering participants to engage with their bodies in a way that promotes healing and resilience.

Unlike traditional yoga classes, trauma-sensitive yoga is mindful of potential triggers and emphasises choice, consent, and autonomy at all times. TCTSY incorporates movement and grounding techniques, developing the client's capacity to feel their body, notice their breath, and make choices throughout the sessions that feel helpful for them.

The benefits of trauma-sensitive yoga are particularly beneficial for those who have experienced trauma or are dealing with symptoms related to post-traumatic stress disorder, or complex-PTSD. This approach can aid in regulating the nervous system, reducing symptoms of anxiety and depression, and improving self-awareness. Trauma-sensitive yoga offers a safe space for clients to explore bodily sensations and emotions at their own pace, promoting a gradual restoration of trust and safety within the body.

TCTSY is especially suitable for survivors of trauma, individuals experiencing chronic stress, and those seeking a gentler and more mindful approach to physical and emotional well-being. Clients will need to have an approved ACC SCS claim, be aged 18+, and be under the care of a registered therapist, counsellor, or psychologist.

Introducing TC-TSY

CERTIFIED TCTSY FACILITATOR

Considered among the most rigorously studied methods of third-wave psychotherapies, Trauma Center Trauma Sensitive Yoga (TCTSY) is a clinically proven intervention designed for individuals grappling with complex trauma or enduring treatment-resistant post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). TCTSY integrates trauma theory, attachment theory, and neuroscience with yoga philosophy and practice. Research studies into TCTSY have clearly demonstrated reductions in PTSD symptoms within 8 weeks. Our TSY facilitator, Jessica, has completed all levels of TCTSY training.

Our approach focuses not on achieving physical forms or specific yoga postures, but on fostering awareness and reconnection with physical sensations, a vital attribute for addressing trauma symptomology. TCTSY places power with the individual rather than the facilitator, and all shapes and practices offered are invitational, making them optional at all times.

By prioritising interoception (the felt sense of the body) to guide decision-making, TCTSY enables participants to restore the connection between their mind and body and reclaim a sense of agency, which is often compromised by trauma.

Our programs offer a gradual and manageable introduction to these practices, acknowledging the potential discomfort that can arise when exploring body sensations. Each class offers participants a range of choices while maintaining consistency and predictability to support a safe and transformative healing journey.

Trauma Center Trauma-Sensitive Yoga (TCTSY) isn't your typical yoga—it's a practical journey back to self. Grounded in trauma-sensitive principles, our groups offer a space for participants to reconnect with themselves, learn to befriend their bodies, explore inner experiences, and tap into somatic resources for wellbeing.

TERM FOUR 2026 & TERM ONE 2027

TERM FOUR 2026

**PLEASE NOTE: No classses during the week of November 30 - December 4th

MONDAY - ONLINE GROUP (9:45 - 11:15 am)
ALL GENDERS - 8 weeks
From Mon 12 October– Mon 7 December

TUESDAY - GREY LYNN GROUPS
8 weeks
From Tues 13 October – Tues 8 December
WOMEN'S Group: 10:45 am – 12:15 pm
LGBQTIA+ ALL GENDERS Group: 12:30 – 2pm

WEDNESDAY - ONLINE GROUP (6:30 - 8pm)
ALL GENDERS - 8 weeks
From Wed 14 October - Wed 9 December

THURSDAY - ROTHESAY BAY (11–12:30 pm)
WOMEN ONLY - 8 weeks
From Thurs 15 October - Thurs 10 December

TOOLS FOR TRANSFORMING TRAUMA
DAY RETREATS
Sat Nov 14 Rothesay Bay 10:30-4:30pm
WOMEN ONLY

Sat Dec 12 Rothesay Bay 10:30-4:30pm
WOMEN ONLY

TERM ONE 2027

MONDAY - ONLINE GROUP (9:45 - 11:15 am)
ALL GENDERS - 7 weeks
From 22 February – 5 April

TUESDAY - GREY LYNN GROUPS
7 weeks
From 23 February – 6 April
WOMEN'S Group: 10:45 am – 12:15 pm
LGBQTIA+ ALL GENDERS Group: 12:30 – 2pm

WEDNESDAY - ONLINE GROUP (6:30 - 8pm)
ALL GENDERS - 7 weeks
From 24 February – 7 April

THURSDAY - ROTHESAY BAY (11–12:30 pm)
WOMEN ONLY - 7 weeks
From 25 February – 8 April

TOOLS FOR TRANSFORMING TRAUMA
DAY RETREATS
Sat 13 March, Rothesay Bay, Akl, 10:30am-4:30pm
WOMEN ONLY

Sat 3 April, Rothesay Bay, Akl, 10:30am-4:30pm
WOMEN ONLY

Kiritaki are welcome to attend one or more day retreats per term - each day retreat is a standalone experience. Clients are also welcome to attend a weekly group AND a day retreat if they choose.

TERM TWO & THREE 2027 GROUPWORK OPTIONS

TERM TWO 2027

DETAILS TO COME

TERM THREE 2027

DETAILS TO COME

Kiritaki are welcome to attend one or more day retreats per term - each day retreat is a standalone experience. Clients are also welcome to attend a weekly group AND a day retreat.

HOW TO REGISTER KIRITAKI/CLIENTS.

If you would like to register clients for one or more of our groups, please see the details below on how to do this.
NOTE: We are unable to register your client until both the purchase order and registration form have been received. Applying for a purchase order as soon as possible will increase the likelihood of securing a spot in one of our groups. Our groups often fill quickly and have waitlists.

There are 3 steps to this process, your involvement will be needed during the first 2 steps. Once you have requested the Purchase Order, and our ACC Supplier (The Nelson Clinic) has received it, they will then EMAIL YOU A REGISTRATION FORM which needs to be completed for your client.

Process for Lead Providers

STEP 1: Purchase Order Request

To arrange approval for a client to attend a group, please contact the client's recovery partner as soon as possible. You will need to provide a rationale and request that the following codes be approved:

PLEASE NOTE - each Purchase Order (PO) will need to have 2 codes - Please use the code SCSGTT x 1 (for triage) ALONG WITH selecting from the codes below, depending on the course you are registering for.

- SCSGT x12 – BRIGHTER LIFE – Online Trauma-Sensitive Yoga (All Genders) with Jess & Amy
- SCSGT x12 – BRIGHTER LIFE – In-Person Trauma-Sensitive Yoga, Auckland (LGBTQIA+ / All Genders) with Jess & Amy
- SCSGT x12 – BRIGHTER LIFE – In-Person Trauma-Sensitive Yoga, Auckland (Women's Group) with Jess & Amy
- SCSGT x7 – BRIGHTER LIFE – One-Day Trauma-Sensitive Yoga Retreat, Auckland (Women's Group) with Jess & Amy

Time Frames: 01/07/26 - 30/12/26
Vendor ID: VAH127 (The Nelson Clinic)

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HOW TO REGISTER KIRITAKI CONT...

Group Facilitator Information:
Name: Jessica Dziwulska
Role: Yoga Specialist
ACC ID: PVT0423JD
ACC Supplier: The Nelson Clinic
Vendor ID: VAH127

Name: Amy Benjamin
Role: ACC registered counselor
ACC ID: PAS256
ACC Supplier: The Nelson Clinic
Vendor ID: VAH127

Deadline: The deadline for Purchase Orders is 1 week before a retreat or group begins.

Please copy amy.benjamin@nelsonclinic.nz and our ACC supplier groups@nelsonclinic.nz into your ACC PO request so we know to expect your client's PO and can follow up if it's taking longer than expected:

STEP 2: Registration
When The Nelson Clinic (TNC) receives the Purchase Order from ACC, they will contact you to register your client and advise on the next steps.

PLEASE NOTE: We cannot register your client until you have completed their registration form, which TNC will email to you once the purchase order has been received. If you do not receive a registration form via email, please contact TNC on groups@nelsonclinic.nz

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HOW TO REGISTER KIRITAKI CONT...

Example Rationale To Use when Applying For Funding From ACC:

"We would like to request approval please for this client to attend a group course run by the Nelson Clinic (VAH127), which will commence on [DATE]. The aim of this would be for the client to acquire some additional skills in managing PTSD and depressive symptomatology and promote an opportunity for safe social connection to address current isolation. Could you please let me know if this can be approved for the client? They are motivated to attend this treatment, which aligns well with their current goals as outlined in the wellbeing plan."

STEP 3: Triage

Once we have received an approved Purchase Order AND you have completed the registration form, one of our facilitators will contact your client directly to assess any needs prior to starting the group and to discuss what to expect. You will be kept informed of any decisions related to your client.

Note on timelines and communication:

- The ACC application process (via ACC and our ACC supplier) can take several weeks.
- Please keep your client informed throughout and ask them to hold their availability until their place is confirmed.
- We contact clients 2–4 weeks before a retreat or group begins, but only after we have both an approved Purchase Order (PO) and the completed registration form.
- As we are the final step in the process, we do not receive client details until the PO and registration are in place; earlier contact is often not possible.

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS OF TC-TSY

Our trauma-sensitive yoga groups are grounded in the principles of Trauma Center Trauma-Sensitive Yoga (TCTSY), an evidence-based, adjunctive treatment for complex trauma and PTSD. TCTSY integrates elements of neuroscience, attachment theory, and trauma theory, offering a structured yet flexible approach that prioritises choice, safety, and agency.

Unlike traditional yoga, TCTSY is not about physical performance or achieving specific postures. Instead, it focuses on interoception—the ability to sense and understand internal body cues—which is often disrupted by trauma. Through invitational language, shared power, and a non-coercive approach, participants are encouraged to explore movement in a way that fosters autonomy and empowerment.

This approach aligns with the latest research in trauma recovery, which highlights the importance of bottom-up regulation (engaging the body to influence the nervous system) rather than relying solely on cognitive processing (talk-based therapies). By integrating mindful movement with a trauma-sensitive framework, the group offers participants an opportunity to cultivate presence, restore a sense of connection, and develop self-regulation skills in a supportive and affirming environment.

EVIDENCE FOR EFFECTIVENESS

Trauma-sensitive yoga (TSY), particularly Trauma Center Trauma-Sensitive Yoga (TCTSY), is backed by a growing body of research demonstrating its effectiveness in supporting trauma recovery. Studies have shown that body-based interventions like TCTSY can help reduce symptoms of PTSD, anxiety, and depression, while improving emotional regulation, interoception, and overall well-being.

A randomised controlled trial conducted by van der Kolk et al. (2014) found that TCTSY significantly reduced PTSD symptoms in individuals with complex trauma, with many participants no longer meeting the diagnostic criteria for PTSD after completing the program. Other studies have reinforced these findings, indicating that TSY can enhance self-compassion, body awareness, and a sense of agency, which are often compromised in survivors of sexual trauma.

Neuroscience research supports the idea that trauma is stored in the body and that bottom-up approaches—those that engage the body first, rather than relying solely on cognitive processing—are essential for healing. TCTSY helps regulate the autonomic nervous system, shifting individuals from states of hyperarousal or dissociation toward greater balance and resilience.

By integrating the latest research in trauma, neuroscience, and somatic healing, this program offers survivors a gentle yet powerful path toward

OUR OBJECTIVES

Brighter Life

Our groups aim to:

1. **Provide a Safe, Accessible Space** – Offer a compassionate and trauma-informed environment where survivors can explore their experience at their own pace.

2. **Support Nervous System Regulation** – Help kiritaki develop skills for reducing hyperarousal, grounding in the present moment, and increasing emotional resilience.

3. **Enhance Interoception and Body Awareness** – Encourage a non-coercive exploration of bodily sensations to rebuild a sense of safety and connection with the body.

4. **Foster Choice and Agency** – Empower kiritaki by offering choices in movement and breath, reinforcing autonomy in a way that counteracts the disempowerment of trauma.

5. **Reduce Trauma-Related Symptoms** – Support clients in alleviating symptoms of PTSD, anxiety, and dissociation through evidence-based practices.

6. **Cultivate Self-Compassion** – Provide tools to develop a kinder, more accepting relationship with oneself, fostering healing and resilience.

7. **Create a Supportive Community** – Offer a gentle and non-judgmental space where kiritaki can experience connection while maintaining control over their level of participation.

Is TC-TSY right for your client?

Our trauma-sensitive yoga groups are for kiritaki who have experienced trauma and have an approved ACC Sensitive Claim. These groups provide a safe, supportive, and structured environment for participants to explore research-driven, body-based approaches to healing from PTSD and C-PTSD.

Gender: We offer two kinds of groups - one for women only, and one for all genders, including members of the LGBQT+ community.
Age Range: Adults (18+).
Trauma History: Kiritaki must have an approved ACC Sensitive Claim, indicating they have experienced trauma covered under this funding.
Therapeutic Support: To ensure appropriate support, kiritaki must be actively engaged with a therapist, counselor, or psychologist while attending the group. A referral from a mental health professional is required.
These groups are designed to complement individual therapy, providing additional tools for nervous system regulation and embodiment in a trauma-sensitive setting.

Who Would Not Be Appropriate for Our Groups?

While our TSY groups are designed to be a supportive and accessible space, they may not be suitable for all individuals. To ensure the safety and well-being of kiritaki, the following exclusion criteria apply:
Active Psychosis: Individuals experiencing hallucinations, delusions, or other symptoms of psychosis that may impact their ability to engage safely in the group.
Extreme Dissociation: Some level of dissociation is a common trauma response and is understood within this space. However, this group may not be suitable for individuals who frequently experience dissociative states that significantly impair their ability to stay present and engaged.
Acute Mental Health Crisis: Those who are at significant risk of harm to themselves, including individuals experiencing severe suicidal ideation or requiring crisis-level support.
Significant Discomfort in Group Settings: Participants should feel comfortable enough to engage in a shared space and be open to gentle, choice-based movement. If social anxiety or relational trauma makes group participation overwhelming, individual therapy may be a more appropriate first step.
Substance Dependence Impacting Participation: While individuals in recovery are welcome, those currently struggling with substance use that may interfere with their ability to fully engage in the sessions would be better supported through other forms of care before joining.

WHAT KINDS OF GROUPS WE OFFER

WE OFFER 3 TYPES OF GROUPS:

1. **IN-PERSON WEEKLY GROUPS** WITHIN THE AUCKLAND AREA (FEMALE ONLY, LGBQT+ AND ALL GENDER OPTIONS AVAILABLE)
2. **ONLINE GROUPS** FOR KIRITAKI FROM ANYWHERE IN AOTEAROA (ALL GENDERS)
3. **DAY RETREATS** WITHIN AUCKLAND AND WHANGAREI (FEMALE ONLY)

WHAT TO EXPECT IN OUR GROUPS

All our groups and sessions are non-hierarchical and non-directive, meaning kiritaki are always in control of their own practice. There is no expectation to talk, perform, or follow instructions exactly—everything is invitational.

Weekly IN-PERSON Groups:

Each session follows a consistent, trauma-sensitive structure that prioritises safety, choice, and empowerment:

Welcome and Grounding

a. Reminder of group agreements (confidentiality, choice, safety, no expectations).

TCTSY Practice

a. Guided, invitational movements based on TCTSY principles.
b. Emphasis on interoception, choice-making, and self-paced exploration.
c. Simple, accessible shapes and movements, easily modified for each person's unique needs.

Rest and Integration

a. Guided relaxation practice.
b. Space for stillness and reflection.

Optional Cup Of Tea, Social Engagement & Personal Reflections

Kiritaki are warmly invited to share a cup of tea and kai in a relaxed, supportive space. During this time, we offer simple, engaging art activities for those who wish to take part, creating an atmosphere of creativity while encouraging connection. In previous sessions, these moments of togetherness have been essential in fostering belonging and reducing the isolation that is often felt by those navigating life after trauma.

WHAT TO EXPECT IN OUR GROUPS

Weekly ONLINE Groups:

Each session follows a consistent, trauma-sensitive structure that prioritises safety, choice, and empowerment:

Welcome and Grounding

a. Reminder of group agreements (confidentiality, choice, safety, no expectations).

TCTSY Practice

a. Guided, invitational movements based on TCTSY principles.
b. Emphasis on interoception, choice-making, and self-paced exploration.
c. Simple, accessible shapes and movements, easily modified for each person's unique needs.

Rest and Integration

a. Guided relaxation practice.
b. Space for stillness and reflection.

Optional Sharing, Questions or Personal Reflections

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DAY RETREATS - TOOLS FOR TRANSFORMING TRAUMA

Each Tools for Transforming Trauma day retreat follows a structured yet flexible framework. The program blends movement, mindfulness, creative arts, psychoeducation, and reflective practices to provide a holistic approach to healing.

Our intention is for our day retreats to be enjoyable, relaxing, and practical. We've drawn from trauma theory, counseling, and neuroscience to address the impacts of trauma, which touches every facet of a survivor's existence—physically, mentally, emotionally, and relationally. At the heart of our approach lies a commitment to trauma-informed principles, fostering an environment of safety, trust, and empowerment. Our facilitators are trained in an array of modalities, including TCTSY, Expressive Arts Therapy, Somatic Therapy, Counseling, DBT, ACT, and Ecotherapy. We use these modalities and techniques to create experiences that honor the individuality of each participant, recognising and embracing your unique journey.

Through nurturing practices, resilience-building, nervous system regulation, and cultivating self-compassion, our day retreats support you to connect to your body in reparative ways. We'll explore mindful movement, safe social connection, and support for developing healthy coping strategies. You'll come away from the day with a range of practices you can take into your daily life as you continue on your healing journey.

We believe every person deserves access to holistic, integrated, and empowering avenues for trauma recovery; our program serves as a beacon of hope and offers a compassionate, evidence-based roadmap toward integration and healing.

TOOLS FOR TRANSFORMING TRAUMA

Sample Session Plan (changes to suit season, intentions & group needs)

10:30 – 10:45 | Arriving & Setting the Space

- Welcome, introductions, and orientation to the session.
- Overview of the day's schedule and expectations.
- Group discussion: What do we need to feel safe enough today?

10:45 – 11:45 | Trauma-Sensitive Yoga & Movement

- Gentle, guided, choice-based movement designed to support embodiment and self-awareness.
- Focus on nervous system regulation through choice making, interoception, and mindful movement.

11:45 – 12:15 | Tools for Self-Regulation & Resilience

- Psychoeducation on trauma and self-care strategies.
- Practical tools for self-soothing, grounding, and emotional regulation.

12:15 – 1:15 | Nourishment & Optional Creative Exploration

- Lunch break with opportunities for self-guided activities:

1:15 – 1:30 | Guided Relaxation

- Trauma-informed relaxation practice to encourage restful digestion, ease and integration.

1:30 – 2:15 | Trauma-Sensitive Yoga & Mindful Movement

- A second movement session to deepen embodiment and integration.
- Emphasis on choice, comfort, and intuitive movement.

2:15 – 2:45 | Journaling & Self-Reflection

- Guided writing prompts to process insights and experiences.
- Space for personal reflection and meaning-making.

2:45 – 4:00 | Creative Self-Care Resource Making

- Art for self-care: creating a tangible resource (e.g., affirmation cards, vision boards, grounding objects) to support participants beyond the session.

4:00-4:30 | Reflections & Closing

- Group sharing of takeaways from the day.
- Closing ritual to support a smooth transition back to daily life.

Preparing Kiritaki For A Group

To ensure a safe and supportive experience, we take a thorough approach to preparing participants before they join one of our groups.

Referral & Screening Process

- Kiritaki must be referred by their lead provider and have an approved ACC sensitive claim.
- Before the group begins, each participant will undergo a thorough triage call with our approved ACC facilitator. This call helps assess readiness for a group setting, and ensures that kiritaki understand what to expect, feel capable of engaging with the content, and give consent for our facilitators to contact their lead provider if needed.
- Our facilitators will liaise with clients' lead providers prior to the group's commencement to identify any specific needs, concerns, or safety considerations if required.

Outcome Measurement Methods

Choice is a fundamental aspect of a trauma-sensitive approach. Leading trauma researchers emphasise that interventions lacking choice can unintentionally reinforce triggers and even retraumatise survivors. Since experiences of loss of control are often central to trauma, fostering autonomy and agency is essential in the healing process. To honor this, we offer kiritaki the option to select their preferred method for outcome measurement. They may choose between:

1. Pre- and Post-Program Questionnaire OR
2. Pre- and Post-Program Interview

During this process kiritaki will be asked questions about:

- Trauma Symptom Reduction
- Emotional Regulation
- Body Awareness & Interoception
- Mindfulness & Present-Moment Awareness
- Overall Well-being & Quality of Life

Wellbeing Plans & SMART Goals

To support you in your planning, we've created templates for each of our groups, which may be useful when creating wellbeing plans and requesting TSY as part of your client's therapeutic plan.

SMART Goals for ACC SCS Kiritaki - **IN-PERSON GROUPS**:

Goal description

1. How will the outcomes of this goal improve kiritaki functioning? eg what will the kiritaki be able to do differently or better?
2. How will this goal be achieved? Specify the services needed and how they will be used to achieve the goal.
3. How will progress towards this goal be measured?
4. Who will deliver the services to support this goal and what is the expected timeframe to achieve this goal?

QUESTION 1: How will the outcomes of this goal improve kiritaki functioning? eg what will the kiritaki be able to do differently or better?

By participating in our trauma-sensitive yoga groups, participants may experience:

1. Reduced PTSD symptoms, including decreased hyperarousal, dissociation, and emotional dysregulation.
2. Increased body awareness (interoception) and a greater sense of connection with the body.
3. Improved nervous system regulation, leading to better emotional balance and resilience.
4. Greater sense of personal agency, empowerment, and the ability to make choices that feel right for them.
5. A more compassionate relationship with themselves, fostering healing through self-acceptance.
6. A sense of connection and shared experience, while maintaining control over their level of participation.
7. Increased capacity for mindfulness and presence, supporting overall well-being beyond the sessions.

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SMART Goals for ACC SCS Kiritaki CONTINUED... **IN-PERSON GROUPS:**

QUESTION 2. How will this goal be achieved? Specify the services needed and how they will be used to achieve the goal.

Group Name: In-Person Trauma Sensitive Yoga, Auckland
Geographical Area: North Shore, and Central Auckland.
Number of Participants: Maximum of 15 per group
Outline the number of sessions and the duration: In-person Trauma Sensitive Yoga (TSY) groups are 90 minutes in duration and range from 6-8 weeks in length, depending on facilitator availability. Group length is set at the beginning of each term.
Number of Funded Hours Required For This Group: 16 + 1 hour triage

This in-person trauma-sensitive yoga group aims to:

1. **Provide a Safe, Accessible Space** – Offer a compassionate and trauma-informed environment where survivors can explore at their own pace.
2. **Support Nervous System Regulation** – Help kiritaki develop skills for reducing hyperarousal, grounding in the present moment, and increasing emotional resilience.
3. **Enhance Interoception and Body Awareness** – Encourage a non-coercive exploration of bodily sensations to rebuild a sense of safety and connection with the body.
4. **Foster Choice and Agency** – Empower kiritaki by offering choices in movement and breath, reinforcing autonomy in a way that counteracts the disempowerment of trauma.
5. **Reduce Trauma-Related Symptoms** – Support clients in alleviating symptoms of PTSD, anxiety, and dissociation through evidence-based practices.
6. **Cultivate Self-Compassion** – Provide tools to develop a kinder, more accepting relationship with oneself, fostering healing and resilience.
7. **Create a Supportive Community** – Offer a gentle and non-judgmental space where kiritaki can experience connection while maintaining control over their level of participation.

Origins of Trauma Centre Trauma Sensitive Yoga:

Trauma Center Trauma-Sensitive Yoga (TC-TSY) has been developed by the Justice Resource Institute's Trauma Center in Brookline, Massachusetts, specifically for survivors of complex trauma or chronic, treatment-resistant post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). TC-TSY draws on trauma theory, attachment theory, neuroscience, and hatha yoga. TC-TSY is the only evidence-based form of trauma sensitive yoga available today. Research studies by Bessel A. van der Kolk, David Emerson and colleagues have shown that TC-TSY significantly reduces PTSD symptoms in 8-weeks for many participants. This approach to yoga was also found to improve functioning by increasing tolerance to physical and sensory experiences and to increase emotional awareness and affect tolerance. Training in this modality is thorough and extensive and our yoga specialist, Jessica Dziwulska, has trained in TC-TSY to the highest available level.

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SMART Goals for ACC SCS Kiritaki CONTINUED... **IN-PERSON GROUPS:**

Rationale for the Group:

Survivors of sexual trauma often experience lasting impacts on their physical, emotional, and psychological well-being. Traditional talk-based therapies, while valuable, may not always address the ways trauma is stored in the body. Trauma-sensitive yoga (TSY) offers a body-based approach to healing, providing survivors with a safe space to reconnect with their bodies, regain a sense of agency, and cultivate self-compassion.

Despite the growing recognition of body-based healing modalities, trauma-sensitive yoga remains largely inaccessible due to financial barriers and a lack of available, specialised programs. Funding this group will provide survivors with a research-backed, trauma-informed, and empowering practice that can support their healing journey in a way that is both accessible and sustainable.

QUESTION 3. How will progress towards this goal be measured?

Leading trauma researchers emphasize that interventions lacking choice can unintentionally reinforce triggers and even retraumatize survivors. Since experiences of loss of control are often central to trauma, fostering autonomy and agency is essential in the healing process.
To honor this, we offer kiritaki the option to select their preferred method for outcome measurement. They may choose between:

1. Pre- and Post-Program Questionnaire
2. Pre- and Post-Program Interview

The pre-program questionnaire or interview will explore current experiences related to trauma recovery, while the post-program interview will reflect on any shifts in:

- Trauma Symptom Reduction
- Emotional Regulation
- Body Awareness & Interoception
- Mindfulness & Present-Moment Awareness
- Overall Well-being & Quality of Life

Kiritaki are welcome to invite their lead provider to participate in this conversation if they feel it would be supportive.

By offering these options, we ensure that kiritaki engage in a reflective process that prioritises comfort, agency, and well-being, alongside the provision of a baseline for indices of change - ensuring client objectives are being met.

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QUESTION 4. Who will deliver the services to support this goal and what is the expected timeframe to achieve this goal?

Number of sessions and the duration: Our in-person Trauma Sensitive Yoga (TSY) groups are 90 minutes in duration and range from 6-8 weeks in length. Group length is set at the beginning of each term.

Supplier's Name:
The Nelson Clinic

Supplier's number:
VAH127

Supplier's email address:
groups@nelsonclinic.nz

Lead service provider's name and ACC provider number:
Amy Benjamin PAS256

Relevant training and experience to provide proposed services:

Amy Benjamin is an NZAC registered holistic counsellor and a Sensitive Claims provider, offering online and in-person sessions. She blends relational counselling ('talk therapy') with body-centred practices like mindfulness, breathwork, and gentle movement to help clients build self-awareness and regulate their nervous system. A unique aspect of her practice is ecotherapy, where stepping outside and connecting with the intrinsic healing power of nature can significantly enhance the therapeutic process.

Co-facilitator's name and ACC provider number:
Jessica Dziwulska PVT0423JD

Co-facilitator's phone number:
021 884 518

Co-facilitator's relevant training and experience to provide proposed services:
Jessica leads our TSY sessions. She has been practicing yoga for nearly 3 decades and has trained in Trauma Center Trauma Sensitive Yoga (TCTSY), Expressive Art Therapy, Somatic Movement Therapy, Dance Movement Therapy, and Restorative Movement Psychotherapy for survivors of trauma. She is currently working toward her Master of Dance Movement therapy and is writing her thesis on body-based/somatic approaches to working with trauma, PTSD and Complex PTSD. Jess has been working with trauma survivors for the past 7 years, both 1:1 and in group settings. She is passionate about creating and facilitating in trauma-informed spaces where diversity, choice, and agency are held in the highest esteem.

ONLINE GROUPS

Goal description

1. How will the outcomes of this goal improve kiritaki functioning? eg what will the kiritaki be able to do differently or better?

2. How will this goal be achieved? Specify the services needed and how they will be used to achieve the goal.

3. How will progress towards this goal be measured?

4. Who will deliver the services to support this goal and what is the expected timeframe to achieve this goal?

QUESTION 1: How will the outcomes of this goal improve kiritaki functioning? eg what will the kiritaki be able to do differently or better?

By participating in our trauma-sensitive yoga groups, participants may experience:

1. Reduced PTSD symptoms, including decreased hyperarousal, dissociation, and emotional dysregulation.
2. Increased body awareness (interoception) and a greater sense of connection with the body.
3. Improved nervous system regulation, leading to better emotional balance and resilience.
4. Greater sense of personal agency, empowerment, and the ability to make choices that feel right for them.
5. A more compassionate relationship with themselves, fostering healing through self-acceptance.
6. A sense of connection and shared experience, while maintaining control over their level of participation.
7. Increased capacity for mindfulness and presence, supporting overall well-being beyond the sessions.

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QUESTION 2. How will this goal be achieved? Specify the services needed and how they will be used to achieve the goal.

Group Name: Online Trauma Sensitive Yoga
Geographical Area: Online
Number of Participants: Maximum of 20 per group
Number of sessions and the duration: Our online Trauma Sensitive Yoga (TSY) online groups are 60 minutes in duration and range from 6-8 weeks in length. Group length is set at the beginning of each term.
Number of Funded Hours Required For This Group: 12 + 1 hour triage

This online trauma-sensitive yoga group aims to:

1. **Provide a Safe, Accessible Space –** Offer a compassionate and trauma-informed environment where survivors can explore at their own pace.
2. **Support Nervous System Regulation –** Help kiritaki develop skills for reducing hyperarousal, grounding in the present moment, and increasing emotional resilience.
3. **Enhance Interoception and Body Awareness –** Encourage a non-coercive exploration of bodily sensations to rebuild a sense of safety and connection with the body.
4. **Foster Choice and Agency –** Empower kiritaki by offering choices in movement and breath, reinforcing autonomy in a way that counteracts the disempowerment of trauma.
5. **Reduce Trauma-Related Symptoms –** Support clients in alleviating symptoms of PTSD, anxiety, and dissociation through evidence-based practices.
6. **Cultivate Self-Compassion –** Provide tools to develop a kinder, more accepting relationship with oneself, fostering healing and resilience.
7. **Create a Supportive Community –** Offer a gentle and non-judgmental space where kiritaki can experience connection while maintaining control over their level of participation.

Origins of Trauma Centre Trauma Sensitive Yoga:

Trauma Center Trauma-Sensitive Yoga (TC-TSY) has been developed by the Justice Resource Institute's Trauma Center in Brookline, Massachusetts, specifically for survivors of complex trauma or chronic, treatment-resistant post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). TC-TSY draws on trauma theory, attachment theory, neuroscience, and hatha yoga. TC-TSY is the only evidence-based form of trauma sensitive yoga available today. Research studies by Bessel A. van der Kolk, David Emerson and colleagues have shown that TC-TSY significantly reduces PTSD symptoms in 8-weeks for many participants. This approach to yoga was also found to improve functioning by increasing tolerance to physical and sensory experiences and to increase emotional awareness and affect tolerance. Training in this modality is thorough and extensive and our yoga specialist, Jessica Dziwulska, has trained in TC-TSY to the highest available level.

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SMART Goals for ACC SCS Kiritaki CONTINUED... **ONLINE GROUPS:**

Rationale for the Group:

Survivors of sexual trauma often experience lasting impacts on their physical, emotional, and psychological well-being. Traditional talk-based therapies, while valuable, may not always address the ways trauma is stored in the body. Trauma-sensitive yoga (TSY) offers a body-based approach to healing, providing survivors with a safe space to reconnect with their bodies, regain a sense of agency, and cultivate self-compassion.

Despite the growing recognition of body-based healing modalities, trauma-sensitive yoga remains largely inaccessible due to financial barriers and a lack of available, specialised programs. Funding this group will provide survivors with a research-backed, trauma-informed, and empowering practice that can support their healing journey in a way that is both accessible and sustainable.

QUESTION 3. How will progress towards this goal be measured?

Leading trauma researchers emphasize that interventions lacking choice can unintentionally reinforce triggers and even retraumatize survivors. Since experiences of loss of control are often central to trauma, fostering autonomy and agency is essential in the healing process.
To honor this, we offer kiritaki the option to select their preferred method for outcome measurement. They may choose between:

1. Pre- and Post-Program Questionnaire
2. Pre- and Post-Program Interview

The pre-program questionnaire or interview will explore current experiences related to trauma recovery, while the post-program interview will reflect on any shifts in:

- Trauma Symptom Reduction
- Emotional Regulation
- Body Awareness & Interoception
- Mindfulness & Present-Moment Awareness
- Overall Well-being & Quality of Life

Kiritaki are welcome to invite their lead provider to participate in this conversation if they feel it would be supportive.

By offering these options, we ensure that kiritaki engage in a reflective process that prioritises comfort, agency, and well-being, alongside the provision of a baseline for indices of change - ensuring client objectives are being met.

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QUESTION 4. Who will deliver the services to support this goal and what is the expected timeframe to achieve this goal?

Number of sessions and the duration: Our in-person Trauma Sensitive Yoga (TSY) groups are 90 minutes in duration and range from 6-8 weeks in length. Group length is set at the beginning of each term.

Supplier's Name:
The Nelson Clinic

Supplier's number:
VAH127

Supplier's email address:
groups@nelsonclinic.nz

Lead service provider's name and ACC provider number:
Amy Benjamin PAS256

Relevant training and experience to provide proposed services:

Amy Benjamin is an NZAC registered holistic counsellor and a Sensitive Claims provider, offering online and in-person sessions. She blends relational counselling ('talk therapy') with body-centred practices like mindfulness, breathwork, and gentle movement to help clients build self-awareness and regulate their nervous system. A unique aspect of her practice is ecotherapy, where stepping outside and connecting with the intrinsic healing power of nature can significantly enhance the therapeutic process.

Co-facilitator's name and ACC provider number:
Jessica Dziwulska PVT0423JD

Co-facilitator's phone number:
021 884 518

Co-facilitator's relevant training and experience to provide proposed services:
Jessica leads our TSY sessions. She has been practicing yoga for nearly 3 decades and has trained in Trauma Center Trauma Sensitive Yoga (TCTSY), Expressive Art Therapy, Somatic Movement Therapy, Dance Movement Therapy, and Restorative Movement Psychotherapy for survivors of trauma. She is currently working toward her Master of Dance Movement therapy and is writing her thesis on body-based/somatic approaches to working with trauma, PTSD and Complex PTSD. Jess has been working with trauma survivors for the past 7 years, both 1:1 and in group settings. She is passionate about creating and facilitating in trauma-informed spaces where diversity, choice, and agency are held in the highest esteem.

TOOLS FOR TRANSFORMING TRAUMA - **DAY RETREATS**

Goal description

1. How will the outcomes of this goal improve kiritaki functioning? eg what will the kiritaki be able to do differently or better?

2. How will this goal be achieved? Specify the services needed and how they will be used to achieve the goal.

3. How will progress towards this goal be measured?

4. Who will deliver the services to support this goal and what is the expected timeframe to achieve this goal?

QUESTION 1: How will the outcomes of this goal improve kiritaki functioning? eg what will the kiritaki be able to do differently or better?

By participating in this program, individuals will:

✔ Learn practical tools for self-regulation and emotional resilience.
✔ Build a stronger connection to themselves and others.
✔ Increase their capacity for mindfulness and self-reflection.
✔ Cultivate self-compassion and a sense of agency.
✔ Feel more empowered in making choices that support their well-being.
✔ Reduce feelings of isolation through shared experiences.
✔ Strengthen their ability to self-soothe and find moments of peace.
✔ Improve their relationship with their body in a gentle, supportive way.

Ultimately, Tools for Transforming Trauma aims to equip participants with resources to navigate daily life with more ease, self-awareness, and a greater sense of control over their healing journey.

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TOOLS FOR TRANSFORMING TRAUMA - **DAY RETREATS**

QUESTION 2. How will this goal be achieved? Specify the services needed and how they will be used to achieve the goal.

Group Name: Tools For Transforming Trauma (TTT) Day Retreats
Geographical Area: North Shore (with other locations coming in 2026)
Number of Participants: Maximum of 15 per group
Outline the number of sessions and the duration: Tools For Transforming Trauma is offered as a one day, 6-hour retreat-style group.
Number of Funded Hours Required For This Group: 7 + 1 hour triage

Tools For Transforming Trauma (TTT) is an ACC SCS funded group therapy option, offered as a day retreat. It invites individuals dealing with trauma to learn and apply tools for healing, drawing from Trauma-Sensitive Yoga (TCTSY), Creative Arts Therapy (CAT), and mindfulness-based psycho-education.
TTT provides clients with sustainable recovery tools that integrate into daily life. By incorporating the latest advancements in trauma theory and neuroscience, TTT addresses the comprehensive impacts of trauma—physical, mental, emotional, and relational. We are committed to trauma-informed principles, ensuring an environment of safety, trust, and empowerment.
TTT's facilitators are trained in Trauma Sensitive Yoga (TCTSY), Dance Movement Therapy, Creative Art Therapy, Somatic Therapy, and counselling. Through fostering resilience, regulating the nervous system, and nurturing self-compassion, TTT helps participants reconnect with their bodies, explore safe social connections, and develop healthy coping strategies. Anchored in the belief that everyone deserves access to holistic and empowering trauma recovery avenues, TTT serves as a beacon of hope and healing.
The sessions will explore key themes, including:

- **Resourcing & Resilience-Building –** Practicing tools for self-soothing, grounding, and building inner strength.
- **Nervous System Regulation –** Learning gentle movement and breathwork to support physiological and emotional balance.
- **Mindfulness & Self-Reflection –** Cultivating present-moment awareness, self-compassion, and emotional resilience.
- **Building Connection in a Trauma-Informed Space –** Fostering a sense of safety, trust, and shared experience to reduce isolation.
- **Empowering Choice & Agency –** Encouraging participants to explore decision-making in a supportive, choice-based environment.
- **Developing a Positive Relationship with the Body –** Engaging in gentle movement, sensory awareness, and creative practices to reconnect with the body in a non-threatening way.
- **Understanding Trauma & Its Impact –** Exploring how trauma affects the brain, body, and nervous system in an accessible and empowering way.

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TOOLS FOR TRANSFORMING TRAUMA - **DAY RETREATS:**

QUESTION 3. How will progress towards this goal be measured?

A trauma-sensitive approach prioritises choice, safety, and agency. Research shows that interventions lacking choice can inadvertently reinforce trauma responses, while those that support autonomy foster healing. To honor these principles, participants are given the option to select their preferred method of outcome measurement:

1. **Post-Program Participant Feedback Survey**
- Kiritaki will complete an online questionnaire reflecting on their experiences, personal insights, and the impact of the sessions on their well-being.
- The survey will assess key areas such as body awareness, emotional regulation, coping strategies, feelings of safety, and connection with self and others.
- Participants may choose to complete this survey independently or with the support of their lead provider.
-

2**. Post-Program Facilitated Interview**
- If preferred, kiritaki may opt for a one-on-one interview via phone or Zoom with one of the facilitators from their group.
- The discussion will explore their experience of the program, any shifts in self-awareness, emotional regulation, coping mechanisms, and overall well-being.
- If desired, kiritaki may include their lead provider in this conversation for additional support.

By offering flexible assessment methods, we ensure that kiritaki feel empowered and supported throughout the process, while also gathering meaningful data on the program's effectiveness.

Alongside the above options for client feedback and reflection, the following will be conducted throughout:

1. **Facilitator Observations**
   - Throughout the program, facilitators will track engagement, participation, and any notable shifts in participants' confidence, communication, and self-expression.
   - Facilitators will also note individual and group progress in areas such as body awareness, emotional regulation, and comfort in a shared space.
2. **Participant Self-Reflection & Check-Ins**
   - Regular check-ins will encourage participants to reflect on their progress, identifying any shifts in their ability to self-regulate and engage with the practices offered.
3. **Collaboration with Lead Providers**
   - Where appropriate, we will liaise with participants' referring therapists or providers to gather additional insights into support needs.

By utilising these evaluation methods, we ensure that the program remains responsive, impactful, and aligned with the needs of our participants.

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TOOLS FOR TRANSFORMING TRAUMA - **DAY RETREATS:**

QUESTION 4. Who will deliver the services to support this goal and what is the expected timeframe to achieve this goal?

Number of sessions and the duration: Our in-person Trauma Sensitive Yoga (TSY) groups are 90 minutes in duration and range from 6-8 weeks in length. Group length is set at the beginning of each term.

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The Nelson Clinic

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Co-facilitator's name and ACC provider number:
Jessica Dziwulska PVT0423JD

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Jessica leads our TSY sessions. She has been practicing yoga for nearly 3 decades and has trained in Trauma Center Trauma Sensitive Yoga (TCTSY), Expressive Art Therapy, Somatic Movement Therapy, Dance Movement Therapy, and Restorative Movement Psychotherapy for survivors of trauma. She is currently working toward her Master of Dance Movement therapy and is writing her thesis on body-based/somatic approaches to working with trauma, PTSD and Complex PTSD. Jess has been working with trauma survivors for the past 7 years, both 1:1 and in group settings. She is passionate about creating and facilitating in trauma-informed spaces where diversity, choice, and agency are held in the highest esteem.

CLIENT TESTIMONIALS

"I love that the classes are so gentle and discreet. I have found having the freedom to choose which moves I engage in and being offered the freedom to experiment with different positions really empowering. I have also treasured the opportunity to take time out to engage in the practice and to focus on connecting with my body. Hugely therapeutic." (online TSY participant)

"I loved the retreat. I was surprised at how much art therapy and yoga assisted in helping me feel centered, and I can now see how much I try to control the outcome of a process, which I recognise is an illusion of safety. I really appreciate this insight. Loved how it was facilitated. Highly recommend." (day retreat participant)

"I found the retreat really amazing in many ways, but I was most nervous about the interaction with others aspect, and the fact that that wasn't forced or expected of us was amazing. We could sit in our own experience, which is important for me as an empath who holds others' experiences and can be attuned to the negative impact that has on me. You were both awesome facilitators who made the experience safe and enjoyable - I appreciated the experience more than I can say." (day retreat participant)

"I am also so thankful to be able to attend these classes as they are so incredibly peaceful, respectful, inviting, calming, grounding and beautifully orchestrated. It is so comforting to feel how passionate Jess is about transforming trauma through yoga and group therapy sessions like this. Every time I go to these I come out feeling so relaxed, happy and grounded. It has been a very beneficial part of my healing process and I look forward to being able to attend more of these." (day

"From the bottom of my heart thank you Jess & Amy. You are both beautiful people doing extraordinary work. Thank you for playing a role in my healing journey." (8 week in-person participant)

"The last 8 weeks have been amazing and so helpful for me in so many ways. I cannot thank you and ACC enough. I am really looking forward to continuing with the sessions next term." (8 week in-person participant)

"Just wanted to pass on a huge ngā mihi for the weeks of yoga. I truly looked forward to it each week, with the deep value in discovering my relationship with my body. It has been a real empowering process whilst provoking some more challenging reflections, which I have been able to share each week with my therapist and help grow in. The invitation to stillness was a newness to me, so it has taught me a sense of mindfulness which I have been applying beyond yoga too. So again, thank you so much." (online TSY participant)

FAQS

"Do clients need to be fit, or have practiced yoga before?"
No. These groups are designed to be accessible to a wide range of bodies and experiences. No previous yoga experience or level of fitness is required. All movements are invitational and can be adapted to suit each person's needs on the day.

"What if my client has a pain condition, physical limitations, or learning differences?"
Participants are always invited to work within their own range and comfort zone. Choice is central to the practice. Clients can adapt, modify, or skip any movement that doesn't feel helpful. We offer clear information and guidance on different options so that each person can participate in a way that feels safe and manageable for their body and learning style.

"How do you ensure safety in your online sessions?"
Before joining an online group, each client has an individual triage call. In this call, we explore:

- What resources they already use to help regulate if they become distressed
- What helps them feel grounded and safe in their own space
- Who they could contact at home or nearby if they need additional support

We ask that clients have someone available in the house, or a trusted contact they can reach if they need more support than we can offer online.
At the start of each online session, we provide the ACC-registered therapist's phone number in the Zoom chat. If a client needs extra support during or immediately after the session, they can text the therapist, who will then call them back.
At the end of each session, we invite everyone to "sign off" in the chat box so we know they are okay. If someone does not sign off, our therapist will follow up with them after the session to check in.
In rare situations where we have concerns about a client's wellbeing, and with the client's prior consent (given in the triage call), we may contact their treating therapist to let them know that additional support could be helpful.

"Will my client be asked to talk about their trauma during the group?"
No. This is a trauma-resourcing practice, not a trauma-processing or talk-therapy group. The focus is on building body-based resources such as grounding, choice, and present-moment awareness. Because these groups are offered as an adjunct to therapy, we encourage clients to share anything that arises in the sessions with their ACC-registered therapist. This supports continuity of c***are and helps integrate body-based work with their ongoing talk therapy.***

FAQS

“Does my client need to bring or own a yoga mat?”
No. We provide all yoga equipment needed for the sessions. Clients are welcome to bring their own mat or other items if they prefer. They may also bring personal comfort items (for example a favourite blanket, cushion, or soft toy) if they find this supportive.

“***What if my client dissociates during the practice?”***
Some level of dissociation or “checking out” is a common trauma response and is understood and normalised within this space. We offer gentle, choice-based invitations that can help clients stay connected to the present moment.
However, this group may not be suitable for individuals who frequently experience intense dissociative states that significantly affect their ability to remain aware, oriented, or engaged. During our triage process, we will explore together whether this group is the right level of support at this time.

“How do you support clients if they need it?”
An ACC-registered therapist is available throughout every session. Before each group starts, we have a detailed triage call with each client. In this call, we discuss:

- How they might let us know if they need support
- What “support” looks like for them in practical terms

Support might include bringing a glass of water or a hot drink, offering a blanket or eye pillow, quietly checking in, or stepping aside for a brief conversation. If needed, we might also pause with them or take a short walk outside to help them re-orient and ground. The aim is to collaborate with each person so that support feels safe, respectful, and manageable.

THANK YOU

Thank you for your continued support in referring clients to our weekly groups and our Tools for Transforming Trauma day retreats. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact us. We truly believe this mahi can offer profound support to kiritaki navigating the effects of trauma. With research clearly backing the benefits of combining cognitive talk-based therapies with body-based therapeutic modalities, We look forward to the opportunity to collaborate in supporting your clients' healing journeys, and to connecting with you along the way.

If you have any questions, please reach out.

Ngā mihi nui,
Jessica Dziwulska and Amy Benjamin

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