



June 2010

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Helpline using web cams to give teens a personal experience

By Adam Hollingworth

While teens will be able to see who they are talking to, the counsellors will not be able to see them. While teens will be able to see who they are talking to, the counsellors will not be able to see them.

A helpline is giving troubled teens the chance to use webcam technology so they can see the counsellor they are talking to.

It is the latest initiative to reach out to young New Zealanders struggling with depression.

For two years The Lowdown has been using texts to help teens, but now they are introducing webcams so teenagers can have a more personal experience when they talk about their problems.

However, while they are able to see who they are talking

to, the counsellors will not be able to see them.

“It can be a pretty big step to go and talk to somebody face to face, whereas via text and email – and even over webcam on the internet – it helps them to retain a little bit of anonymity,” says Dylan Norton of thelowdown.co.nz.

Teens can also contact The Lowdown by phone or email, but last year texts proved a real breakthrough – with nearly 10,000 sent or received every month.

It is hoped the webcams will work just as well – especially for teens living rurally.

“It’s a real plus to be able to see someone who is there and listening,” says Mr Norton.

“It can be really beneficial, so from a support person’s perspective, it allows you to engage with them a bit more, so you can really show that you are listening.”

The Lowdown team says it has to reach out in every way it can.

One hundred young New Zealanders commit suicide every year, and one in eight

teens will experience mental health issues.

The Lowdown is using the net so that fewer will slip through.

www.thelowdown.co.nz



To all helpline workers and managers!

Ever wanted to see how other helplines do it?

Helplines Australia receives many requests from people wanting to visit other helplines to observe their practices and to take some ideas back to their own work environments. Networking and sharing is part of our mission and following some feedback from members, we have developed a procedure for members to follow, that takes into account privacy issues and acknowledges the impact that visitors can have on a service. It also requires visitors to set objectives for their visit so that the experience is part of their professional development.

Some clear objectives should be established for the visit. For example:

- An opportunity to observe and reflect on the use of helpline communication skills.

- A broadening of knowledge in information about with emphasis on
- An understanding of the range of services provided by helpline referral and other services.
- Access to up to date resources
- An awareness of computerised databases and call monitoring technology the service utilises.

The placement does not result in accreditation to assess and manage callers on behalf of the helpline being visited. Placements generally last for half a day and can be tailored to the individual visitor's learning goals.

We suggest that visitors pay a fee of \$50 to the helpline they are visiting to acknowledge the preparation and attention they will receive during the visit.

One of Helplines Australia's Executive Committee members, Margy Ewing, of the NSW Sexual Health Infoline, has developed some guidelines which are offered to Helplines Australia members as a template for adapting within your own service.

We hope this will formalise the process and give due recognition to the time and care a visit takes and to the benefits such an opportunity can present to helpline workers at any stage of their career.

For details and required documents please visit our website:

www.helplines.org.au



Child Support Agency customers benefit from referrals to the 'Parent Support Service'

C. Hastings.

Separation is arguably one of the most challenging life events a person will face. Separation can bring a change of address, emotional upheaval, financial challenges and possibly ill health due to the stresses and strains. The Child Support Agency (CSA) has responded by offering a free, confidential and immediate telephone counselling service for its customers. Where there are signs of significant emotional distress, complex counselling needs, or a future risk of self harm or harm to others, Customer Service Officers are able to offer parents an assisted transfer to the 'Parent Support Service', which has been provided by Parentline ACT since December 2008.

CSA customers referred to the service receive telephone counselling, referrals and support, including a number of follow-up telephone calls, all at no cost to them. In many cases, the counsellor will also make contact with the referring CSA staff member, to help them

manage their emotional reaction to the call.

“Parentline ACT has taken on this new service enthusiastically and is keen to provide a quality service to assist separated parents and to work in partnership with the CSA. It is gratifying to be able to support people in this difficult time in their lives” says Sue Sheridan, Manager of Parentline ACT.

Referrals to the Parent Support Service have been growing steadily in number and the feedback from customers and CSA staff confirms the value of the service.

“(The service was) a god-send as I really needed help. The best thing was that the lady I spoke to was extremely empathetic, non-judgemental and understanding. I was just allowed to talk; talked through a lot of things.”
Customer feedback, 2009

CSA supports Parentline ACT with training and information on CSA procedures and the issues that parents face navigating the child support system. CSA has also made the Financial Counsellor’s Hotline available to Parentline ACT and with a parent’s permission; counsellors can discuss specific details of a particular child support case. CSA has made a commitment to provide Parentline ACT with continuous professional development in subject matter identified by both organisations as effecting separated parents.

Parentline ACT is also involved in providing ongoing feedback to CSA staff about Agency initiatives in areas such as family violence.

Toni Brown, Director of Parent Support Services at the Child Support Agency says that “The Child Support Agency is committed to supporting parents through their separation journey, not just for their own wellbeing but for the benefit of the children. Parentline ACT plays an important and valued role in offering immediate and confidential advice and support. Our partnership has given both organisations a better understanding of the issues parents are facing and the opportunity to develop a higher capacity to support separated parents and their children”.



Professional Development Seminar Effective Telephone Counselling Techniques

Melbourne Victoria

Presenter: Bill Campos,
Clinical Psychologist

Date: Friday 16 July 2010

Time: 10am-12noon

Venue: TBA

Cost: Free for members, \$35 for
non-members.

Details to be posted on Website



Ambos lend a hand in supporting people touched by suicide.

Dominic Morgan
CEO Ambulance Tasmania

Tasmanian paramedics are to take on a greater role in pointing people bereaved by suicide towards specialised support services to help them through their loss.

Ambulance Tasmania today signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the StandBy Response Service, which provides 24 hour-seven day coordinated community help for anyone who has suffered bereavement through the suicide of a loved one, friend or associate.

Under the MoU, all Tasmanian ambulance vehicles will carry StandBy Sun Visor Kits, including fridge magnets with the 24-hour emergency response numbers – 0439 556 660 (North/North West) and 0400 183 490 (South) - for paramedics attending cases involving suicide to give on-the-spot to relatives, friends or colleagues involved.

Ambulance Tasmania CEO Dominic Morgan said that while paramedics’ prime

responsibility had always been and would continue to be saving lives, they could also play an important referral role towards support services.

“It is obviously a shocking and numbing experience for the relatives, friends, neighbours or colleagues of those who have taken their own life,” Mr Morgan said.

“People affected by these crisis situations are usually in no position to think clearly at this point about what sort of help they might need further down the track.

“So this is a key opportunity for paramedics to be a conduit to important back-up support services available in the community.”

StandBy Coordinator for the North/North West Wendy French said the agreement with Ambulance Tasmania would significantly help the implementation of the response service initiatives in the community.

“StandBy acknowledges the vital role played by Tasmanian paramedics in referring people bereaved by suicide,” Ms French said.

“As the key emergency health people on-the-ground in these cases, they are in the perfect position to provide this vital contact information.”

Ms French said StandBy provided a 24-hour crisis response by members of the trained, qualified and professional team, regardless of when or

where suicide had occurred.

“A reliable single point of contact, StandBy can provide information and advice by telephone, or more effectively through face-to-face outreach, including a home visit.”

Coordinator for the South Connie Alomes said StandBy could also assist in finding practical solutions such as short term accommodation, food and clothing for people immediately impacted by suicide.

“StandBy crisis team members can accompany the bereaved in situations such as undertaking Police statements or identification of the deceased,” Ms Alomes said.

She said StandBy could also assist in complex cases such as suicides within schools and workplaces.

“We can arrange for follow-on support from other local services and/or community groups under the Standby Co-ordinated Community Response Plan,” Ms Alomes said.

**If you have
Information that you
would like published
in our newsletter
please email us at**

info@helplines.org.au



Member Profile

Each year over 7000 people contact the **Hep C Helpline**. Staff can provide information, support, referrals, advocacy and suggestions for any matter relating to hepatitis C. Anyone can call us, including people living with hep C, their family members and partners, employers, prison inmates, people at risk of hep C exposure, health care professionals, community workers and the general public.

The **Hep C Helpline** also facilitates a service called **Hep Connect**, where callers can talk with a peer volunteer who has experiences of living with hep C and undergoing treatment.

Below are just a few of the topics that staff on the Hep C Helpline can provide information on:

1. New diagnosis info
2. Managing symptoms
3. Transmission risks
4. Treatment process & support
5. Disclosure & discrimination
6. Complementary therapies
7. Rights & legal issues
8. Research & trials
9. Antibody & PCR testing

10. Lifestyle and health tips
11. Pregnancy & children
12. Accessing GPs & treatment clinics
13. Diet & nutrition
14. Employment & welfare
15. Insurance & superannuation
16. Support groups & counselling

The *Hep C Helpline* is staffed by trained, full time employees of the Hepatitis C Council of NSW, and is open Monday to Friday 9-5pm.

Outside of these hours, a recorded hepatitis C information service is available.



Mothers share support group

5th May 2010

THE Australian Breastfeeding Association (ABA) is inviting all mums and families to celebrate National Mothering Week in the week leading up to Mother's Day.

ABA's Lockyer group is having a special get together on Thursday, May 6 at 9.30am at the new fenced park at the Cultural Centre in Gatton.

National Mothering Week has been celebrated by the

ABA since 1979 and this year's focus is on the importance of mothers connecting with each other by joining support groups.

There are many programs in our community that are set up for mothers to help other mothers, including the ABA's own support groups.

For many mums, their mothers' group can become a welcome refuge, a place where they can share their feelings and know that others have been there too.

Often mothers form life-long friendships.

"New mums get a chance to meet other mothers and have their breastfeeding questions answered by a qualified breastfeeding counsellor," ABA counsellor and mum Janetta Walker said.

"Mums find this mother-to-mother support a great help in getting through the early days with a new baby, but we also have members with toddlers and older children too."

The ABA runs over 260 local mother support groups around Australia, as well as its 24-hour toll-free National Breastfeeding Helpline, 1800 mum 2 mum (1800 686 2 686) which takes about 1500 calls per week.

It also has a website which has lots of valuable information for mums which can be accessed at www.breastfeeding.asn.au



Nitschke shows how to bypass web filters

Ehsaan Veiszadeh

About 200 elderly people have been shown how to bypass internet filters to access information on do-it-yourself suicide, ahead of federal government plans to restrict access to certain web content.

Voluntary euthanasia and assisted suicide advocacy group Exit International held a "hacking masterclass" workshop on Sydney's north shore on Friday.

Those at the workshop were given tips on how to use proxy servers and virtual networks to slip past filters, such as the ones the government is proposing, to find information on "safe suicide".

Advertisement: Story continues below

Exit International founder and director Philip Nitschke said he wasn't concerned about the legal ramifications of holding the workshop.

The workshop was closed to the media but reporters were able to attend a briefing beforehand.

"We're not concerned because the law hasn't come in yet," Dr Nitschke

said at a community centre in Chatswood where the workshop was held.

"In fact, we've recently heard that the federal government, at least (Communications Minister) Stephen Conroy, has almost suggested that when the law comes in, it may not be a crime to tell people how you could bypass it."

The government in 2009 announced plans to block access to certain websites discussing euthanasia and assisted suicide, which is against the law, as well as sites devoted to pornographic and other illegal activities.

The government and Senator Conroy have been accused of censoring the internet.

Dr Nitschke said it was important to allow access to accurate information for people who were interested in ending their lives.

"If you know what you're doing, then you're not so afraid of the options and you then have choice, and when you have choice you're less inclined to do desperate and dangerous things," he said.



Abbott's pregnancy hotline reborn as parents' helpline

One of Tony Abbott's most controversial initiatives as health minister -- funding a Catholic charity to help run a pregnancy hotline and hopefully dissuade women from having an abortion -- will be scrapped within six months.

During the Howard government's last term, Mr Abbott made a concerted effort to lower the abortion rate in Australia, trying to stop the introduction of the drug RU486 and convincing cabinet to fund Medicare rebates for pregnancy counselling.

Mr Abbott also announced a \$15.5 million pregnancy hotline would be run by McKesson Asia Pacific with help from the Catholic Church's welfare arm Centacare and the Victorian-based Caroline Chisholm Society, amid claims he was pushing his own anti-abortion agenda.

But new figures show women have shunned the hotline, with call volumes failing to reach government estimates, and the average number of monthly calls halving over the past two years.

Between January and October last year, the hotline received just 1438 calls including 930 calls about unintended pregnancy and 95 from women unsure whether to continue

with their pregnancy -- an average of three or four calls a day.

There is also no evidence Mr Abbott succeeded in reducing the then estimated 100,000 abortions in Australia each year. The latest rough Medicare estimates, which include miscarriages and spontaneous abortions but not planned terminations in the public sector, suggest the number of related medical procedures has risen, from 76,666 in 2005-2006 to 79,636 in 2007-2008.

Federal Health Minister Nicola Roxon, who in opposition questioned whether Mr Abbott was allowing his Catholic faith to interfere with his decisions on women's fertility, said the hotline would be replaced with a new perinatal helpline offering a broader range of information, advice and referral services, not just for pregnant women but new parents and their families. She said the new helpline would start on July 1, when the existing hotline would cease, as part of a \$120.5m maternity package announced in the budget.

"We know that depression during or after pregnancy, or coping with grief following a miscarriage, impacts on the lives of many Australian women and their families," Ms Roxon said.

"That's why the government is providing \$5.1m for four specialist organisations to link in with the hotline,

providing telephone-based support during this difficult time."

The specialist organisations are Post and Antenatal Depression Australia, SIDS and Kids Australia, Stillbirth and Neonatal Death Support, and the Bonnie Babes Foundation.

Postnatal depression affects almost 16 per cent of new mothers, while about 10 per cent of women experience depression during pregnancy. One in every four pregnancies ends in a miscarriage or stillbirth



Shedding light on childhood epilepsy

Ashley Alasagas

Ms Zeffiro watches on each day as her daughter struggles with epilepsy. But she always remains positive, and during Epilepsy Awareness Week hopes to shine light on the condition.

Maggie's daughter, Vanessa, had her first seizure at just four months old, only hours following immunisation.

"It was a shock. I was bathing her when she started having a seizure in the bath. I didn't know what was happening. I got her

out of the bath tub and wrapped her up in a towel on the floor. We got in the car and drove straight to the nearest hospital.

"All the way there she was having the seizure – it was really frightening."

Vanessa continued to suffer with seizures, and at age 12 was diagnosed with Dravet Syndrome, a rare form of the neurological disorder.

Now 16, Vanessa, who had been attending mainstream schools, was forced to enrol into Jackson Special School in St Albans following continuous seizures.

"It's better for her," says Maggie.

"She is in a smaller classroom now and has an aide."

Maggie has now set up her own special support group for Dravet families.

Vanessa is one in 54,000 people in Victoria living with epilepsy.

For assistance, visit www.epinet.org.au or www.dravetsyndrome.com or contact the Epilepsy Foundation of Victoria on 9805 9111 or the Epilepsy Helpline on 1300 852 853.



Helplines Australia New Members

By Geraldine James

A warm welcome to
**Continence Advisory
Service WA**

To become a member please
check our webpage
For membership:
www.helplines.org.au



Professional Development Seminar: Transactional Analysis

Sydney NSW

Presenter: Rhae Hooper,
President of Western Pacific
Association of Transactional
Analysis

Date: Friday 17 September
2010

Time: 1pm-4pm

Venue: Cancer Council,
153 Dowling St,
Woolloomooloo

Cost: Free for members, \$35
for non-members.



DIARY DATES

July 2010



Helplines Australia Seminar

Presenter: Bill Campos, Clinical Psychologist

Date: Friday 16 July, 2010

Time: 10am-12noon.

Venue: Cancer Council,

July 2010



ICAP International Congress of Applied Psychology

11 – 16 July 2010
Melbourne Convention Centre

www.icap2010.com

September 2010



Seminar: Transactional Analysis

Presenter: Rhae Hooper, President of Western Pacific Association of Transactional Analysis

Date: Friday 17 September, 2010

Time: 1pm-4pm

Venue: Cancer Council, 153 Dowling St, Woolloomooloo

September 2010



ACA & NZCA International Conference

30 September – 2 October
Langham Hotel
Auckland NZ.

www.theaca.net.au

November 2010



International Mental Health Conference

17 – 19 November
Wrest Point,
Hobart Tasmania

www.cdesign.com.au/aspac

[2010/](#)

November 2010



Australasian Professional Society on Alcohol and other Drugs 2011 Conference

28 November 2010
National Convention Centre,
Canberra, Australia

www.beyondblue.com.au

December 2010



December Helplines Australia AGM

www.helplines.org.au