

Module 3: Supporting Recovery from Trauma

Review Helen's Story (We first met Helen in Module 1)

Helen is a 45 year old woman with an intellectual disability. Helen was sent to a Home for Crippled Children by an abusive step-father. She spent time on the streets when she ran away from school, home and various institutions. She has been in and out of hostels during her adult life but has recently found stability and relative independence in a unit in a complex for the homeless in inner- Brisbane. Helen says she has "come a long way" and is now learning to cook, shop and budget.

Helen says she has a learning disability, which she was born with. Helen says this means she is not good at remembering ("I forget things quickly") and is not good at doing some things (for example, Knowing left from right"). Helen says she hardly ever went to school ("I was picked on and had my books ripped up and the teachers wouldn't do anything about it").

Helen has wanted a child of her own for a very long time. She has expressed anger at having to have Depo-Provera and in not being able to make the same choices as other women. Recently Helen spent time with a GP who regularly visits her current residence. The GP explained that Helen's epilepsy was the problem. She explained that if she went off medication she might die – and that she would need to be off medication if she became pregnant. This information was upsetting for Helen and she has had to have the news repeated several times.

Helen likes and trusts her GP who delivered the facts in a manner that Helen found to be caring and compassionate. The GP was prepared to deliver the information many times and share this message with other supports in Helen's life who could help reinforce the message. Helen felt that nobody had really explained this to her before. Helen never feels judged by her GP and she never feels stupid for asking questions.

Helen has been referred to you for counselling by her GP because she is experiencing deep sadness at not being able to have a child. Helen's GP is aware that Helen has had a 'difficult' life, and believes that she may benefit from counselling to discuss these experiences. Helen has never been to counselling before, but she likes her GP and agrees to give counselling a try.

Today is Helen's first appointment. A support worker from Helen's housing provider has driven her to her appointment. The support worker has told Helen she will wait in the car to drive her home after the appointment.