



## **ADAA Submission to the Senate Community Affairs References Committee Inquiry into Suicide**

February 2010

### **Introduction**

This submission from the Anti Depression Association of Australia (ADAA) addresses the terms of reference of the Community Affairs Committee inquiry into suicide in Australia related to “the role of targeted programs and services that address the particular circumstances of high-risk groups” and “the effectiveness, to date, of public awareness programs and their relative success in providing information, encouraging help-seeking and enhancing public discussion of suicide”. With this context the ADAA argues that as a country we are lacking the programs needed to provide effective support. The ADAA considers that programs such as those offered by Fountainhead Organic retreat provide the support and relief needed to help prevent suicide.

The ADAA recognises the recent SANE Research Bulletin 11\* which identifies that having a mental illness as one of the highest risk factors for suicidal behaviours and self harm and yet many people do not receive the practical help they need to reduce the risk of further attempts.

\* Suicide, self harm and mental illness (Feb 2010) ISSN 1832-8385

The mission of the ADAA is to help source and introduce effective support for people with stress related illness. This will be achieved by creating a community of like-minded people with a focus on finding and sharing solutions. Through this the ADAA will connect sufferers with information and services. Although early in its development the ADAA is already aware of an educational approach to the treatment of stress related illness through a life affirming approach called The Fountainhead Method™. Through this programme sufferers first learn about how and why they look at life events in the way that they do. They then learn a more correct way of looking at those things in their life that they believe are the cause of their stress.

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## **Background and Discussion**

The Fountainhead Method is a system of mentoring that has been developed at Fountainhead Organic Retreat in Maleny since 2001, although some information dates back to the ancient Greeks. To date, some 4 000 clients have attended the retreat to seek benefit from the method. The information is structured in a way that helps sufferers of depression and anxiety disorders overcome their illness. Using the method, the mentor shows the client how to uncover the exact way of thinking (belief) that causes their distress, and then teaches a new way of not only looking at their current situation but also at life. Unlike traditional psychology that believes a distressed client can have hundreds of varied core beliefs, the Fountainhead Method believes it comes down to only four. Once this is identified the client is ready to receive and take control of their self learning. The focus of the method is to help people move forward in their life with a renewed freshness and energy.

The Method identifies that at the seat of all psychological stress-based illnesses are feelings of worth-less. A way of thinking that questions our own ability to make the right decisions, get our life right and consequently blame ourselves for being on the wrong path. The accompanying denial of reality results in our attempt to convince ourselves that there is a right path and that we are now further away from what we believe it is that we need. Psychological stress can be the direct result.

The Method teaches that our life's worth is not attached to material success or achievement and helps individuals identify and understand their intrinsic worth and value. The consequence of divorcing achievement from worth is to leave people with a feeling of liberation and empowerment to attack life with gusto free from the fear of personal failure or of having to change life direction. Essentially, an individual's motivation for setting their goals is upgraded.



### **How does this help with suicide prevention?**

A person who commits or attempts suicide has witnessed a perceived degradation in their life's worth as judged by their own learning that their life needs to be a certain way in order for them to be okay. Where okay equals the approval of self or others. An understanding that whatever their life looks like at any moment in time has no bearing on their worth as a person will help to prevent or derail what can be a fatal cascade of thinking.

### **Conclusion**

The Method represents an intervention through education which has value through both 'rescue' and 'prevention'. The power of The Method lies in its simplicity (allowing people to intellectualise quickly) and its practicality which ensures that a person does not need to keep revisiting a Method Mentor, because that is where the expertise lies, but feels more personally empowered and skilled to take charge of their own learning. The Method appears to be not a 'sticking plaster' approach to stress related illness and through extrapolated thinking suicide, but a long term solution.

Due to the educational nature of the Fountainhead Method it has both utility in both prevention and support. The ADAA would support further discussions as to how the method could be integrated into the main stream through both a public program and referral based approach.

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