

# UQ Compassion Symposium

## Conference programme

**Saturday 7 September 2019**

**9.00am - 4.30pm**

**Emmanuel College**

**Sir William MacGregor Drive**

**The University of Queensland**

**St Lucia QLD 4067**



## Welcome

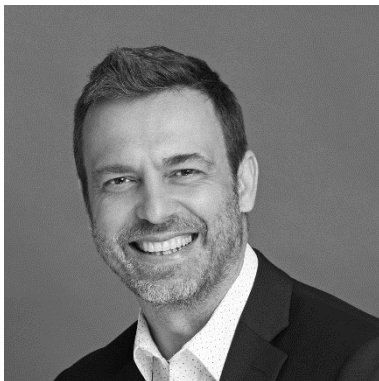
UQ Psychology's Compassionate Mind Research Group would like to welcome you to the fifth annual University of Queensland Compassion Symposium.

Following our Friday night keynote address with Dr Christopher Germer, we will again be hosting an action-packed full-day conference event to showcase diverse research and practice which sits at the forefront of the compassion field.

## Compassion Conference

This cross-disciplinary event is designed to bring together academics, clinicians, researchers and students from different disciplines within the University and the community to present on how compassion is or could be a part of their research, studies or practice.

## Our team



**Dr Stan Steindl**  
*Clinical Psychologist*



**Dr James Kirby**  
*Clinical Psychologist*

*Imagine a more compassionate world, one where we are kind to one another no matter what our differences might be, where we reach out to those in need and help to relieve their suffering, and where we can even treat ourselves with that same love and compassion. That is our vision, our intention.*

**Dr Stan Steindl**

[compassioninitiative.com.au](http://compassioninitiative.com.au)

## 2019 CONFERENCE AGENDA

8:30 – 9:00	Conference Registration	
<b>OPENING PLENARY SESSION</b>		
Riverview Room		
Open	<b>Dr James Kirby</b> <i>Conference introductory session</i>	
9.00 – 9.30	<b>Celia Roberts</b> <i>Compassion Focussed Yoga Therapy and Meditation</i>	
9.30 – 10.00	<b>Dr Madeleine Ferrari</b> <i>A Meta-analysis of Existing Self-compassion based Interventions: Effects of RCTs on Psychosocial Outcomes</i>	
10.00 – 10.30	Morning Tea (30 min)	
<b>MORNING CONCURRENT STREAMS</b>		
	Riverview Room	Seminar Rooms
10.30 – 11.00	<b>Tarli Young</b> <i>The Ethical Way to Wellbeing</i>	<b>Dr Rebekah Scotney</b> <i>Do we need a SAFETY VEST? A case for initiating a fully integrated Mental Health Ergonomics Curriculum for Veterinary and Animal Sciences students at UQ</i>
11.00 – 11.30	<b>Adam Gerace</b> <i>“Hold my hand and walk with me”: Empathy in the therapeutic relationship</i>	<b>Georgina Lennard</b> <i>Can boosting self-compassion improve post-partum outcomes for mothers and babies? A randomised controlled trial</i>
11.30 – 12.00	<b>Dr Petrina Barson</b> <i>Outcomes of teaching compassion cultivation to medical students at the University of Melbourne</i>	<b>Ali Nott and Dr Fiona McDonald</b> <i>The impact of a manualised therapeutic program incorporating self-compassion on the well-being of adolescents impacted by cancer</i>

12.00 – 12.30	<b>Dr David Roland</b> <i>The Power of Suffering and the Hero's Journey</i>	<b>Veya Seekis</b> <i>A Comparison study of Young Adults with Positive or Negative Body image: How is Self-compassion Approached as a Coping Strategy?</i>
10 min	<b>Session Buffer</b> <i>Accommodates for stream-swapping and speaker setup</i>	
12.40 – 13.30	<b>Lunch (50 min)</b>	

AFTERNOON CONCURRENT STREAMS		
	Riverview Room	Seminar Rooms
13.30 – 14.00	<b>Keren Jones and Zarinah Hienekamp</b> <i>Increasing Self-Compassion and Body Neutrality for University Students: The Journey of the "Freedom From Your Cage" program at UQ</i>	<b>Ashraf Badat, Dr Leigh Donovan, Alyson Gundry, Dr Penelope Slater &amp; Rachel Edwards</b> <i>Alleviating suffering through compassion in a children's hospital</i>
14.00 – 14.30	<b>Kate Clark &amp; Lily Brisick</b> <i>Restorative Justice in the Queensland Criminal Justice System: Affected people finding compassion, self-compassion and peace in the aftermath of crime</i>	<b>Dr Rachel Bushing</b> <i>Rotten Apples: How Internalised Shame Compounds Mental Ill-Health in Children and Adolescents (And What We Can Do About It)</i>
14.30 – 15.00	<b>Alicia Carter</b> <i>Compassion focused therapy to treat body weight shame for individuals who are overweight or obese: a pilot trial</i>	<b>Dr Tara Hickey</b> <i>Evaluation of a Mindfulness with Compassion Program for Youth with Psychotic Symptoms</i>
15.00 – 15.30	<b>Helen Correia &amp; Karee Stewart</b> <i>Compassion, care and community: exploring flows of compassion in cultivating compassionate environments</i>	<b>Lara Gama Cavalcanti</b> <i>The role of fear of compassion, rumination and worry in the relationship between self-criticism and psychopathology</i>

10 min	<p><b>Session Buffer</b></p> <p><i>Accommodates for stream-swapping and speaker setup</i></p>
15:40 – 16:00	<p><b>Afternoon Tea (20 min)</b></p>
<p><b>AFTERNOON PLENARY SESSIONS</b></p> <p><i>Riverview Room</i></p>	
16.00 – 16.30	<p><b>Dr Kiera Buchanan &amp; Amanda Donnet</b></p> <p><i>Fierce Compassion: Smashing the patriarchy without harming those in it</i></p>
Close	<p><b>Dr Stan Steindl</b></p> <p><i>Conference wrap-up session</i></p>
16.30	<p><b>Estimated End of Event</b></p>

## Presentation Information

Listed alphabetically by first author surname

### **ASHRAF BADAT**

*Psychologist, Oncology Services Group, Queensland Children's Hospital*

**Bio:** Ashraf has worked in Child and Youth and Adult Mental Health, as well as in private practice before his current full-time position as a psychologist in paediatric oncology.

### **DR LEIGH DONOVAN**

*Bereavement Coordinator, Children's Health Queensland Hospital and Health Service*

**Bio:** Leigh has become highly regarded in Australia for her contribution as a social worker to the field of paediatric bereavement. Leigh held the inaugural position of Bereavement Coordinator, Paediatric Palliative Care Service, at the Queensland Children's Hospital Brisbane between 2010 and 2018 while also completing her PhD exploring the experience and needs of parents whose child has died from cancer. Leigh has been a long-term advocate for a hospital wide response for bereavement care for families following the death of a child and in 2017 was awarded a Churchill Fellowship to visit international hospital, hospice and community based bereavement programs with the aim to inform guidelines for bereavement care in tertiary children's hospitals in Australia. In 2019 Leigh became the inaugural Bereavement Coordinator for Children's Health Queensland and looks forward to developing an innovative, responsive and compassionate program of care for families whose child has died and the formal and informal caregivers who walk alongside them.

### **ALYSON GUNDRY**

*Bereavement Coordinator – Paediatric Palliative Care Service, Queensland Children's Hospital*

**Bio:** Alyson continues to work as the Bereavement Coordinator with the Paediatric Palliative Care Service since commencing in the role in 2012. With a professional background across Paediatric Rehabilitation and the breadth of adult mental health inpatient and outpatient services, she brings a diversity of skills and knowledge to her practice. Within the Bereavement Service, Alyson has provided compassionate care to parents/carers, siblings, extended networks of families and friends, schools, involved professionals and communities as the impact of a child dying is experienced broadly and in a myriad of ways across the community.

### **DR PENELOPE SLATER**

*Program Manager, Oncology Services Group, Queensland Children's Hospital*

**Bio:** Penelope Slater is Program Manager for the Oncology Services Group at Lady Cilento Children's Hospital, including the Queensland Paediatric Palliative Care, Haematology and Oncology Network. In that role she manages planning, evaluation, projects, quality and safety, and consumer engagement. She also coordinates the Oncology Staff Wellbeing Program which advocates for compassion through strategies to build resilience and self care. Penny has been with Queensland Health since 1990 in various research, planning and evaluation positions related to diabetes, aged care, suicide prevention and oral health.

### **RACHEL EDWARDS**

*Oncology Nurse Educator, Oncology Services Group, Queensland Children's Hospital*

**Bio:** Rachel Edwards is a registered nurse with over 20 years experience providing care to patients with haematology and oncology conditions. Rachel currently works as a Nurse Educator for the Oncology Services Group, providing education consultancy for the tertiary Oncology Services at the Queensland Children's Hospital, Children's Health Queensland, Hospital and Health Services (CHQHHS). In this role Rachel provides educational leadership, develops curriculum, and facilitates training programs for staff employed in the CHQHHS and supports education activity across the State in the Regional Paediatric Shared Care Units. Rachel is the current Chair of the Nursing Sub-Group of the Australian and New Zealand

Children's Haematology and Oncology Group (ANZCHOG) and is providing nursing leadership to the group as they develop a nursing research agenda and progress nursing research activities.

### ***Alleviating suffering through compassion in a children's hospital***

**Abstract:** Queensland Children's Hospital is the single specialist paediatric hospital for Queensland 'caring for the sickest and most critically injured children from across the state'. In addition to the necessary technical expertise required to do the best for patients and their families, staff are challenged every day to address suffering beyond patients' experience of disease – to address their subjective experience of illness: fatigue, emotional distress, loss of meaning, grief, loss, isolation and despair. Compassion fuels person centred care, however it is difficult to explicitly address this subjective suffering in patients and the workforce, at both interpersonal and organizational levels. Identifying the implicit compassion focused care in the hospital has the potential to transform what is already an excellent healthcare service into a more explicitly compassion focused one.

This poster presentation will present findings on the practical application of compassion in three complex paediatric hospital services: paediatric oncology, palliative care and bereavement care. Compassionate practice has been integrated meaningfully for the workforce through development of a wellbeing and staff mindfulness program; between colleagues in the context of individual supervision and coaching; and for parents through a self-care program and in offerings of bereavement care. We will also address our "bottom-up" and "top down" approaches to effecting compassion focused cultural change. We imagine this cultural change as a dynamic, organic process, symbolised in our poster as a tree of compassion, taking seed and root in our work with ourselves, in our relationships with patients and their families and within the organizational culture.

**DR PETRINA BARSON**

*University of Melbourne*

**Bio:** Dr Petrina Barson is a general practitioner from Melbourne Australia. She is a certified teacher of the Compassion Cultivation Training (CCT) originating at Stanford University's Centre for Compassion and Altruism Research and Education. She has been teaching CCT to medical students at the University of Melbourne, and to other health professionals, since 2014. Petrina has a passion for education which promotes human kindness and connection - with ourselves, with others, and with the planet.

***Outcomes of teaching compassion cultivation to medical students at the University of Melbourne***

**Abstract:** Dr Petrina Barson has been teaching Compassion Cultivation to medical students at the University of Melbourne since 2014. Originally devised by CCARE (the Center for Compassion and Altruism Research and Education) at Stanford Medical School, Dr Barson has delivered an abridged version of this course to over 200 medical students. Dr Barson will share her experience of teaching Compassion Cultivation, in particular some preliminary results of a quantitative and qualitative study into the outcomes of this teaching for student wellbeing and compassion. Conducted with Dr Amy Finlay-Jones and researchers at the University of Melbourne, this research is the first in the world to investigate outcomes of compassion training in medical students.



**DR RACHEL BUSHING**

*Clinical Psychologist, POP! Psychology (private practice)*

**Bio:** Educated at The University of Queensland, Dr Rachel Bushing is a Clinical Psychologist with 17 years of practice with children and families. She is passionate about setting children out with the very best start in life. Within the day to day practice as a child psychologist, she has come to believe that nurturing parents' journeys and reaching out to the family as a whole creates the kind magic that allows kids to flourish and overcome their emotional difficulties. She is an advocate for good quality peer education and clinical supervision, through the power it contains for continually reflecting, growing, and learning just as we ask of our clients. She runs a busy little private practice in Brisbane called POP! Psychology, which has the aim of bringing the fun into therapy, she co-hosts the parenting podcast Pop The Kettle On, and most importantly, she takes pride in being imperfect.

***Rotten Apples: How Internalised Shame Compounds Mental Ill-Health in Children and Adolescents (And What We Can Do About It)***

**Abstract:** Child psychology and psychiatry are rich and diverse fields of clinical practice, where we are asked to integrate the fields of psychiatric medicine, child development, dyadic attachments, parenting skill training, and family systems into an integrative and succinct model of care and evidence-based intervention. It is well known that forms of abuse and neglect are significant pre-cursors to the expression of clinical mental health diagnoses in childhood. It is less well understood how more subtle forms of emotional abuse and neglect, and the sense of internalised shame they can produce in children, can pose significant barriers to our standard cognitive-behavioural treatments. Compassionate and mindfulness-focused parenting models are bridging this gap by training parents to more effectively hold an emotional frame for their child, in order to build their emotional resilience, thereby preventing mental ill-health. While this is aimed at the primary prevention level of care, these models are rarely implemented to parents attending therapy services with their child.

The aim of this workshop is to offer a clinical standpoint on how the research on Shame, as an emotion, can underpin mental ill-health for child and adolescent clients presenting to our services, and to point toward emerging clinical models which are allowing us to integrate standard treatments for child and youth psychiatric diagnoses with these "third wave" practices. It is intended that the workshop will allow practitioners to broaden their scope of practice by introducing some practical ideas for addressing Shame in clinical practice, and to outline further areas of exploration.

**DR KIERA BUCHANAN**

*Clinical and Health Psychologist, Centre for Integrative Health*

**AMANDA DONNET**

*Clinical Psychologist, Spilt Milk Psychology*

***Fierce Compassion: Smashing the patriarchy without harming those in it***

**Abstract:** Women's study scholar, Penny McIntosh reflected on the importance of discussions of privilege: *"It has to do with looking around yourself the way sociologists do and seeing the big patterns in the rest of society, while keeping a balance and really respecting your experience. Seeing the oppression of others is, of course, very important work. But so is seeing how the systems oppress oneself."*

We live within systems and systems live within us. So how do we work towards dismantling those systems without causing harm? Neff recently wrote on the topic of *fierce compassion*: "We need love in our hearts so we don't perpetuate a cycle of anger and hate, but we need fierceness so that we don't let things continue on their current harmful path." Alongside qualities and warmth and kindness and understanding, compassion contains within its heart a need for strength and courageous action.

This interactive panel discussion aims to explore the concepts of fierce compassion and shame resilience. It will also examine how gender differences intersect with compassionate action. Dynamic audience participation will encourage personal reflection as we move towards identifying meaningful action we can all take in moving forward with fierce compassion.

**ALICIA CARTER**

*The University of Queensland, School of Psychology*

**Bio:** Alicia Carter is a Masters of Health Psychology and Doctor of Philosophy candidate at The University of Queensland under the supervision of Dr Tegan Cruwys, Dr Stacey Parker, Prof Paul Gilbert O.B.E and Dr James Kirby. Alicia's research interest align with how we can cultivate compassion in relation to our experiences of our body, as well as our relationship with self, food and exercise.

***Compassion focused therapy to treat body weight shame for individuals who are overweight or obese: a pilot trial***

**Abstract:** Individuals who are obese are at increased risk for mental health vulnerabilities, particularly depression, anxiety, and body weight shame. To date, there have been no randomized controlled trials (RCT) specifically designed to treat body weight shame for individuals with obesity that do not have a clinical condition, such as binge eating disorder or depression. Here we report the results from the first ever pilot testing the first time the efficacy of Compassion Focused Therapy (CFT) to help a non-clinical population of obese individuals with body weight shame.

**Methods:** The CFT intervention is a 12-session/2 hour group program that is aimed to directly target shame and self-criticism by cultivating compassion. Five participants who meet criteria for obesity (BMI > 30) (80% female, Mage = 30.6). Self-report online measures of mental health, compassion, relationship with food, group process, social rank variables and physical activity were obtained at pre, post, and 6-month follow-up. The primary outcome measure was body weight shame. Additional measures of program satisfaction was obtained post-intervention via online survey and through a focus group discussion at the 6-month follow-up (example: "Looking back now, how do you think the program has affected some of the feelings you have about your body weight and shape?"). This paper will present on the findings.

**LARA GAMA CAVALCANTI**

*Griffith University*

**Bio:** Lara Gama is a Brazilian psychologist who recently completed her Master of Clinical Psychology at Griffith University, Gold Coast. She has a special interest in Compassion Focused Therapy and mindfulness-based therapies.

***The role of fear of compassion, rumination and worry in the relationship between self-criticism and psychopathology***

**Abstract:** Research has found that there is a link between self-criticism and psychopathology. The current study further investigated this association by examining the role that rumination, worry, and fear compassion for self and from others play in explaining the mechanisms that underlie the relationships between self-criticism, depression, and anxiety. Participants (N = 417), consisting of an undergraduate, and general population sample, completed an online survey using a battery of self-report questionnaires to measure their levels of self-criticism, depression, anxiety, rumination, worry, fear of self-compassion and fear of compassion from others. It was predicted that self-criticism would have an indirect impact on psychopathology, influenced by repetitive negative thinking. Results showed that rumination is an important mediator between self-criticism and depression, and between self-criticism and anxiety; and that worry is a significant mediator between self-criticism and anxiety. These results confirm that self-criticism influences repetitive negative thinking, which in turn has an impact on psychopathology. In addition to this, it was predicted that the indirect effects of self-criticism on psychopathology through repetitive negative thinking would be conditional, depending on the levels of fears of compassion for self and from others. Results showed that fears of compassion for self and from others magnify the impact of self-criticism on rumination, and of rumination on depression; and that fear of compassion from others magnifies the impact of self-criticism on the levels of worry. These findings suggest that having high fears of compassion for self and from others potentiates the pathogenic effect of self-criticism and repetitive negative thinking.

### **KATE CLARK**

*Legal Director of Clark & Associates Mediation Services*

**Bio:** Kate holds a Bachelor of Law (Honours), a Bachelor of Behavioural Science (Psychology) and a Graduate Diploma of Legal Practice. She is an admitted solicitor, a Nationally Accredited Mediator and an Accredited Family Dispute Resolution Practitioner.

Kate has held the position of Legal Associate to Family Court of Appeal Judge, The Honourable Justice May and Legal Officer at the Queensland Law Reform Commission. She has practiced as a solicitor in private practice (family, criminal, domestic violence, child safety and professional discipline) and has volunteered as a pro bono solicitor for Community Legal Centres for over ten years.

Pursuing her passion to change the way people resolve their disputes, Kate established Clark & Associates Mediation Services in 2017. Kate is passionate about delivering and promoting high quality Restorative Justice services.

### **LILY BRISICK**

*Panel Mediator of Clark & Associates Mediation Services*

**Bio:** Lily has worked in the criminal law system since 2004 when she took up the role of Associate to several District Court Judges. After admission as a legal practitioner in 2006, Lily worked as a criminal defence solicitor, before joining the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions in 2007. There she worked as a Legal Officer and, from 2008, a Crown Prosecutor. Lily is now a barrister based on the Sunshine Coast practicing predominantly in criminal defence.

In 2019 Lily became a Nationally Accredited Mediator and joined Clark & Associates Mediation Services as a Panel Mediator.

### ***Restorative Justice in the Queensland Criminal Justice System: Affected people finding compassion, self-compassion and peace in the aftermath of crime***

Restorative Justice provides a neutral setting for those affected by crime to talk directly to each other and develop a deeper understanding of their circumstances.

The structured, voluntary process allows parties to become genuinely engaged and open up a dialogue between them. Focus is shifted away from traditional concepts of justice, which are often unwittingly criminogenic, and redirected to themes of empowerment, self-determination and humanisation.

A safe space is created for questions to be asked, emotions to be shared, needs explored and accountability and remorse demonstrated. Following mutual understanding, forgiveness, compassion and self-compassion are often achieved and peace restored between individuals within communities.

Our presentation will provide a summary of international work in the area of Restorative Justice as well as an explanation of our practice of Restorative Justice in Queensland. Case study examples will be shared to provide context.

**HELEN CORREIA**

*Murdoch University*

**Bio:** Helen Correia is an academic in Psychology at Murdoch University and a Clinical Psychologist specialising in cognitive-behavioural, mindfulness, and compassion-based interventions. She has worked across a range of settings with diverse populations, developing and implementing programs and interventions with individuals and groups. Her current clinical and research interests are varied and include scholarly enquiry into mindfulness and compassion-based approaches in clinical interventions, education, training and supervision. She is particularly interested in the application of mindfulness and compassion in relational, social, and systemic frameworks, and working with diversity, including cultural and linguistic diversity, and gender and sexuality diversity.

**KAREE STEWART**

*Clinical Psychologist*

**Bio:** Karee Stewart is a clinical psychologist in Perth, Western Australia working in both private practice and community settings. She has experience working with individuals from across the lifespan. She has an interest in applying compassion-based approaches to working with all presentations but especially people affected by eating disorders, self-loathing and high shame. Karee also has an interest in applying compassion-based approaches with gender and sexuality diversity, as well as with loved ones, families and carers supporting people with mental health struggles.

***Compassion, care and community: exploring flows of compassion in cultivating compassionate environments***

**Abstract:** There is growing evidence that recognises the important role of compassion and compassion-based approaches to improving mental health outcomes for individuals with a lived experience of mental health difficulties. Caring environments and community contexts also play a critical role in supporting individuals with a lived experience. There is an emerging area of practice involving developing compassion in families, schools and organisations, including healthcare professionals. To date, however, there has been little empirical research exploring flows of compassion in relational contexts of care. This presentation explores the concept of cultivating compassionate environments in relational and systemic contexts using an ecological framework and will include case examples to demonstrate clinical practice. Focusing on body image, eating and weight concerns to illustrate, and using a compassion-focused model, we will explore ideas of cultivating compassion at multiple levels and directional flows, especially when working with carers and loved ones.

**Dr Madeleine Ferrari**

*Australian Catholic University and The University of Sydney*

**Bio:** Madeleine is a PhD student at The University of Sydney, and since 2015 is a clinical psychology lecturer at Australian Catholic University (Strathfield campus). Her research interests are in the areas of clinical and health psychology. Her research focuses on adolescent wellbeing and the development of early intervention programs to promote positive mental health. She is passionate about self-compassion and cultivating a healthy and supportive way of treating oneself. She is also interested in the way individuals understand and manage complex chronic illnesses such as diabetes. Dr Ferrari is a registered psychologist with clinical endorsement and a member of the Australian Psychological Society. She also works in private practice in Sydney's CBD. She graduated from Macquarie University with a Doctorate of Clinical Psychology.

***A Meta-analysis of Existing Self-compassion based Interventions: Effects of RCTs on Psychosocial Outcomes***

**Abstract:** This talk will present the findings from a recent meta-analysis. Self-compassion is a healthy way of relating to one's self motivated by a desire to help rather than harm. This meta-analysis identified randomized-controlled trials (RCTs) of self-compassion interventions, and measured their effects on psychosocial outcomes. We conducted a systematic search of six databases, and hand-searched the included study's reference lists of included studies. Twenty-eight studies met inclusion criteria following independent screening. Pre-post and follow-up data was extracted for the intervention and control groups and study quality was assessed using the PRISMA checklist. Results suggested that self-compassion interventions led to significant improvement across 11 diverse psychosocial outcomes compared to controls. Notably, the aggregate effect size Hedge's  $g$  was large for measures of eating behavior ( $g = 1.76$ ) and rumination ( $g = 1.37$ ). Effects were moderate for self-compassion ( $g = 0.7075$ ), stress ( $g = 0.67$ ), depression ( $g = 0.6266$ ), mindfulness ( $g = 0.5762$ ), self-criticism ( $g = 0.56$ ), and anxiety ( $g = 0.5457$ ) outcomes. Further moderation analyses found effects for the improvements in depression symptoms continued to improve at follow-up, and self-compassion gains were maintained at follow-up. Results differed across population type, and were stronger for group over individual delivery methods. Intervention type was too diverse to analyse specific categories and publication bias may be present. Despite these limitations, this review supports the efficacy of self-compassion based interventions across a range of outcomes and diverse populations. Future research should consider mechanisms of change. PROSPERO (2017:CRD42017069182).

**ADAM GERACE**

*Discipline of Psychology, School of Health, Medical and Applied Sciences, Central Queensland University*

**Bio:** Adam Gerace is Head of Course – Positive Psychology at Central Queensland University. His research specifically focuses on the process of perspective taking and the strategies used to understand another person's point of view. Adam's recent work has examined empathy during conflict situations on acute psychiatric units. Adam has authored almost 40 chapters and articles in journals such as *Personality and Individual Differences*, *Aggression and Violent Behaviour*, *Journal of Relationships Research*, *Victims & Offenders*, and *International Journal of Mental Health Nursing*. He is a regular contributor to ABC Radio and Psychology Today, and has recently completed two terms as the Convener of the Australian Psychological Society Psychology of Relationships Interest Group.

***“Hold my hand and walk with me”: Empathy in the therapeutic relationship***

**Abstract:** Empathy is central to communication and understanding in healthcare settings. Sometimes, health professionals see the value of empathy when things do not go so well, and there is a difficulty in connecting with a client. In this presentation, I want to examine what empathy is and how it uniquely plays out in the health professional-client therapeutic relationship. In particular, I will discuss some of the unique challenges mental health nurses encounter when working with clients in inpatient psychiatric settings. I will draw on a qualitative study that examined how empathy is built and maintained when there is conflict between nurses (n = 13) and clients (n = 7) regarding treatment, client behaviour, or nurse communication. In this study, nurses and consumers differed in how they conceptualised the role of the nurse in client treatment and recovery, although they identified many similar empathic processes (e.g., taking the client's perspective, being there, experiencing compassion, trust) as important to resolving problematic situations. From this discussion, I will examine ways in which professional empathic responses can be strengthened, and ways clinicians can engage in self-care when entering into the sometimes-distressing worlds of their clients.



**DR TARA HICKEY**

*Monash University*

**Bio:** Tara holds an honorary associate position with the University of Sydney and is a practicing clinical psychologist in Melbourne. She has worked in early psychosis services in Australia, the UK and in an assertive outreach team in New York City. In 2014, she trained in Compassion Focused Therapy (CFT) with its founder, Paul Gilbert. She has also completed Mindful Self-Compassion teacher training with its founders Dr Kristin Neff and Dr Christopher Germer. She is currently completing a PhD focusing on the development of a mindfulness and compassion programme for young people with psychotic symptoms. She is a committee member of Compassionate Mind Australia.

***Evaluation of a Mindfulness with Compassion Program for Youth with Psychotic Symptoms***

**Introduction:** Despite evidence supporting the application of mindfulness and compassion approaches across a range of mental health disorders their application to psychotic symptoms has received limited attention. The focus of this presentation is an evaluation of a new mindfulness and compassion group program designed specifically for youth with psychotic symptoms.

**Method:** A non-randomized, non-controlled prospective follow-up study was conducted. Participants were recruited from two mental health hospital networks in Victoria. They were offered an 8-week group program consisting of a 90-minute session per week. Measures of symptoms, functioning, self-compassion, fear of compassion, mindfulness, forms of criticizing and self-reassurance and attachment style were administered at baseline post-treatment and at 6-week follow-up.

**Results:** Of the 31 participants who were recruited to the study 17 attended the group. Out of these 17 participants, 15 (88%) completed the program with 11 (65%) attending 5 or more sessions. Quantitative results suggest the intervention was feasible and was associated with a large increase in self-compassion plus acting with awareness, a subscale on the mindfulness questionnaire. Improvements were also found in psychotic and affective symptoms, functioning and attachment style. Self-compassion and mindfulness appear to have positively contributed to some of these findings.

**Conclusions:** Overall the results support the acceptability, feasibility and potential utility of this intervention. The findings suggest the intervention had a positive impact on self-compassion, mindfulness, mental health as well as social and role functioning. A larger and controlled research study is warranted to further explore the effectiveness of this novel mindfulness and compassion program.

**KEREN JONES**

*Student Services, The University of Queensland*

**Bio:** Keren Jones is a Psychologist with over 20 years of experience supporting individuals in community settings including disability, rehabilitation and paediatric roles, in addition to her Student Counsellor role at UQ. She is a passionate believer in the value of preventative strategies, the capacity for growth and change as well as honouring everyone's journey in life.

**ZARINAH HIENEKAMP**

*Student Services, The University of Queensland*

**Bio:** Zarinah Hienekamp is a Psychologist whose speciality areas are psychological resilience and self-compassion. She has many years of experience in the community, youth work and TAFE sectors, works in private practice and has nearly ten years of experience as a Student Counsellor at UQ. She enjoys working with both individuals and groups from a range of ages and diverse cultural backgrounds. She utilises a range of therapeutic interventions with a focus on use of a positive psychology approach to assist people to uncover and utilise their strengths and potential.

Zarinah and Keren's professional connection was founded in a concern that students could not recognise their own worth and value they bring to their lives. This led to the development of the Freedom From Your Cage body image program in 2014. They fundamentally believe that our capacity to develop self-compassion for ourselves leads to less suffering and more living.

***Increasing Self-Compassion and Body Neutrality for University Students: The Journey of the "Freedom From Your Cage" program at UQ***

**Abstract:** Many university students experience an extremely negative relationship towards their body, which can result in eating and perceptual disturbances. Efforts to address this body distress led to the development of a group program in 2015 to support body image change over time. The current research assessed both the usefulness of the program and the content, and the importance of self-compassion and body neutrality. Focus groups were held with university counselling staff and past group participants to evaluate these key questions. The results demonstrated strong support in the usefulness of the program and the overall themes in the content but also identified the need for further clarification of body neutrality as a relational stance as well as reflecting the challenging nature of building self-compassion for many university students.

**GEORGINA LENNARD**

*Masters of Clinical Psychology student, The University of Queensland*

**Bio:** Georgina Lennard is a second year Masters of Clinical Psychology student at The University of Queensland and a provisional psychologist. Georgina is interested in working clinically with children and families, and has undertaken placements working with these populations at the UQ Psychology Clinic and the Queensland Children's Hospital.

***Can boosting self-compassion improve post-partum outcomes for mothers and babies? A randomised controlled trial***

**Abstract:** Becoming a mother is an adjustment that can encompass significant physical and psychological difficulties. In particular, difficult childbirth and feeding experiences have been linked to delays with lactogenesis and mother-infant bonding, development of post-traumatic stress symptoms, and general maternal distress. Previous research supports the utility and acceptability of a brief online intervention designed to increase self-compassion in new mothers, with effects on post-traumatic stress, breastfeeding satisfaction, and self-compassion. However, research to date has been limited by exploratory study designs and is yet to test potential moderators of intervention effect. We used a randomised controlled trial (RCT) to evaluate the efficacy of a brief online self-compassion intervention for mothers of infants (<2 years old). The intervention comprised an informational video, a guided self-compassion exercise, a tip sheet, and weekly supportive SMS messages. Mothers completed online self-report measures assessing objective and subjective childbirth and breastfeeding experiences; self-compassion and fears of compassion; psychological flexibility; and symptoms of anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress. The intervention group received access to the self-help resources, and all participants completed the online questionnaires again 8 weeks later. We hypothesised that, compared to the control group, mothers in the intervention condition would report increased satisfaction with infant feeding practices, decreased symptoms of anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress, improved psychological flexibility, and greater self-compassion at 8 weeks post-intervention. We also predicted that individuals' fears of self-compassion would moderate intervention effects and resource use. Results will be discussed in the context of current and future opportunities for improving peri-partum care.

### **ALI NOTT**

*Counsellor and Psychosocial Team Leader, CanTeen*

**Bio:** Ali is a Counsellor and Psychosocial Team Leader at CanTeen, where she provides clinical expertise and support to both young people and her multidisciplinary team across Queensland.

At CanTeen, Ali works with young people living with cancer; whether that be their own diagnosis or someone in the family. Ali believes in providing a safe space for young people to experience their vulnerability and be empowered to work through their thoughts and feelings as they come up.

Ali specialises in grief and bereavement and the impact this can have on one's ability to cope with loss, having worked in a range of disciplines including aged care, hospice & palliative care and family separation.

Ali holds a Bachelor in Health Sciences awarded by the University of Sydney and Master in Counselling from the University of Queensland.

### **DR FIONA McDONALD**

*Research Manager, CanTeen*

**Bio:** Dr Fiona McDonald is the Research Manager at CanTeen, the Australian organisation for young people living with cancer. She also holds an adjunct lectureship in the School of Cancer Nursing at the University of Sydney. Dr McDonald has worked at CanTeen for 9 years investigating the psychosocial impact on adolescents and young adults of their own or a family member's cancer diagnosis, with a focus on developing measures of cancer-related needs and supporting their clinical use. Fiona is also instrumental in translating research into organisational practice and evaluating the supportive programs and services that CanTeen provides to its clients. She has published 25 peer-reviewed journal articles and is a member of two international psycho-oncology working parties.

### ***The impact of a manualised therapeutic program incorporating self-compassion on the well-being of adolescents impacted by cancer***

**Background and objectives:** Adolescents affected by cancer experience short- and long-term effects on their psychosocial well-being, including disrupted social opportunities and increased isolation, increased distress, and reduced quality of life. These effects could be ameliorated through interventions incorporating self-compassion and its three core components: common humanity, mindfulness, and self-kindness. A manualised 6-session Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) based program, PEER, was developed; two sessions focused on teaching self-compassion through group discussion and experiential activities. This presentation describes the development, implementation, and outcomes of the program and examines self-compassion as a mechanism for improving well-being.

**Methods:** PEER was evaluated over a one-year period across six programs. Program effectiveness was assessed at three timepoints using measures of distress and quality of life. Mediation analyses explored the possible role of psychological inflexibility, sense of belonging, mindfulness, and self-kindness in the process of change.

**Results:** 191 adolescents (11-18 years; 68% female, Mage = 14.5 years, SD=1.6) attended PEER. Participants' quality of life improved significantly after participating in PEER ( $t=2.84$ ,  $p=.005$ ). Participants with high levels of distress ( $t=2.82$ ,  $p=.006$ ), high psychological inflexibility ( $t=2.39$ ,  $p=.019$ ), or low levels of mindfulness ( $t=-2.23$ ,  $p=.028$ ) at baseline experienced greater benefits from the program. Changes in self-kindness mediated changes in quality of life ( $\beta=0.19$ , 95% CI:0.04, 0.38) and distress ( $\beta=-0.41$ , 95% CI:-0.92, -0.03).

**Conclusion and clinical implications:** These results demonstrate the benefits of the program for distressed young people impacted by cancer and the role of self-compassion in improving their quality of life.

**CELIA ROBERTS**

*Biomedical Institute of Yoga and Meditation, BIYOME*

**Bio:** Celia Roberts is Senior yoga teacher and therapist with Yoga Australia and Meditation Australia, and among other qualifications, Celia has a Bio-Medical Science degree.

"My education and experience combined has brought me to a place where, above all else, I believe in offering you the highest quality education. This is done through continually revisiting and reinvestigating research, resources, values, and touchstone delivery of teaching in the field of yoga, meditation, and mind-body medicine. I am inspired by truth, trust, connection, education, mindful living and people from all walks of life. Moreover, I take passion and pride in the ongoing development of our innovative, evidence informed yoga and meditation teacher training programme that, I am excited to announce, will be running through our new organisation: The BioMedical Institute of Yoga and Meditation, BIYOME (pronounced Bi-yo-me)."

***Compassion Focussed Yoga Therapy & Meditation***

**Abstract:** Compassion Focused Yoga Therapy and Meditation have significant effects on the physiological responses of the bodily processes, including heart rate variability and vagal tone. It is a wonderful (and ancient) antidote to regulating our emotions, assisting with trauma, PTSD, anxiety and depression.

In this session, we will use ancient meditation techniques combined with yoga postures to learn how to effect positive and compassionate change in brain and body. Buddhist and yogic masters have long taught how the simple mental mastery of the breath can change us for better, both physiologically and mentally. They combine compassion meditation for structural reintegration in both brain and body. Buddhists and Yogis have long used these simple breath, flow and compassion practices to change lives.

Buddhist masters encourage us to literally "take the medicine", which is the breath and the compassion contained within our hearts. Whilst these practices seem essentially easy at first glance, they can take a lifetime to master and cultivate in both the brain and body. Please join us to understand how to use simple body-mind interventions in practice including yoga postures (asana), micro expressions (manas mudras), breathing exercises (pranayama) and further yoga therapy interventions for cultivating compassionate mental and bodily change. Please bring a yoga mat or be prepared to move gently without.

## **DR DAVID ROLAND**

*Psychologist*

**Bio:** Dr David Roland is a psychologist and writer of narrative non-fiction. His current book project *The Power of Suffering: growing through life crises* will detail his investigation into the nature of human suffering, what it does to us, how we survive it, and how we grow as a result.

He is the author of *How I Rescued My Brain: a psychologist's remarkable recovery from stroke and trauma* (Scribe, 2014), which was shortlisted for an Australian Book Industry Award in 2015. It was also selected by Reading Well as a prescription book and made available throughout libraries in the UK

His first book *The Confident Performer* (Currency Press & NewSouth) is a self-help guide for mental preparation for performers and has been widely used in performance teaching institutions around the world. He has been published in *Best Australian Science Writing* (NewSouth, 2015).

David's writing has been featured in the *Good Weekend*, *Sydney Morning Herald*, *Newcastle Herald*, and *Rolling Stone* magazine, *The Conversation*, *The Hoopla* and *Wellbeing*. He has appeared on ABC TV, Channel Ten and ABC Radio including *Conversations with Richard Fidler* and *Big Ideas*. He has appeared at the *Byron Bay Writers Festival*, *Brisbane Writers Festival*, *Sydney Writers Festival* and the *Perth Writers Festival*, amongst others.

David has a PhD in clinical psychology and has worked independently as a clinical and forensic psychologist. He is an Honorary Associate with the School of Medicine, University of Sydney. He also loves salsa dancing.

### ***The Power of Suffering and the Hero's Journey***

**Abstract:** What is human suffering, what does it do to us, how do we survive it, and how might we grow as a result? This was the question I set myself when I undertook a personal investigation three years ago.

Through the course of my investigation I interviewed experts, drew on research in zoology, psychology, medical science, neuroscience, mythology and literature to delve into the nature of suffering, what causes it, how we survive it and how it transforms us.

I spent time with people whose lives had been upturned by major life crises. How did they survive these upheavals and grow? I also had my own experience to draw on as a past sufferer of posttraumatic disorder, brain injury, financial catastrophe, divorce and the loss of my career as a clinical and forensic psychologist. Yet, in spite of all these things, I became a more content person.

I will summarise my findings and provide a roadmap for those negotiating their way through suffering. And for their carers and professional helpers, what they can do to assist and not hinder this ancient journey, the hero's journey.

## **VEYA SEEKIS**

*PhD Candidate, Griffith University*

**Bio:** Veya is a PhD candidate currently completing her research PhD in psychology at Griffith University. Veya's primary research interest is in understanding approaches, such as self-compassion and positive body image, to reducing the potentially negative effects of appearance-related social media on young people's body image. Veya completed her Bachelor of Psychology with first-class Honours degree in 2016 and was awarded the APS Excellent Honours Degree Thesis in Health Psychology for her thesis "The Effect of Self-compassion and Self-esteem Writing Tasks on Body Image in Female Young Adults: A Randomised Controlled Trial". That study formed the basis of a paper lead by Veya and co-authored by her supervisors A/Prof Graham Bradley and Dr Amanda Duffy that was published (December 2017) in the international academic journal *Body Image* entitled "The Effectiveness of Self-compassion and Self-esteem Writing Tasks in Reducing Body Image Concerns". Veya also has a book chapter in press "Self-compassion Interventions in Body Image: A Review of the Literature" in an upcoming book entitled *The Power of Compassion* (Eds Laura Galiana & Noemí Sansó), and a manuscript under review entitled "Social Networking Sites and Young Women's Body Image Concerns: Mediated and Moderated Pathways, which was recently presented at the Adelaide APS Health Psychology Conference.

### ***A Comparison study of Young Adults with Positive or Negative Body image: How is Self-compassion Approached as a Coping Strategy?***

**Abstract:** Negative body image affects a majority of university aged women, and a growing proportion of university aged men. Recent studies have highlighted the significance of a holistic self-care attitude shared by those with positive body image for maintaining a healthy attitude toward their appearance. One practice that can help cultivate a healthy attitude by promoting resilience and boosting inner strength is self-compassion. Studies have shown that self-compassion has (a) an inverse relationship with negative body image and (b) has moderated links between predictors and body image concerns. However extant literature is limited in the following ways: (1) it seldom addresses self-compassion and body image in men, (2) it mostly examines self-compassion as a trait rather than a state, and (3) while generally recognising that self-compassion comprises three distinct aspects, it seldom addresses how or whether all three aspects are utilised in coping with appearance-related distress. To address these issues, an interview-based qualitative study with young adult women ( $n = 16$ ) and men ( $n = 14$ ), who had either a positive or negative body image, was conducted in late 2018. Thematic analysis identified similarities and differences between genders, and between body image groups, in the ways self-compassion is applied during body image distress. This presentation will report the study findings. By comparing genders, and body image types, experiential and accessible processes of embodying positive body image and applying self-care strategies can be identified for use in preventative or treatment intervention programs.

**DR REBEKAH SCOTNEY**

*Clinical Academic, School of Veterinary Science, The University of Queensland*

**Bio:** Rebekah graduated from The University of Queensland (UQ) in 1993, taking her first position within the School of Veterinary Science shortly thereafter. Rebekah is an experienced Veterinary Technical Officer, qualified Veterinary Nurse and Workplace Trainer and Assessor. She has a strong background in animal welfare, behaviour and ethics. After more than 15 years' experience in facility management, Rebekah held the position of Director, Clinical Studies Centre within the School of Veterinary Science from 2013 until mid-2018.

As Academic Program Coordinator of the Bachelor of Veterinary Technology degree, Rebekah teaches into the BAppSc, BVetTech and BVSc programs. She has a passion for teaching and a commitment to instil a desire in all students to embrace life-long learning.

Rebekah is a passionate researcher and educator specialising in the psychology of human – animal relationships. Rebekah attained her PhD in 2017, titled Occupational Stress and Compassion Fatigue in Animal-Related Occupations, and has lectured extensively in the areas of compassion fatigue, occupational stress and emotional intelligence for more than 10 years. Rebekah also provides thought-provoking seminars and workshops within the animal industry.

Rebekah is highly regarded in her field, particularly for her leadership and mentoring expertise.

***Do we need a safety vest? A case for initiating a fully integrated mental health ergonomics curriculum for veterinary and animal sciences students at UQ***

**Abstract:** As veterinary and animal science educators, we spend much time and effort teaching undergraduates how to be veterinarians, veterinary paraprofessionals and animal scientists how to look after animals — but do we spend enough time teaching them how to look after themselves? While existing literature suggests that professional students (e.g., medical, law, nursing) experience high levels of stress and depression, the experiences of veterinary and animal science students have been less well examined. However, a recent study by Tomasi et.al. (2019) indicated that proportionate mortality rates for suicide for female as well as male veterinarians were higher than for the general population. Similarly, a study by Milner et.al. (2015) reported elevated risk of suicide in veterinary nurses. These are alarming statistics that may be effectively decreased with further expansion of the health and wellbeing content of undergraduate programmes: the implementation of a comprehensive mental health ergonomics curriculum for undergraduate students, which focusses on self-care and self-compassion, but also has a focus on compassion for others. Further, the benefits of a health and wellbeing curriculum both during undergraduate training and into workforce years needs to be investigated. This presentation will outline the challenges in veterinary and animal science occupations, and the potential benefits of a fully integrated and assessable, mental health ergonomics curriculum at UQ.



## **TARLI YOUNG**

PhD Candidate, School of Psychology, The University of Queensland

**Bio:** Tarli Young is in her last year of a PhD in Psychology at The University of Queensland where she also lectures in Positive Psychology. Tarli currently has three main research streams:

1. Improving workplace wellbeing within meaningful careers
2. Investigating the links between ethics and wellbeing, and
3. Blending mindfulness and positive psychology theory and interventions

Each of these link to her overall aim of about improving peoples' wellbeing.

### ***The Ethical Way to Wellbeing***

**Abstract:** Ethics may offer another path to wellbeing – a route indicated within philosophy but not yet investigated within psychology. In a pilot study with 181 U.S. online participants, we found correlations between ethical framework clarity and well-being, while controlling for religiosity and age. This relationship was fully mediated by the extent to which having an ethical framework helped make sense of the world – denoting a sense of meaning. To establish causality, we randomly assigned 356 U.S. participants to either a prime condition to enhance ethical clarity, or an active control. While no main effect of condition on well-being was found, participants' initial levels of ethical clarity moderated the effects. Specifically, those who initially had low ethical clarity reported significantly higher well-being after receiving the ethical prime compared to those in the active control condition. Collectively, these results provide preliminary evidence suggesting that a well-defined ethical framework can boost well-being by increasing meaning.