

In April 2009 a mother of a missing person shared the ways she had developed her resilience over the last four years since her son disappeared. She provided the group with the following tips.

1. Counselling support

Accessing the Families and Friends of Missing Persons Unit (FFMPU), Department of Attorney General and Justice, helped me understand and learn to live with unresolved grief.

2. My workplace

- ↳ I accessed the Employee Assistance Program.
- ↳ I accessed a counsellor.
- ↳ I learnt how to help my manager learn how to support me.
- ↳ I found that being able to come to the workplace, and having that normality, was helpful and knowing that I didn't have to talk if I didn't want to.

3. Documenting the 'missing' process

By cataloguing the disappearance and the search, it assisted me by maintaining a level of control.

4. Acknowledging the importance of rituals

- ↳ Rituals were important as it allowed my family and friends to come together and support one another.
- ↳ The rituals were not linked to any church or religion (but having said that, religion does not often have rituals for missing anyway!)

These are some of the rituals we have held:

- ↳ We started with picnics, creating a space for us all to come together to acknowledge what had happened.
- ↳ My son's friends are from the arts community so we were able to be creative in our planning of an event.
- ↳ We organised a film festival of Ash's acting and film works.
- ↳ We were able to include a prevention message for young people at the festival asking them to talk to a trusted friend if they were thinking of going missing.
- ↳ We raised money and donated this to *Tropfest Junior* for an award for an 'up and coming' artist.

5. Blogs

A friend of mine set up a blog spot to update people on the search; it also gave us a way to communicate with Ashley

6. I thought about how I could change the system for others

I had input into advocacy issues regarding missing persons by:

- ↳ providing feedback to the process of missing, for example the policing process at local, state and federal levels and how it has been fragmented
- ↳ providing feedback on improving the sector and making it easier for others.

7. Relying on my professional expertise

I used my professional skills as a health promotions officer with a government health service.

8. Providing input to develop resources

- ↳ Input into the FFMPU Forum.
- ↳ Input into counselling packages and fact sheets.
- ↳ In my work place I am now having input into the prevention of mental illness for young people through health and lifestyle programs.

9. An active, healthy lifestyle

- ↳ I am physically active – I cycle, walk, lift weights (research has proved that lifting weights can help in stabilising your mood) and I eat a balanced diet, I get enough sleep and I limit my alcohol intake.

10. New skills

- ↳ I have learnt to meditate. I practice Raj Yoga and open eye meditation.
- ↳ I have learnt to clear my mind, still my thoughts and focus on positive thoughts.
- ↳ I value myself!
- ↳ I have compassion for life and for others through a loving heart.

11. Focusing on life skills you may already have

I acknowledged that I had a high level of resilience to start with so with that, I focused on my strong family upbringing and my broad base of friends

In addition, I acknowledged that I had faced many of life's challenges and seen that I could 'bounce back' before.

12. Guiding others

- ↳ Others often don't know how to support you so I found I was often supporting other people and this, in turn, helped to support me.
- ↳ I acknowledged other peoples relationships with my son and the importance of them and how the loss was affecting them.
- ↳ I understood that letting people know that 'missing' doesn't come with an instruction manual and that there are no rules. You can just make them up collectively to build resilience in getting each other through.

CONTACT DETAILS

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