

INTERVIEW



Introducing Rhonda Bliss...

Rhonda Bliss was raised and educated in Pukekohe, training at Auckland University of Technology in psychotherapy for a Graduate Diploma in Psychosocial Studies and a Master of Health Science (Psychotherapy). She works in private practice as a member of Life Unlimited Counselling and Seminar Services and is a senior member of the face to face team at Youthline in Auckland.



What is Youthline?

Youthline began as a telephone help line for young people, but now provides services to people of all ages, because young people need a healthy family and community environment to grow. There is support for parents, family therapy, face to face individual counselling and pregnancy counselling. Clients range in age from children to people in their seventies. We have a dedicated, skilled and qualified team, who are trained to help. They offer a safe, confidential environment for the client to “tell it like it is.” They are caring, respectful of different values and non-judgemental. Their role is to listen, support the client, make sense of what is happening and help the client work through the issues towards a resolution that fits with the client’s goals and values. Modern Youthline uses the latest technology, providing email and txt services, holds seminars which are open to everyone, and sends youth workers to schools with information sheets and programmes for at-risk young people. They focus on the potential and the preventative, not just the problems. Youthline also has an alternative school for kids who are no longer in the school system, with dedicated teachers who do tremendous work and a Youth Leadership programme, which provides a voice for 15-17 year olds.

How can Franklin residents approach Youthline?

There is great need in South Auckland and presently there is a core centre in Manukau. We are fundraising for a new centre in the old Papatoetoe Fire Station, to service the area, extending south including Franklin. When the building is refurbished, it will provide a centre where young people can drop in and have their own safe “hang out” space, like their own “village,” and where Youthline services will be based for the South Auckland and Franklin areas. Youthline aims to work in partnership with the community, to find out and provide what is needed before people reach the stage where things are desperate. To reach Youthline, phone Youthline Helpline: 0800 376 633; TXT 234 (free), email talk@youthline.co.nz or logon to www.youthline.co.nz

What needs come before your counsellors/therapists?

We provide individual, couple and family counselling, sexual abuse counselling for ACC and Family Court counselling. People come for help to overcome the effects of abuse of all kinds, addictions, anger management, depression, anxiety, eating

disorders, grief, life changes, relationship issues, mental health disorders, parenting problems, self-esteem, sexual offending and stress. People who call are matched with the counsellor or therapist who can best help them and therapy is very individual for each person. We live in a society where people try to be independent and feel shame if they ask for help, but humans are designed to be inter-dependent. Men in particular, often feel anxious about asking for professional help. They think they should be able to sort it out for themselves. Some feel they are “crazy,” or have lost hope. But everyone has times when we could benefit from talking to someone who is professional and objective. No issue is unimportant, or too small – talking to someone now can prevent a situation from escalating. Some callers feel isolated and just want somebody to talk to. In a year, Youthline receives over 100,000 calls and still depends on trained volunteers.

What is Life Unlimited?

Life Unlimited is a charitable trust to meet the needs within the church community. Christians sometimes feel they have to work things out on their own or depend on their faith and are reluctant to ask for help. They benefit from having someone who is trained help them through. Donations for Life Unlimited go toward covering costs for people who cannot afford to pay the usual fees.

Helping people with so many different, and sometimes severe problems must be difficult.

It’s challenging and very varied, but I love my job. I’m passionate about what I do. We do something really, really useful and it’s incredibly rewarding to see people get more satisfaction out of life, get into healthy relationships and make really positive changes in their lives. The time it takes differs, but I know it works. My work is very research based – in the last 20 years, there have been exciting developments in my field, such as in trauma theory. Research shows there is a direct relationship between our experiences and what we learn as infants and children and later life thoughts, feelings and behaviour. Brain scans demonstrate that as people process and work through issues, neural pathways of the brain are changed. This means that over time with consistent and empathetic counselling or therapy, people can make real changes in their lives. This offers hope to all, including those who have been traumatized by sexual, emotional and physical abuse.