



Program heals family violence trauma through dance, music and art

Counselling and therapy are the traditional services offered to women trying to overcome the trauma of family violence but an innovative program offered by Tri-City Transitions helped a dozen Port Coquitlam women heal through music, dance, and art. Funded by a \$4,500 grant from the Port Coquitlam Community Foundation, Give Her Voice ran two eight week workshops in 2016 that gave women a chance to explore and express their voice through guided art therapy, music and dance. Domestic violence impacts the mental, physical and emotional health of women and can lead to chronic pain, mental health issues and more, says Tri-City Transitions executive director Carol Metz Murray.

Body movement and self-expression can unlock and release blocked trauma within the body. According to Metz Murray, women who are abused often see no way out of the ongoing daily crisis they live in. Dance, movement, music and art expressions begin to awaken the voice inside which in turn creates feelings of freedom and ultimately restores self-respect, self-confidence and health, Metz Murray says. The concept for the workshops grew out of a conference Metz Murray attended several years ago that focused on dance as a way to heal trauma. It is an innovative approach that many women expressed an interest in, but not all registered. It's a scary process, Metz Murray admits, but those who found the courage and stepped forward, it worked for them. They are all committed to themselves, to rebuilding their lives. When a woman regains her sense of worth, she is more likely to step away from an abusive relationship, Metz Murray adds. After completing the eight-week workshop and drawing up an action plan, participants were eligible for free financial literacy courses offered through VanCity as well as employment counselling offered by Avia Employment.