

## The Boarding School Survivor's Journey

We can use the idea of the Boarding School Survivor's Journey as a way of reflecting on our experience and development as survivors. The four stages of the journey can be thought of as:

1. Understanding what happened to us
2. Reconnecting to the damaged child within
3. Finding compassion – and help – for the task
4. Reframing relationships with self and others

We will all be at different stages on the journey, and for most, 'the journey' is not a linear one.

### 1

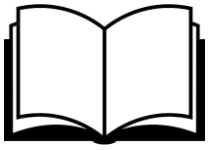
## Understanding what happened to us

**Not "What is wrong with me?", but "What was done to me?" – and how I survived.**

Some of us have always known on some level that our boarding school experience was traumatic: but, for others of us, our experiences can be hidden behind a veil. It may be the rupturing of family attachment that has caused the damage, or maybe the school environment: but it is usually a combination of the two. The veil can be lifted by a triggered memory after a conversation with a friend; or when our child gets to a certain age; or when we realise that we keep repeating the same 'mistakes' in our relationships: and then the realisation dawns that something is not right, and so the journey of exploration and healing begins. Some useful guides along the way are listed overleaf.

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## Guides for our healing journey may include:



### **BOOKS TO READ, AMONST OTHERS (see back page)**

**The Making of Them**, Nick Duffell

**Boarding School Syndrome**, Joy Schaverien

**Finding Our Way Home**, Simpson, ed.

**Men's Accounts of Boarding**, Laughton et al., ed.

**Stiff Upper Lip**, Alex Renton

**A Very Private School**, Charles Spencer



### **VIDEOS AND PODCASTS (see back page)**

**The Making of Them** (video on YouTube)

**Leaving Home at Eight** (video on YouTube)

**An Evolving Man** (podcast)

### **FACEBOOK GROUPS**



If you are on Facebook, there are two groups that are supportive and affirming. Search for:

[Boarding School Survivors](#)

[Boarding School Action](#)

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## Therapies, workshops and support groups

### **BSS-SUPPORT**

Newsletters, online resources and an annual conference

### **BOARDING SCHOOL SURVIVORS**

Weekend workshops, where you can meet other boarding school survivors and work with trained therapists to gain a better understanding of your experience

### **BOARDING RECOVERY**

A list of trained therapists who can help on a 1-to-1 basis

### **SEEN & HEARD**

Online support groups, a therapist and practitioner directory, self-help and learning resources – and more

## 2

## Reconnecting to the damaged child within

### Rediscovering and connecting with the abandoned one

As we begin to understand the impact that the separation from our families had on us, we begin to acknowledge the price we paid for that loss. Feelings of grief, sadness and anger are not uncommon, and a growing tenderness towards the young child that we were when we were sent away.

It is at this point that many of us feel the need to find support somewhere, be it from a trained therapist, a therapeutic workshop or from more informal support groups.

## 3

## Finding compassion – and help – for the task

### Learning to treat ourselves kindly and finding help for recovery

Guilt, shame and anger towards ourselves and others are a common experience for survivors. Finding ways to understand the source of these feelings and to begin to treat ourselves more kindly is a key part of our recovery.

What seems to help many survivors is to connect with others going through the same experience. Whether the therapeutic groups run by [Boarding School Survivors](#); or the more informal online connection groups run by [Seen & Heard](#); or the conversations happening on **Facebook** ([Boarding School Survivors](#), [Boarding School Action](#)), there are increasing numbers of opportunities for survivors to come together with others to tell their story.

And, of course, there are many other practices and approaches available to us that help us develop self-compassion, calm our stressed nervous systems and rebuild a love of life: be that yoga, mindfulness, being in nature, being with our loved ones, finding ways to express ourselves through art or music, and so on.

# 4

## Reframing relationships with self and others

### Discovering anew ourselves and those we love

As the personal work we have undertaken and the insights gained from the previous stages become integrated within us, we find that we are able to respond differently, more flexibly, in our relationships and in life generally.

We notice more often and more quickly when we fall back into old ways of responding. If we do become withdrawn, irritable, depressed or anxious again, we try to remember where we've come from and treat ourselves kindly. We stop just surviving and start living.

#### WHERE TO BUY – BOOKS

The Making of Them .....	<a href="https://www.amazon.co.uk">amazon.co.uk</a> OR <a href="https://www.karnacbooks.com">karnacbooks.com</a>
Boarding School Syndrome .....	<a href="https://www.amazon.co.uk">amazon.co.uk</a> OR <a href="https://www.joyschaverien.com">joyschaverien.com</a>
Stiff Upper Lip .....	<a href="https://www.amazon.co.uk">amazon.co.uk</a> OR <a href="https://www.alexrenton.com">alexrenton.com</a>
A Very Private School .....	<a href="https://www.amazon.co.uk">amazon.co.uk</a> OR <a href="https://www.charles-spencer.com">charles-spencer.com</a>
Finding Our Way Home (women's boarding) .....	<a href="https://www.amazon.co.uk">amazon.co.uk</a>
Men's Accounts of Boarding School – Sent Away .....	<a href="https://www.amazon.co.uk">amazon.co.uk</a>

#### WHERE TO FIND – VIDEOS AND PODCASTS

The Making of Them (film) .....	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2uRr77vju8U">youtube.com/watch?v=2uRr77vju8U</a>
Leaving Home at Eight (film) .....	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d6vfjWBT45o">youtube.com/watch?v=d6vfjWBT45o</a>
An Evolving Man (podcast) .....	<a href="https://www.piers-cross.com">piers-cross.com</a> OR on <a href="https://www.youtube.com">YouTube</a>

#### USEFUL ONLINE RESOURCES & SERVICES

##### BSS-Support

web: [bss-support.org.uk](https://www.bss-support.org.uk)

email: [info@bss-support.org.uk](mailto:info@bss-support.org.uk)

##### Boarding School Survivors

web: [boardingschoolsurvivors.co.uk](https://www.boardingschoolsurvivors.co.uk)

email: [info@boardingschoolsurvivors.co.uk](mailto:info@boardingschoolsurvivors.co.uk)

##### Boarding Recovery

web:

[boardingrecovery.com/therapists.html](https://www.boardingrecovery.com/therapists.html)

##### Seen & Heard

web: [seenheard.org.uk](https://www.seenheard.org.uk)

email: [info@seenheard.org.uk](mailto:info@seenheard.org.uk)