



## **fabric of life**

### **counselling & psychotherapy**

*...weaving the threads together*

**What happens when life turns out differently to the way you designed it?**

*Real support for parents who have a child with special needs*

Parenting is hard work. But parenting a child with special needs can be all consuming. All your attention becomes focussed on your child (as it has to) to ensure that they are supported in their everyday challenges. Meanwhile, who supports you in yours?

Once your lifestyle adjusts, and accommodating your child's additional needs weaves into the everyday fabric of your life, you may begin to feel frayed around the edges as the challenges of parenting a child with special needs becomes an ever present reality. The ongoing nature of this demanding role can at times feel emotionally overwhelming, isolating and despairing.

*Common emotional experiences include:*

- **feelings of grief and loss** triggered by life events, both big and small. Such as, missing out on reaching the milestones of development other children achieve, missing the option of having freedom of choice, or sometimes it's simply seeing your child miss out on a birthday party invitation (again).
- **feeling anxious and fearful** about the future is common among parents who have a child with special needs, raising concerns such as: 'What will the future hold for my child? How will it impact on my life and that of the rest of my family?'
- **social isolation** and a lack of support can often be felt at an interpersonal level, with many extended family members and friends failing to understand the complexities of your child's condition.

- **anger, resentment, guilt, shame....** the pain of feeling dis-empowered by a lack of control over your life.

Amidst the everyday challenges of parenting there is often an inner voice that says: 'What about me? I feel trapped, but there's no escape. I don't feel equipped to deal with this. What about my dreams? What about my life? When will I be able to start living for me?'

These feelings are rarely acknowledged because they feel too painful and shameful, many parents fearing they will be deemed selfish or indulgent in exploring them.

However, your individual needs are just as important as your child's. In fact, one could argue that they are even more important. Because without you, who will take care of your child? The key is self-nurture. The best thing you can do for your child is to look after yourself. Talking to a professional counsellor with personal experience and insight can help.

Mali Farnell has over 10 years experience working with special needs and is a qualified and registered Professional Counsellor.

She has also completed study majors in Workplace Counselling, Grief and Loss Counselling and Relationships Counselling.

Mali has personal insight into the pressures placed on parents who support a child with special needs and is keen to support others in their experiences.

Call **Mali Farnell** on **0432 027 078** or email her at **malifarnell@aapt.net.au**. For more information about Fabric of Life Counselling & Psychotherapy go to **www.folcounselling.com.au**

\*Some private health insurance rebates available

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