

# News Letter

**‘Be with those who help your being.’ - Rumi**

## ***Responding to Psychological Distress - A New Approach***

When someone is in psychological distress, especially a young person, **how we respond can make all the difference**. High-stress moments require calm, confidence, and compassion; yet many people feel unsure or overwhelmed in these situations. **TAR3** is a practical model that helps people respond safely and effectively in these moments. It improves psychological safety and transforms the quality of our interactions, whether it is at home, at school, or in the community.

Developed by our Founder & Clinical Nurse Consultant (Child & Adolescent Mental Health) and researcher **Dr Stephen Spencer (PhD)**, TAR3 was born from both professional experience and a deeply personal motivation.

Steve began his career in the forensic unit at Morisset Hospital before transitioning into an acute child and adolescent mental health unit. What he discovered shocked him: children and young people experiencing acute psychological distress were often more likely to be subjected to coercive interventions like seclusion, restraint, or sedation than adults in forensic settings. These methods were used frequently, despite evidence that they don't work, are not transferable out of the hospital environment, and can even cause physical and psychological harm.

For Steve, the experience of physically restraining or sedating young people in distress was deeply troubling, especially as a father of three daughters. He knew there had to be a better way.

At the same time, Steve observed that when young people in hospital were cared for by skilled professionals who understood how to manage their distress effectively, they often recovered quickly.

This sparked an idea: What if families, carers, and educators in the community could learn the same techniques? What if we could build their capacity to support young people in

distress so that fewer kids would need to be admitted to hospital, and more would have their needs met at home or school? This revealed a clear and urgent **gap in the system**: while most professionals are required to learn physical first aid skills like CPR or DRSABCD, which they may rarely use, very few receive training in how to respond to psychological distress, something many encounter almost daily. Parents, teachers, and carers are often the first responders when a young person is struggling, yet they are typically left without the tools or confidence to help effectively. **TAR3 fills that gap**. It is the psychological equivalent of first aid: simple, compassionate, and grounded in evidence. Since its development, thousands of people across New South Wales and other parts of Australia have been trained in TAR3. Educators, health workers, parents, and carers are now better prepared to respond when someone is struggling - not with fear or force, but with calm and care.

TAR3 is also embedded into clinical practice at **Rest in Essence**. Our psychologists and allied health professionals use the model in their day-to-day work, and it is integrated into training programs for professionals across sectors. Still, the need remains urgent. Despite growing awareness and reduced stigma around mental health struggles, outcomes for young people are not improving. Suicide remains the leading cause of death for Australians aged 15–24, and many families are left navigating an overstretched public system or facing the high costs of private care.

**TAR3 puts the power to support mental health back into the hands of the people** who are there every day: parents, teachers, carers, and community members. By building their capacity to respond, we believe we can improve mental health outcomes and reduce the need for emergency interventions. With TAR3, we can respond better - before distress becomes a crisis.

## **Services we offer**

- Psychological intervention for children aged 4+, adolescents and adults
- Child and adolescent psychiatry
- Family therapy and couples counselling
- Comprehensive psychological assessments, including ADHD, Autism and Learning Disorders
- Mental Health Treatment Plans, Eating Disorder Plans and DVA
- Workers Compensation and CTP
- Disability, NDIS and Victim of Crimes support

## **We'd love to hear from you**

The purpose of this newsletter is to keep you informed about topics relevant to your practice and support your work in providing quality care to your patients. We value your input. If you have feedback or suggestions for topics you would like us to cover, please get in touch with us.



**(02) 4902 8900**

**info@restinessence.com.au**

**www.restinessence.com.au**

