



# People Social Work & Positive Change

RUTH STARK  
PRESIDENT

International Federation of Social Workers

# International Definition of Social Work

- ▶ Social work is a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people. Principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversities are central to social work. Underpinned by theories of social work, social sciences, humanities and indigenous knowledge, social work engages people and structures to address life challenges and enhance wellbeing.

# People and change

- ▶ Planned change

- ▶ Forced change

# How do we cope with change?

1. How do you cope with change
  1. Moving House
  2. Changing job
  3. Getting married
  4. New relationships
  5. New children
  6. New caring responsibilities

# Journeys

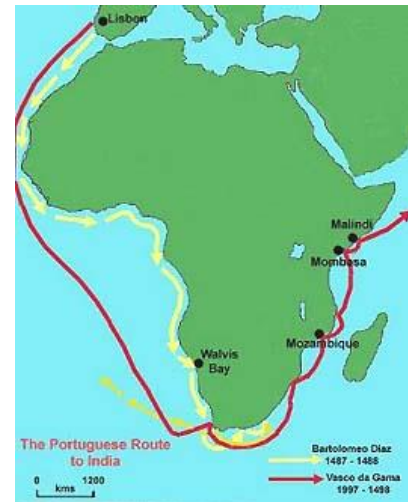


# Well-being of being in control

► Destination



► How to get there

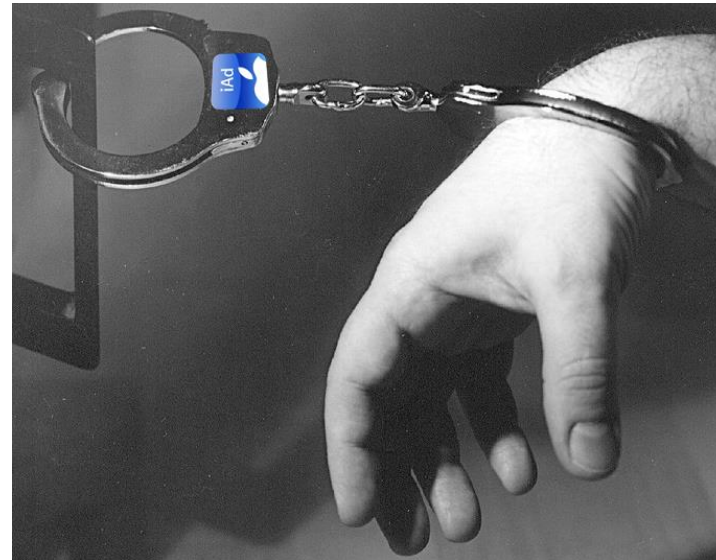


# Traumatic Journeys





# Power and Control





# Being out of control



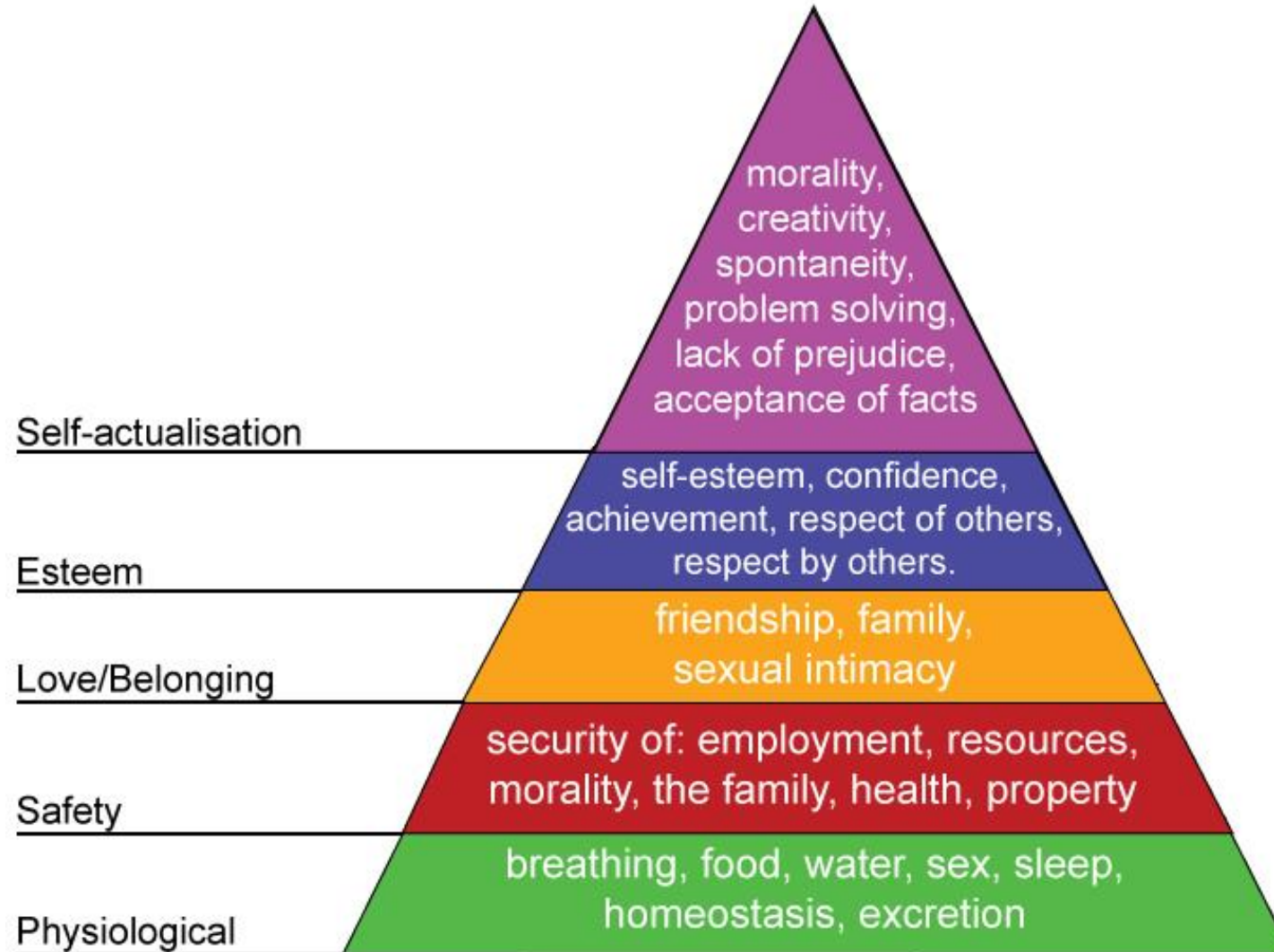
# How do people who have experienced Trauma cope with change?

- ▶ FEAR
- ▶ VICTIM OF POWER AND CONTROL
- ▶ DISEMPOWERED
- ▶ REDUCED RESILIENCE
- ▶ REDUCED CAPACITY TO BE POSITIVE

However they also have positive assets

- ▶ SKILLS
- ▶ SURVIVAL

# MASLOW 1942



# Two case examples

- ▶ Jane
- ▶ Wonderful school career
- ▶ 1<sup>st</sup> year University
- ▶ Repeated very serious suicide attempts
- ▶ 10 years later she feels safe enough to speak about how she was
  - ▶ Sexually abused by her father and brother
  - ▶ Her mother failed to protect her as she had learning disabilities
- ▶ 20 years later publishes book on recovery

# Philippines Typhoon

- ▶ Two villages
- ▶ Same humanitarian aid
- ▶ In one village the mayor invited social workers to be part of the rebuilding team
- ▶ The employed people to rebuild their houses and their boats, they restarted their economy, people had pride and ownership
- ▶ The other village is still stuck with people 'waiting for the humanitarian aid to rebuild their homes for them to move into - inertia in their local economy

# Empowerment through asking questions

- ▶ Social Workers are not Social Administrators
  - ▶ Some humanitarian responses use social workers to document people so they can move into social protection floors. This is not how social work skills should be used.
- ▶ Social Workers work with people through the social relationship
  - ▶ Social Workers ask questions so that people ask themselves the questions to help them find the answer. The solution comes from working together



# The Social Work Role in Disaster Planning

- ▶ The disaster
- ▶ The 12 months post disaster
- ▶ The 20-30 years recovery
- ▶ The investigation/legal proceedings/compensation/social justice
  - ▶ Reliving the trauma
- ▶ The toll on the social workers



# People, social work and positive change

- ▶ Understand what the person sees as their goal, it may be different from yours and the other partners.
- ▶ Understand what they see as a socially just outcome, it may be different from yours
- ▶ Listen, do the analysis together, co-construct a way forward
- ▶ Change will only happen when the partners are engaged in the same project working in the same direction.
- ▶ Social Workers are not advice givers or social administrators - understand your own skills
- ▶ Social engagement leads to financial engagement that lead to healthy, sustainable societies and happy communities!

