

Speak Out Loud:

Stories of Strength from the Southern Downs

EPISODE: RETURNING HOME

GUEST: Peter Gill

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SUMMARY OF EPISODE

My guest on the podcast today is Peter Gill. Peter lives on the Granite Belt in the Southern Downs Region where he's surrounded by bush land that's a habitat to a diverse range of vegetation and wildlife, including many birds which you might hear as you listen to this episode. For Peter, writing poetry is a catalyst for self-expression and creativity. He shares one of his poems with us today that conveys the relief and the despair of returning home after the bush fire in September 2019. Peter also shares with us the vital importance of preparation and being proactive, including asking for help of any kind, if you need it.

Listen to the podcast conversation to hear Peter share:

- his connection with the Southern Downs including what attracted him to the area
- one of his poems "Returning Home" that was exhibited in the Hope + Growth Photography Exhibition
- how his poems include elements of emotional expression and education
- the agricultural community deals with stress each year such as hail, flood, fire and economic issues
- part of the strength of the community is that support is available
- it's important to acknowledge when you need support
- you can access formal help such as counselling if you need it, and connect informally with others by sharing ideas, solutions and resources
- the Blue Tree Project is an awareness-raising initiative that encourages people to acknowledge difficulties and work towards solutions
- there's always a solution
- preparation for troubles such as bushfires is vital and includes mental preparation and practical action
- longer term preparation strategies include investment in equipment / systems, expanding diversity of income or interests, and creating buffer zones
- the bushfire provided him with an opportunity to simplify, put things in perspective, see the silver lining and reduce risk for future events, all of which enabled him to deal with loss and bounce back better
- dealing with loss is not about moving on and forgetting, but moving on knowing you survived, recovered and identified ways to reduce your future risk

- preparing for change and accepting change helps you to deal with it better
- it's important to connect with people in your life who can understand what you're going through including friends, family, neighbours, council, services in the community and the ombudsman
- there is great value in taking the step of asking yourself how you can fix a problem or issue and then being proactive and taking action yourself - don't expect recovery to come to you
- his poems and the bushfire photos have been on display in the Hope + Growth Exhibition at several locations across the region
- poetry is his preferred form of expression but other people might use painting, drawing or planting
- be prepared for ongoing cyclical seasons of dry weather, fires, wet weather and growth

VIEW THE HOPE + GROWTH 2019 EXHIBITION ONLINE (PHOTOS AND POETRY)

W: <https://www.srag.org.au/hope-growth>

RESOURCES MENTIONED IN THE PODCAST

Southern Downs Regional Council <https://www.sdrc.qld.gov.au/>

Blue Tree Project <https://www.bluetreeproject.com.au/>

Queensland Fire and Emergency Services <https://www.qfes.qld.gov.au/>

Queensland Rural Fire Service
<https://www.qfes.qld.gov.au/about-us/frontline-services/rural-fire-service>

Make your Bushfire Survival Plan <https://www.qfes.qld.gov.au/bushfires>

Prepare for Bushfire Season <https://www.qfes.qld.gov.au/prepare/bushfire/prepare-for-bushfire-season>

Know Your Risk
<https://www.qfes.qld.gov.au/prepare/bushfire/know-your-risks>

Stanthorpe Regional Art Gallery <https://www.srag.org.au/>

Jamworks <https://jamworks.com.au/>

Vincenzo's Cafe <https://www.vincenzoscafe.com.au/>

Wild Grounds Cafe <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100071357650519>

Southern Downs Disaster Management Dashboard
<http://disasterdashboard.sdrc.qld.gov.au/>



The Speak Out Loud: Stories of Strength podcast has been produced by Kathryn Walton Consulting www.kathrynwalton.com.au



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The information shared in the podcast and handouts is intended for general information only. To the best of our knowledge, this information was correct at the time of publishing. Please consult with your doctor or health provider for support based on your individual needs.

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