



Online lifeline

Many South Africans who have experienced a terrifying, life-altering event are desperate for someone to throw them a lifeline, as they are barely holding on.

Erine Bröcker is a clinical psychologist specialising in trauma exposure and post-traumatic stress disorder at Stellenbosch University.



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Orcid ID:

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9861-9527>

Additional information:

<https://www.samrc.ac.za/people/erine-br%C3%B6cker>



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Trauma and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) are often associated with war. PTSD prevalence is so widespread among veterans that PTSD is also referred to as “soldier’s heart”.

The majority of South Africans suffer from soldier’s heart after experiencing their own war that has changed life as they know it, and resulted in them experiencing feelings such as that they are drowning and can’t breathe.

Sufferers of PTSD daily experience flashbacks, nightmares, sleep difficulties and/or uncontrollable thoughts after experiencing a terrifying, life-altering event.

“These difficulties are exacerbated by limited access to the needed support, due to an overburdened mental health system, rendering individuals desperate for someone to throw them a lifeline,” says Erine Bröcker. “It is imperative to identify alternative, efficient and accessible lifelines of support.”

Researchers at the Department of Psychiatry, Stellenbosch University, are currently evaluating a mobile application-based intervention as a promising alternative lifeline. Data so far supports that this intervention is both feasible and acceptable in our resource-constrained setting.

An individual who completed this intervention captured what the project aims to provide beautifully: “This intervention is a life-saver, as this on-demand tool



An online tool could help many PTSD sufferers through their struggles.

is accessible in my pocket. It is directly accessible when needed, and when used correctly it helps to show me how far I have come. It helps to calm me down when I

struggle to breathe, and helps me to realise that I will survive.

“The fact that I can access this intervention without anyone knowing is the best!”