Complex post-traumatic stress disorder—breaking the silence of the fringe dweller

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This presentation is a personal narrative of my own journey with complex post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), from diagnosis to management.

Commencing with a broad outline of my own professional background, the story will reveal the crippling effects of complex post-traumatic stress disorder, its symptomology and the difficulties encountered when dealing with government bodies, institutions, communities and day-to-day living through the darkened filter of this illness.

This poorly understood illness does not yet appear in the DSM, but is expected in the next release (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Illness). By observation it is often resistant to the usual PTSD treatments and lifelong. It also misses out on disability support payment from Centrelink, as does PTSD, despite its crippling nature, which ensures the struggle of those trying to navigate through a life trying to manage it is all the greater.

From a regional perspective, I will discuss the disadvantages and advantages I’ve experienced in the management of complex PTSD in regional Australia, plus the immeasurable benefits of an arts practice in coping with this illness.

I will also cover its effects on an emerging arts practice and an anecdotal account of how its impacts have shaped my own arts practice, including the difficulty in submission of grants, proposals and arts opportunities whilst in the grip of the illness that by nature comes and goes.