

# Tending trauma's scars

BY AMANDA BOWER

IT BEGAN with a seven-year-old girl who was terrified of the shower.

Moshe Lang, now considered the grandfather of family therapy in Australia, was a young psychologist in the late 1960s.

The little girl was referred to him after other therapists had no luck in understanding why she would scream, scratch and fight every time her parents tried to put her in the shower.

Mr Lang asked the girl to do some drawings and describe them.

"She drew a house with a

chimney and said people went in there and never came out," he said.

Alarms rang for the Israeli-born psychologist, who lost three grandparents in the Holocaust.

He quizzed the girl's parents and discovered they regularly told their daughter how her grandparents died: they were told to take a shower in a building with a chimney, and never came out.

It was the first of many encounters — now about one a week — Mr Lang had in helping Holocaust survivors come to terms with their memories.

His new book, *Resilience:*

*Stories of a Family Therapist*, includes a section on how generations of families dealt with the Holocaust.

Mr Lang said it was a struggle for people to tell their stories, which had clear parallels with the experiences of Vietnam veterans, sexual abuse victims and survivors of other trauma.

"For a long time the attitude in Australia was that when you came to the new country, you left the old country behind, you looked forward," the best-selling author said.

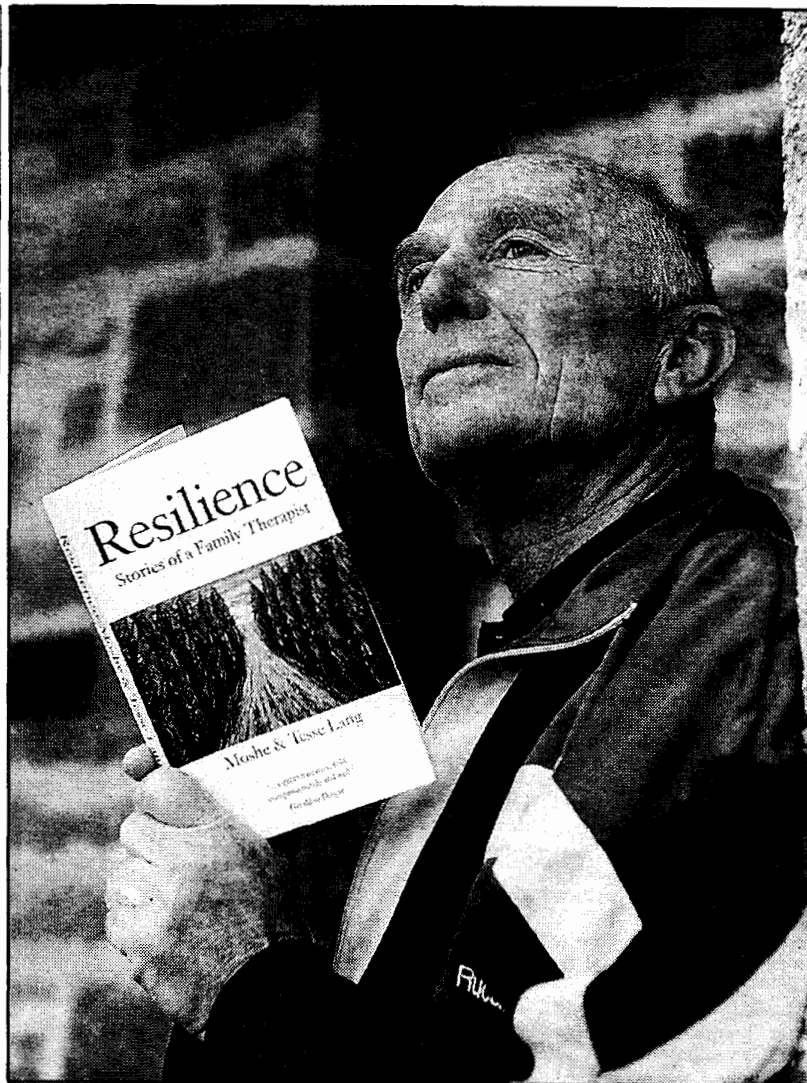
"In the past few years that culture has changed. We are encouraging people more to own their history."

Co-written with his wife Tesse, Mr Lang's book is divided into four sections dealing with children, couples, individuals and generations.

Mr Lang, director of a Melbourne family therapy centre, said the book was written simply, with little academic jargon.

"It gave their stories more dignity, more significance and weight," he said. This promoted discussion and allowed an insight into how psychology and therapy worked.

Mr Lang will give a public lecture at the UWA Simmonds Lecture Theatre, on the corner of Fairway and Myers Street, at 7.30 tonight.



**Healer:** Psychologist and author Moshe Lang with his latest book on family therapy which includes a section on the Holocaust. PICTURE: DIONE DAVIDSON