

## Telling stories of misery, joy and the human condition

By DEBORAH MORRIS

THE THERAPY, in its many shapes and forms, has helped thousands of Australians deal with life's problems. But what does the therapist think, how does the therapist deal with the misery and joy of the human condition? One way — the way renowned family therapist Moshe Lang has chosen — is to write about it.

Dr Lang's new book, *Resilience: Stories of a Family Therapist*, is a distillation of more than 30 years' experience helping children, couples and families try to find a happier state of mind.

The 50 short stories show that within every family lie secrets. The way Dr Lang helps resolve many family problems is through listening to those secrets.

"In some ways, therapy is both complex and simple," he says. "Therapy

highlights the importance of listening and the importance of human conversation. It also shows the healing power in story-telling."

For Dr Lang, storytelling is his way of understanding, as well as a way for people to get "rid of the haunting memories". Many of his patients are Holocaust survivors.

"Generally, Holocaust survivors kept their memories to themselves, believing that no-one wanted to hear them. And, in fact, many therapists believed that it was best not to talk about it. I have often been asked why survivors couldn't simply forget and forgive — why were they so morbidly preoccupied?" he says.

"I believe that not to forgive and certainly not to forget is a healthy and appropriate position to take.

"Among other things I hope to do in this book is to tell the reader that traumas can potentially be passed from one generation to the next. Often those who haven't spoken have communicated in some other way."

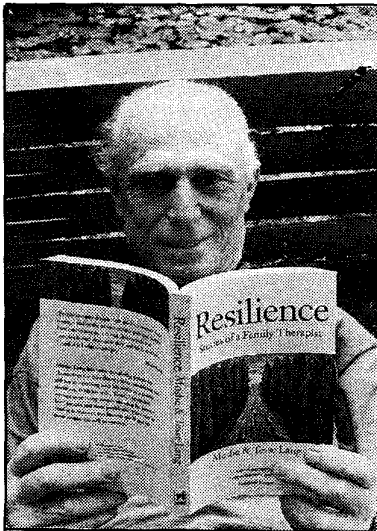
Dr Lang believes the long shadow of holocaust memories is not confined to Jewish survivors.

"There are numerous people in this country who lived through the experience of a Holocaust," he says.

"Cambodians, Chinese, Aborigines have all felt the terror. There are thousands of Australians who were incarcerated in Changai. They were, emotionally, terribly destroyed and their children and grandchildren have been affected.

"The children who see their father as a hero, yet hear him crying at night is a common story."

Dr Lang co-wrote *Resilience*, his second book with his wife, Tesse. Their first book was titled *Corrupting the Young*. "Its title was changed to *How to Stop a Nagging Mother* for the Hebrew version," Dr Lang said.



**Strong:** Family therapist Moshe Lang with a copy of his book, *Resilience*.  
Picture: **Maurice Grant-Drew**

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