

experience is repeated within the transference and countertransference. Various problems, that can arise in any psychotherapy, tend to be experienced as a repetition of previous traumatic events. From a personal example of getting into difficulties with a patient, Dr Earl Hopper will illustrate how we can develop our skill in understanding errors, become more comfortable in taking responsibility for these, and then integrate our new knowledge of ourselves into the therapeutic process. He will illustrate how the patient can help the therapist in this process.

Dr Earl Hopper

1.10 Discussion with audience

1.30 Lunch

2.30 Choice of Workshops

These will run concurrently. Please select a first and second choice from the descriptions.

3.45 Tea

4.20 Presentation: Mistakes as part of the analytic process

I wish to consider different kinds of mistake and some of the dynamics that may operate. I then wish to distinguish those mistakes that clearly should not be regarded as part of the analytic process and those that do seem to be a part of it. A key factor in making this distinction is, I believe, indicated by the uncanny parallels that we sometimes find in particular mistakes and the details of trauma in the patient's history. I shall present an example where this perspective could have saved an analysis from collapse.

Patrick Casement

5.00 Discussion with audience

**5.20 Can all mistakes be resolved?
Panel discussion (All speakers)**

5.45 End of conference

WORKSHOPS

WORKSHOP 1

Patrick Casement: How best can we learn from our clinical mistakes?

I expect the main input for this workshop to come from the participants, around the issue of mistakes. Please bring examples from your own practice and we will then be able to explore together how best we can learn from them.

WORKSHOP 2

Dr Carol Holmes: Why did you say that?

Is it possible to limit our mistakes with clients, or should the therapeutic process more usefully be focused on the client's perceptions of the therapist's errors? This workshop will give participants the opportunity to begin to develop and practice listening to the unconscious communication in narratives (primarily from a systemic, interpersonal perspective) and to understand the connections that exist between past, present and here and now, which are concealed in the client's narrative communications. Please bring a brief verbatim account from a recent session in which you think you made a mistake.

WORKSHOP 3

Rosemary Kent: If I make a mistake I just need to say 'I'm sorry'. If it's malpractice I could get sued ... right?

This workshop will focus on the overlap between mistakes and harmful practice, examining therapists' responsibilities for reducing risks to clients. We will consider ethical, rather than legal or theoretical issues. Damaging mistakes can occur through our failing to make an appropriate, ethical decision in difficult circumstances: examples of this include agreeing to work with a client who challenges us beyond our professional competence, or ignoring serious allegations of abusive behaviour by a senior colleague. The workshop leader will give a short presentation highlighting the importance of actively attending to our own clients' psychological safety, and being vigilant about that of colleagues' clients. She will then provide a structure for discussion.

Please bring examples that illustrate times at which a therapist is most likely to make an error of judgment in a clinical relationship.

WORKSHOP 4

Dr Earl Hopper: Working Responsibly with our own Fallibility

When working with difficult, traumatised patients, mistakes by the therapist are inevitable, and often stem from our own personal fallibility. It is essential to acknowledge one's own contribution to the difficulties with a patient, and to explore the meaning of what happened. One's own sense of shame should not become hidden and encapsulated in the same way that the patient has often encapsulated his or her sense of shame when they experienced the helplessness of trauma. In this workshop we will consider how to achieve a balance between acknowledgement to the patient of a mistake one has made, and the need to maintain a sense of authority associated with holding and containing through thought and interpretation. This balance is often achieved with the help of the group.

WORKSHOP 5

Dr Diana Shmukler: Out of my depth

I will look at those clinical consequences of accepting or agreeing to work with someone, which subsequently proves to be an error of both judgement and diagnosis. This kind of mistake is of a different order, and requires a different clinical solution. This workshop is led by a clinical psychologist with a thorough training and experience in diagnosis and assessment.

Please bring examples from your own practice, considering what motivated you to agree to work with this person.

RELATED READING

- Begental, J.f (1988). *What is failure in psychotherapy?* *Psychotherapy*, 25, 532-535
- Bollas, C. (1987) *The Shadow of the Object: Psychoanalysis of the Unthought Known*: London: Free Association Books
- Patrick Casement (2002). *Learning from our Mistakes* (Brunner-Routledge)
- Patrick Casement (1982) *Some pressures on the analyst for physical contact during the reliving of an early psychic trauma*. *International review of Psycho-Analysis* 9: 279-286
- Chused, J.F. (1991) *The evocative power of enactments*. *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association* 39: 615-639
- Chused, J.F. and Raphling, D (1992) *The analyst's mistakes*. *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association* 40: 89-116
- Coleman, S.B. (Ed) (1985). *Failure in family therapy*. New York: Guilford
- Coyne, R.K. (1999). *Failures in group work*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage
- Greenberg, J. (1986) *On the analyst's neutrality*. *Contemporary Psychoanalysis* 22: 87-106
- Hollon, S. D. (1995). *Failure in Psychotherapy*. *Journal of Psychotherapy Integration*, 5(2),171-175
- Carol Holmes (due to be published in 2003). *Why did you say that? Communication and its Complexities* (Brunner-Routledge)
- Earl Hopper (2002). *Traumatic Experience in the Unconscious Life of Groups*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
- Katz, G.A. (1998) *Where the action is: the enacted dimension of analytic process*. *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association* 46: 1129-1167
- Kottler and Carlson (2002). *Bad Therapy: Master Therapists Share Their Worst Failures* (Brunner-Routledge)
- Kottler, J. A. & Blau, D.S. (1989) *The imperfect psychotherapist: learning from failure in therapeutic practice* (San Fransisco: Jossey-Bass)
- Levenson, E.A. (1992) *Mistakes, errors, and oversights*. *Contemporary Psychoanalysis* 28: 555-571
- Robertiello, R.C., & Schoenewolf, G. (1987). *101 common therapeutic blunders: countertransference and counterresistance in psychotherapy*. Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson.
- Sandler, J. (1976) *Countertransference and role-responsiveness*. *International Review of Psycho-Analysis* 3: 43-47
- Searles, H (1975) *The Patient as Therapist to his Analyst, in Giovacchini (Ed) Tactics and Techniques in Psychoanalytic Therapy, Vol 11*

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presents

Making *Mistakes*

Seasoned psychotherapists
guide us through the
labyrinth of clinical error

A Symposium

chaired by Dr Josephine Klein
Saturday 22 November 2003

London

psychotherapy



BOOKING FORM

Please read the booking conditions (see information panel)

Full Name _____

Address _____

Post Code _____

Telephone Number _____

Professional Occupation _____

If Psychotherapist, which orientation/ training _____

I would like to register for the following workshop:

Please indicate your first choice with two ticks

and your second choice with one tick

Workshop 1 Patrick Casement

Workshop 2 Dr Carol Holmes

Workshop 3 Rosemary Kent

Workshop 4 Dr Earl Hopper

Workshop 5 Dr Diana Shmukler

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INFORMATION

Venue London Voluntary Sector Resource Centre, 356 Holloway Road, London N7

Dates Saturday 22 November 2003

Start Time 10.0am

End Time 5.45pm

Registration 9.30 – 10.0am

Fees	If funded by yourself	£90
	Confer Members	£76.50
	If funded by an organisation	£140

Parking Limited street parking

Tube Holloway Road (Piccadilly line)

To Book Please complete the booking form and return it with payment to

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A receipt will be sent to you to confirm your place

Booking Conditions The place you book is for your own use only.

It cannot be transferred to another person or event.

Should you wish to cancel regrettably we cannot give a refund in any circumstances.

Confer reserves the right to alter the programme if a speaker is unable to attend.

Certificates of Attendance will be available on the day.

Further Information Confer: Telephone: 0207 254 2323
Email: ryan@confer.demon.co.uk
www.confercpd.com

Copies of the flyer can be downloaded from this website

Programme Director Jane Ryan

Advisors to Confer Brett Kahr and Elizabeth Scott



INTRODUCTION

Every psychotherapist aims to achieve the best possible intervention in any particular moment in the therapeutic encounter but, inevitably, we will often fall short of that goal. Sometimes we'll find that a carefully prepared intervention skewed badly, that there are certain clients/patients who we're much more likely to let down, that we're not just feeling uncharacteristically moody but we made a downright caustic remark, or forgot someone ... fell asleep ... called their partner by the wrong name and so on.

These kind of errors, it can be argued, fall into the category of mistakes rather than malpractice but they can nonetheless cause serious setbacks in the relationship and even be re-traumatising. They present a fascinating and ambiguous intersection between countertransference enactment and human fallibility, and can be seen as a crucial sign of something important that needs attention.

This symposium is about talking about such mistakes so that they can contribute to the therapeutic process rather than work against it. The day will provide a range of strategies for conceptualising and working with errors, and will also offer a revealing glimpse into the consulting room of some of our most experienced psychotherapists. They will talk about how they have navigated the pitfalls of the unconscious and their own fallibility, sharing stories about their own clinical errors and how we can all work towards therapeutic repair when a faux-pas has occurred.

A therapist's account of a mistake

I was working with an elderly man for whom I was emotionally and intellectually stretching myself to support him in his immediate states of distress, and yet felt helpless to do so. During this session he sighed, in a moment of resignation, and said "All I know is that I will either sink or swim". I decided to offer reassurance and to say, "I am sure you will swim." But instead I said, "I am sure you will sink." Stunned, we both looked at each other. The client immediately came to the rescue by laughing and saying, "I think you meant swim".

The supervisor's response

When you say that you intended to say: "I am sure you will swim" it worried me quite deeply because it was an attempt to reassure, which was likely to communicate to your patient that you were not in touch with the patient's fear that he might sink. So, whatever you were going to say should have included your awareness of his fear and his need to know that you were in touch with it. So, it's a relief to me to see that your unconscious was not going to allow you to switch off so completely from his fear that he might sink! It was all there, in the slip.

Therapist's reply

I know intellectually that it is not helpful to offer reassurance, because what is actually most reassuring is the capacity to be in tune with the unbearable feeling and able to bear it. However, I sometimes find myself slipping into reassuring behaviour. In this instance I had problems of feeling fearful myself about sinking or drowning during our sessions. I now think that the intervention was an attempt to soothe myself, which I was unable to do with any conviction and so uttered the wrong word, sink instead of swim.

This case will be developed in Patrick Casement's presentation, when we will consider how such a mistake, or cluster of mistakes, present in one intervention can be worked through to the patient's advantage.

SPEAKERS

Patrick Casement is a training and supervising analyst for the British Psycho-Analytical Society, having previously trained with the British Association of Psychotherapists. His main publications are *On Learning from the Patient* and *Further Learning from the Patient*. His third book, *Learning from our Mistakes* was published in 2002 (Brunner-Routledge).

Dr Carol Holmes is a Communicative Psychotherapist, lecturer and supervisor. The theme of her PhD was the interface between communicative psychotherapy, existential philosophy and systems theory, and was based on some of her publications in this area. The subject of her book *There is no Such Things as a Therapist* (Karnac, 1998) explored the nuances of the therapeutic interaction from an interpersonal perspective. She is currently writing an innovative text for Macmillan Press, which examines the topic of countertransference across a range of therapeutic approaches (publication date 2003).

Dr Earl Hopper is a Member of the British Psycho-Analytical Society, the British Association of Psychotherapists and the Institute of Group Analysis. He is the Past President of the International Association of Group Psychotherapy and is a Past Chairman of the Group of Independent Psychoanalysts of the British Psycho-Analytical Society. His special interests include social and personal trauma. His two most recent books are *The Social Unconscious: selected papers* (London, Jessica Kingsley) and *The Traumatic Experience in the Unconscious Life of Groups* (London, Jessica Kingsley).

Rosemary Kent was previously Training Co-ordinator at POPAN (Prevention of Professional Abuse Network). She is a qualified Social Worker, a Chartered Counselling Psychologist, and an Honorary Lecturer at the Kent Institute of Medicine and Health Sciences (University of Kent). Her areas of specialisation are addictions and the resolution of ethical issues in therapy. She has over 20 years' experience as a trainer, counsellor, supervisor and consultant and draws on a variety of different therapeutic models in her work. Her publications include *Working through Setbacks in Psychotherapy* (with Rob Leiper, published by Sage, 2001).

Dr Josephine Klein is a psychoanalytically orientated psychotherapist and supervisor, recently retired from private practice. She is the author of numerous papers and books, including *Our Need for Others and its Roots in Infancy, Doubts and Uncertainties in the Practice of Psychotherapy* and *Jacobs Ladder: essays on experiences of the ineffable in the context of contemporary psychotherapy* (2002). She is a Fellow of the London Centre of Psychotherapy and a Member of the British Association of Psychotherapists.

Dr Diana Shmukler is a clinical and research psychologist, and a psychotherapist and supervisor in private practise. She is the former Professor of Applied Psychology at the University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa. She is currently Visiting Professor of Psychotherapy at the University of Derby, and Integrative teacher and supervisor at the Metanoia Psychotherapy Training Institute and at The Institute for Arts in Therapy and Education. She has had wide experience dealing with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, as well as cultural and racial issues. She is most interested in countertransference reactions in clinical work with individuals, couples and in group dynamics.

PROGRAMME

9.30 **Coffee and registration**

10.00 **The Observing Unconscious**

What can we learn about the unconscious from the stories we tell each other? This presentation will focus on the contradictory interests, abilities and activities that occupy and divide the conscious and unconscious mind. We will look at how this understanding may influence the quality of the therapeutic interaction through enhancing the way the therapist can openly and non-defensively listen to the unconscious advice of the patient. We will consider how mistakes are more likely to occur when we cannot listen in this way, and how we can learn to do so.

Dr Carol Holmes

10.40 **Discussion with the audience**

11.00 **Coffee**

11.30 **The impossibility of being perfect**

I have long been interested in the fact that for many of our best psychotherapy students success has rested on their capacity to 'get it right'. They can become very stressed in a field where helplessness and confusion are the order of the day, knowing that getting it wrong and making errors can be very costly or damaging to clients as well as to therapists. One of my challenges hence, as a teacher and supervisor, is helping students to understand that process work is about learning and adjusting. Drawing on my own experience of making mistakes, I will offer a developmental model of how these can be understood and part of our on-going growth as psychotherapists.

Dr Diana Shmukler

12.10 **Discussion with audience**

12.30 **Learning from a 'Mistake' in Group Analysis: Failed dependency and the case of Pandora**

Traumatic experience in the psychotherapy of our most 'difficult' patients is not uncommon. Therapist and patient tend unconsciously to collude in such a way that encapsulated