

CONFER

Spiritual Narratives and Psychological Therapies II

**Working psychotherapeutically
with the patient's spiritual issues**

Friday 30 May and Saturday 31 May 2008
Conference and workshops
London

Introduction

The therapist has the skill to engage with many manifestations of the mind, but dealing with spiritual anxiety – which can become a florid crisis – or a deeply religious concern, traditionally belongs to the domain of ministry. Nonetheless, practitioners will often find themselves listening to the spiritual narratives of their patients or clients, and be uncertain how to work effectively with these.

This 2-day conference with workshops focuses on how practitioners can hear and work with these themes in an informed, sensitive and responsive way. We will consider how the therapist can sense and locate herself in a spiritual or religious narrative when it arises in the consulting room, can find a language to communicate with the client that both contains and, if necessary, helps to work through that spiritual experience.

We will hear how contemplative approaches to psychotherapy may be useful in bringing the therapist closer to the patient's spiritual process and consider how psychological and spiritual factors may be interconnected.

“Psychotherapists need to be able to distinguish healthy from unhealthy spirituality without pathologizing clients’ experiences, beliefs, or their religious faiths.”

David Lukoff



Day 1 – Friday 30 May 2008

1.30 pm **Registration, tea or coffee**

2.30 pm **Nigel Wellings**

With Buddha in mind: mindfulness based psychotherapy in practice

This talk will introduce some key ideas about the particular understanding and clinical practice of Contemplative Psychotherapy. Clinical vignettes will illustrate the following themes: psychotherapy without a self; using mindfulness in our practice; loving kindness and the persecutory inner voices; fixing nothing and beyond the narrative. The Contemplative Psychotherapy I present here draws deeply upon Buddhist roots and values an approach that celebrates curiosity and kindness, being mindfully present with our emotions and opening to the ground of our already awakened nature.

3.15 pm **Dr Sarah Egger**

Assessing spiritual needs in a healthcare setting.

Assessment is an important aspect of delivering spiritual care and one which healthcare professionals often feel ill equipped to manage. Being curious about what gives meaning to a person's life and what helps most in difficult times is an important way to strengthen the therapeutic relationship. In this presentation a range of models will be explored from styles popular with the medical profession through to the nursing process as well as narrative and theological approaches. Practical concerns as to who does the assessment, when it is carried out and how it is recorded are also considered.

4.0 pm **Tea**

4.45 pm **Dr David Lukoff**

Distinguishing between healthy spirituality, spiritual problems, and psychopathology with religious content

Very similar mental and behavioral states may be designated mental disorders in some cultural settings and religious experiences in others. A variety of behavioral and phenomenological factors along with good prognostic signs can be used to differentiate between these states. Studies also have shown that clients bring a wide range of spiritual experiences and problems into psychotherapy. Thus psychotherapists need to be able to distinguish healthy from unhealthy spirituality without pathologizing clients' experiences, beliefs, or their religious faiths.

5.45 pm **Dinner reception**

6.45 pm **Choice of workshops**

Option 1. **Janice Hartley**

Mapping the far side of the mind: Psychosis and recovery as an inner spiritual journey

We will explore the concept of 'The Hero's Journey' based on the work of anthropologist Joseph Campbell, and transpersonal psychologist Professor David Lukoff, as a powerful and liberating way to make sense of terrifying psychotic experiences. I draw on personal experience of hallucinations to illustrate how such difficult and troubling phenomena can be worked with and valued in a way that can facilitate transformation and spiritual growth.

Option 2. Catherine Lucas

A Mindfulness-Based Approach to Spiritual Emergency

We will take an experiential approach using simple meditation and mindfulness techniques to illustrate the theory and to inform our discussion. The main focus is to ground experience in the body, finding ways to be with and work with any difficult or painful aspects. This workshop is suitable both for experienced meditators and beginners.

Option 3. Dr David Lukoff

Clinical approaches to spiritual Assessment

Spiritual interventions and culturally competent therapy begin with a spiritual assessment and identifying a client's spiritual beliefs, practices, community and religious coping resources are the focus of this workshop. One approach is the F.I.C.A. (Faith, Importance, Community and how to Address client's faith during the treatment), which is currently taught in two-thirds of the medical schools in the USA and only takes a few minutes to administer. We will consider two other approaches.

Option 4. Shahnawaz Haque

**'Verily in the Remembrance of God do Hearts find their Rest':
Psychotherapy with Muslims, and Islam as psychotherapy**

The quote in the title is from a verse in the Qur' n (13:28). This workshop is an exploration of aspects of psychotherapeutic work within the Muslim community in London together with reflections on therapeutic elements existing in the beliefs and practices of Islam.

Option 5. Dr Sarah Egger

Keeping body and mind together: meditation made simple

The aims of this workshop are to promote the benefits of a calm and discerning mind, both in clinical practice and everyday life, by offering instruction in one or two simple meditation techniques that bring body and mind into harmony. It seeks to increase our capacity to stay focused in the present and remain attentive with equanimity, while allowing us to improve our capacity to witness and endure distress, and sustain an attitude of hope.

Option 6. Agneta Schreurs and Beaumont Stevenson

A narrative approach to spirituality in psychotherapy

Moving from the psychological to the spiritual level implies moving from personal pain to universal meaning - which often contributes significantly to the healing process. Sometimes such a move happens spontaneously, for example in a religious experience, some other times it does not happen spontaneously. Then we can help people making such a change of perspective by teaching them how to re-formulate their tragedy or difficulty on the narrative, myth or metaphoric level.

Option 7. Isabel Clarke

Reaching out beyond the threshold. What do you say?

As a therapist, the spiritual preoccupations of clients on or beyond the borders of sanity present a challenge. This workshop will introduce a normalising way of working with this challenge, and cement the therapeutic alliance. Exercises will enable participants to try out the approach.

Option 8. Sue Staziker

Yoga session relating to the theme of the conference

8.15 pm End of day

Day 2 – Saturday 31st May 2008

8.30 am **Social Dreaming Matrix led by Laurie Slade**

Social dreaming is a way of working with dreams. In social dreaming we meet to share and associate to dreams, making connections were possible.

9.15 am **Registration**

10.0 am **Margaret Landale**

Reaching beyond the ego - the emergence of spiritual meaning in psychotherapy

There is growing interest in the integration of spiritual perspectives within psychotherapy - not as an idealisation but as an innate part of our existence. In essence spiritual traditions offer guidance to facilitate a complex and ongoing dialogue or process between the ego and self-less or altruistic aspects of our human nature. We will explore some of the key practices and qualities which lie at the heart of spirituality. This will include how contemplation and mindfulness can help us to develop an 'impartial observer', teaching us to see beyond the identity, beliefs and concepts of the ego. We will also look at how core spiritual qualities such as acceptance, compassion and forgiveness can be cultivated within the therapeutic context. And how to communicate in a truthful language which is based on the client's internal frameworks yet allows for deeper spiritual meaning to emerge.

10.50 am **Dr David Lukoff**

Integrating spirituality into the psychotherapeutic journey towards recovery

Several studies document that patients with serious mental disorders use religion to cope with their condition. In fact, religious practices (such as worship and prayer) appear to protect against severity of psychiatric symptoms and hospitalization, and enhance life satisfaction and speed recovery in mental disorders. For many people, having a relationship with a higher power is the foundation of their psychological well-being. This presentation focuses on how to provide spiritually-oriented psychotherapy and support for a client's spiritual journey in recovery.

11.40 am **Coffee**

12.10 pm **Agneta Shreurs**

Spiritual relationships as an analytical instrument in psychotherapy with religious patients

Insight into the relational structure of a religious patient's spirituality may help to analyse how psychological and spiritual factors are interconnected and in what way the patient's 'spiritual relationship' influences his mental health problems either positively or negatively. They also help us to identify the latent opportunities for therapeutic and spiritual healing that are present within spiritually-minded patients' own religious frame of reference.

1.0 pm **Lunch, yoga group, biodynamic massage sessions, or meditative walk in the grounds**

2.0 pm **Café conversation facilitated by Richard Hawkes**

How do we recognise a spiritual theme within a patient's narrative?

A café conversation is a simple methodology for collectively considering answers to important questions. It rests on the principles that change arises from conversation, that strategic questions encourage collective learning and that jointly we have the wisdom and resources to impact on social or professional issues.

3.30 pm **Tea**

3.50 pm **Isabel Clarke**

Revisiting the concepts: framing anomalous experience; psychosis; spiritual crisis etc. in non stigmatising ways for effective therapeutic approaches.

Research suggests that breaking into non-ordinary reality is a widespread, but not universal, part of human experience. However, the devastating effect of standard medical approaches on self image can turn a brief excursion into long standing disability. Isabel Clarke's approach to such disturbances to normal life treats them with respect while enabling people to recognise their origins and gain control over their lives through techniques such as mindfulness.

4.40 pm **Discussion and completion**

5.0 pm **End of conference**

Speakers

Isabel Clarke is a Consultant Clinical Psychologist, currently employed as Psychological Therapies Lead in a new NHS Acute Inpatient Unit (Woodhaven, New Forest). She has published, organised conferences and given talks in the area of Psychosis and Spirituality. Details of her publications and activities can be found on her web site: www.scispirit.com/Psychosis_Spirituality.

Dr Sarah Egger is Chair of the Special Interest Group in Spirituality and Psychiatry at the Royal College of Psychiatrists. She is the medical advisor to the Janki Foundation, promoting a worldwide values-based approach to healthcare. Recently she was invited to be a trustee of the National Spirituality and Mental Health Forum. She currently chairs the Faith and Spirituality group within her mental health NHS trust where she is a consultant old-age psychiatrist.

Shahnawaz Haque qualified as a psychoanalytic psychotherapist with the London Centre for Psychotherapy. He is an honorary Imam and has a private practice as an Islamic therapist working with individuals and couples in psychotherapy and counselling informed both by his psychotherapy training and by Islamic concepts. He is a consultant psychotherapist at the Clinic for Dissociative Studies.

Janice Hartley has conducted training sessions for the charity Hearing Voices Network, and for the Clinical Psychology training program at Liverpool University. She is also involved in the newly formed UK Spiritual Crisis Network. She has conducted research into negative paranormal or spiritual experience (which is currently in press), and plans further research in this area.

Richard Hawkes is Organisational Development Manager for Slough Borough Council. He is a Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development. He has been coaching and training since 1996 and has a particular interest in facilitating Café Conversations. He is an active meditator.

Catherine Lucas is an accredited Breathworks Mindfulness Trainer. She set up the UK Spiritual Crisis Network and organised three conferences on spiritual emergency, the first entitled 'A Mindfulness-Based Approach to Spiritual Emergency'. She has published various articles and featured on a BBC Radio 4 programme on spiritual emergency.

Dr David Lukoff is Professor of Psychology at the Institute for Transpersonal Psychology and author of 70 articles and chapters on spiritual issues and mental health. His areas of expertise include treatment of schizophrenia, transpersonal psychotherapy, and spiritual issues in clinical practice. He is Co-President of the Institute for Spirituality and Psychology and of the Association for Transpersonal Psychology; he maintains the Spiritual Competency Resource Center at www.spiritualcompetency.com

Margaret Landale is an integrative psychotherapist (UKCP), an experienced workshop facilitator and public speaker and has been Training Director at the Chiron Center for Body Psychotherapy, London. She has a longstanding meditation and yoga practice and incorporates psycho-spiritual aspects in her work.

Dr. Agneta Schreurs studied andragogy, theology and then worked as a lecturer and researcher at the University of Utrecht and the Vrije Universiteit in Amsterdam. She is now retired from University but continues her private practice of spiritual direction and pastoral counselling. She is the author of *Psychotherapy and Spirituality* and other writings on conceptual analysis, group methodology, and spiritual direction.

Laurie Slade is a psychoanalytic psychotherapist working in private practice. He is a member of the Guild of Psychotherapists, the Confederation of Analytical Psychologists and the International Neuro-Psychoanalysis Society. He has been exploring social dreaming for the past 7 years in a variety of settings. His paper "*Social Dreaming for a Queer culture*" was published in *Self and Society* (November 2005).

Sue Staziker has been teaching yoga for 25 years. Her training has involved working with Iyengar teachers and she is registered with the British Wheel of Yoga. More recently she has become more involved with the therapeutic aspects of yoga and its healing potential. Her own training encouraged her to develop all the different aspects of yoga – physical, emotional, mental and spiritual – all of which she thinks are equally important.

Canon Beaumont Stevenson is a Member of the Institute of Group Analysis, UKCP Registered Psychotherapist. He is lecturer in Pastoral Psychology at St. Stephen's House, Oxford, and teaches on the Oxford Introductory Course in Group Analysis. He formerly was Chaplain and Staff Support Service of the Oxford and Buckinghamshire Mental Healthcare NHS Trust for many years. His primary interest is in the relationship between Spirituality and Psychotherapy.

Nigel Wellings is a psychoanalytic psychotherapist who works within a contemplative perspective. Initially training with AGIP he later became a member of the Association of Independent Psychotherapies and has also served as a Director of Training at the Centre for Transpersonal Psychology. He has edited and written two books with Elizabeth Wilde McCormick: *Transpersonal Psychotherapy, Theory and Practice*, and *Nothing To Lose, Psychotherapy, Buddhism and Living Life*. He is a (poorly) practicing Buddhist and founding member of the Forum for Contemplative Studies.

