

# Self-harm, self-care and the way between

A training workshop for  
psychotherapists led by  
**Dr Maggie Turp**



**Saturday 18 September 2010**

# About this event

This one-day training workshop is designed to support psychotherapists in their work with clients or patients who are on the self-harming spectrum from minor self-injury to suicide. Led by Dr Maggie Turp, author of *Hidden Self-Harm: narratives from psychotherapy*, we will be introduced to the concept of self-harm, its aetiology and function. We will explore the continuum model of self-harming behaviour, its roots in infancy, and be introduced to the concept of 'psychic skin functioning' – a way of thinking about self-harm as damage to boundaries around the self. We will link findings from infant observation to findings from neurobiology to help us understand why some people self-harm. Finally, we will fine-tune our capacity to identify, understand and address dependency issues in clinical work.

## Speaker's biography

Dr. Maggie Turp is a psychodynamic psychotherapist and supervisor in private practice and a chartered psychologist. Her academic career has included lectureships at the University of Reading and at Birkbeck College, London. Since retiring from mainstream academic life, she has been a visiting lecturer at the Tavistock and Portman NHS Trust. For the past decade, Maggie's educational work has included the provision of CPD training workshops for regionally based associations of counsellors and psychotherapists. These reflect her longstanding interest in the emergence of psychological distress in the physical realm and the enduring nature of early, body-centred modes of relating. The clinical themes addressed in the workshops include self-harm, depression, psychosomatic illness, and the aftermath of trauma. A more recent area of interest concerns integrity and fraudulence as experienced in the consulting room and work in progress includes writing and organising workshops around these themes. Maggie is a member of the Editorial Boards of the journals 'Psychodynamic Practice' and 'Infant Observation'. Her publications include several journal papers and two books, *Psychosomatic Health: the body and the word* (2001 Palgrave) and *Hidden Self-Harm: narratives from psychotherapy* (2003 Jessica Kingsley). She welcomes correspondence at maggieturp@googlemail.com

## Schedule

- 09.30 Registration begins
- 10.00 First session
- 11.30 Coffee
- 12.0 Second session
- 13.00 Lunch
- 14.0 Third session
- 16.00 End

# **Programme**

## **Part I: An Introduction to the concept of self-harm**

The relationship between self-harm and suicidal behaviour will be explored.

Drawing on DVD footage and service user testimony, we will consider how individuals who self-harm conceptualise their own experience, attending to both the aetiology and function of self-harming behaviour. With the assistance of supervision group vignettes, we will reflect on the multiplicity of ways in which self-harming tendencies can become manifest. In an endeavour to address the prevalent polarisation between 'we' who do not and 'they' who do self-harm, participants will be invited to reflect on sub-clinical manifestations of self-harming tendencies that they may recognise in themselves. A continuum model of self-harm will be presented and discussed.

## **Part II: Developmental aspects of self-harming behaviour**

Drawing on extracts from infant observation studies, we will consider the building blocks of a functioning capacity for self-care. Particular attention will be paid to the development of boundaries around the self that are appropriately permeable – neither so tough as to impede communication nor so porous as to invite the invasion of chaos. These matters will be discussed in terms of psychic skin functioning (Bick 1968, Briggs 1997, Turp 2003, 2007). Parallels will be drawn between psychodynamic understandings and neurobiology findings relating to arousal levels, affect regulation and problems with interdependency (Schore 1994, Gerhardt 2004).

## **Part III: Self-harm and therapeutic practice**

The focus in this session will be on clinical practice. Clinical vignettes will be provided for discussion in small groups and a large group discussion of issues arising will follow. Space will be available for consideration of clinical dilemmas currently being experienced by participants. Particular attention will be paid to countertransference issues, with their potential for eroding empathy and impeding thoughtfulness. The session will end with a summary of helpful therapeutic strategies.