Pre-Therapy; Working with Clients who are Contact Impaired

Lorna Marchant
Saturday 16th May 2015  9.30am-4pm

Suitable for Supervisors, Counsellors/Therapists and Psychologists

This day will introduce participants to the ideas of Pre-Therapy and in particular contact – What do we mean by contact?

Often those with Aspergers and who are on the Autistic Spectrum (AS) are contact impaired. Participants will explore both experientially and from a practice perspective times when we have been ‘out of contact’

There will be an exploration of what we mean when we talk about clients who have Aspergers or who are on the AS and how they may present in the counselling room. It is clear there are more clients (not only young people) who are accessing counselling who are on the AS – some who may not have a diagnosis.

Role plays are offered as a way of practicing this way of working, which can feel a little strange initially. I aim to offer a day that is thought provoking and create an atmosphere that allows an openness to working together.

Lorna’s publications include;


About Lorna Marchant...

I came into counselling from a background of working with children in care. I recognised at that time there was often only a Social Worker for the young people to speak to and this didn’t allow any confidentiality; a counsellor would have helped them so much.

I was some would say ‘zealous’ about the Person-Centred approach believing as I still do that when I can offer a certain way of being in the counselling room something happens…..and I try to remember this when I feel lost with a client. Over the years my practice has changed to now being more inclusive of the wider Humanistic school; integrating Gestalt, T.A. and Existentialism into my work. Training is something I also have a real passion for; from my roots in feminism and a belief that counsellor education, at all levels, would be one way that would enable women to have more choices and perhaps a more meaningful life, to bespoke training days for counsellors who are looking to gain some professional development.

In offering this day on ‘Working with people on the Autistic Spectrum’ I am reminded of the organisation of Pre-Therapy which I was part of during the time I worked at Brighton University running the Postgraduate Diploma in person-Centred Counselling. I, along with Penny Dodds, set up and ran the UK arm of the Pre-Therapy organisation which had been set up in Europe by the founder of Pre-Therapy; Garry Prouty.

Contact Work (which arises out of Pre-Therapy) is used very broadly in many different settings and I have seen a real value in this for the counselling profession in particular working with clients who are on the Autistic Spectrum. Having worked in a wide range of settings and organisations I have felt enormously helped by the ideas behind Pre-Therapy and Contact Work to be able to offer a way of working that ensures a space for all in the therapeutic environment.