

network:training

Continuing Professional Development
Programme

Diploma
in
Working with the spiritual
dimension in therapy

February – December 2012

Network Counselling & Training

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Working with the spiritual dimension in therapy

What is this course?

This is a substantial post-qualification Continuing Professional Development course in working with the spiritual dimension in therapy. It is a part time course which consists of three separate modules, each offering around 25 hours of training. Each module stands on its own and you may choose to complete one, two or all three modules in any year. As Modules 2 and 3 build on Module 1, the latter needs to be completed first, but the second and third modules can be completed in any order. If all three modules are completed, you will have completed 75 hours of training in total and will be awarded a Network Training Diploma. This will indicate that you have followed a comprehensive course which is designed both to develop your awareness and understanding of the spiritual dimension of human nature and experience and to equip you to work effectively with this aspect of our being as part of your work with clients.

What is the course ethos and approach?

The course ethos is a person-centred one and the approach the course takes is an integrative person-centred one which draws on aspects of person-centred philosophy and theory, on key theoretical insights from other counselling approaches, on the psychology of human development and religion and on the wisdom of the world's major religious and spiritual traditions.

Who is the course for?

This course is suitable for qualified counsellors from any therapeutic orientation with a level 4 or 5 Diploma in counselling. It will be of particular interest to those who have completed a humanistic counselling training which has not addressed the spiritual dimension of human nature in any detail. It will also be of interest, however, to those who have already completed a pastoral counselling training such as that offered by Network Training but want to address the issue of working with the spiritual dimension in greater depth.

You do not have to adhere to a particular religious or spiritual tradition in order to do this course, but it is most likely to be of benefit to those who have an interest in spirituality and consider themselves to be on some form of spiritual journey.

How will the course be structured?

The course will take the form of 9 weekend workshops in three separate modules over a ten month period. It involves a commitment of no more than one weekend per month. Sessions will be held on Friday nights from 6.30 p.m. – 9.30p.m. and Saturdays from 9.30 a.m. – 4.30 p.m.

The training days will include theoretical seminars, practice sessions and personal and spiritual development work.

Where and when will the course take place?

The course will take place at Network's premises in Henbury, Bristol. The course dates are as follows:

Module 1 Understanding human spirituality

Session 1 24th – 25th February 2012

Session 2 16th and 17th March 2012

Session 3 27th and 28th April 2012

Module 2 Spiritual experience and development

Session 4 25th and 26th May 2012

Session 5 22nd and 23rd June 2012

Session 6 20th and 21st July 2012

Module 3 Spirituality, mental health and well-being

Session 7 28th and 29th September 2012

Session 8 26th and 27th October 2012

Session 9 30th November and 1st December 2012

Entry Requirements

- a level 4 or 5 Diploma in counselling

In addition, you must be:

- currently in practice
- willing and able to commit to regular attendance at the training sessions. You will need to attend a minimum of seven out of the nine sessions in order to achieve the Diploma award.

Course rationale and aims

'Counselling and psychotherapy have a problem with spirituality.'
(West 2000)

The British therapist, William West (2000) begins his exploration of the relationship between spirituality and therapeutic practice with the assertion that the therapeutic world has generally failed to take the spiritual dimension of human experience seriously enough. He argues that many therapists remain as dismissive of spiritual and religious experience as Freud was over a century ago when he described religion as an illusion and as 'the universal obsessional neurosis of humanity'.

We believe that any therapeutic approach that seeks to be truly holistic and to make sense of the totality of human experience must embrace the spiritual. It must, moreover, do more than simply recognising the importance of the spiritual dimension of human nature and adopting a more open-minded, accepting and balanced attitude towards religious and spiritual experience. It must also be prepared to integrate an awareness and understanding of the complexity of human spirituality into its philosophical and theoretical framework and to equip its practitioners to work effectively with the spiritual issues and concerns that may emerge in therapy.

We believe this to be important for a number of reasons. Firstly, there is strong evidence that spiritual and religious experience is of fundamental importance in many people's lives and, it seems, is becoming more so. Secondly, it is becoming much more common for clients to bring to therapy issues and concerns which are of an existential or spiritual nature and to ask that their therapist engage with them in their exploration of the spiritual dimension of their experience. Thirdly, the worldview, values and assumptions clients may hold as spiritual beings will inevitably impact — whether positively or negatively — on their physical, psychological and social development and well-being. An awareness and understanding of the complex inter-relationship between body, mind, soul and spirit and a willingness to attend to and work with the spiritual dimension of human existence is, therefore, essential if we are to work holistically with every aspect of our clients' experiencing.

Because the majority of counselling training courses do not address the spiritual dimension of people's experience in sufficient depth, most therapists feel ill-equipped to work effectively with the spiritual issues and concerns their clients may choose to bring to therapy. This course is designed to deepen your understanding of human spirituality, both religious and non-religious, and to equip you to work effectively with the spiritual dimension of your clients' experience and problems in living, however their spirituality may be expressed.

Course content

The course will cover the following key areas:

Module 1 Putting the soul back in psychotherapy

'A great tragedy has occurred in modern psychology; the soul has been shut out of its own house and exiled from its own kingdom. Psychology has lost its soul.'

Elkins 1998

'To listen another's soul into a condition of disclosure and discovery may be almost the greatest service any human being ever performs for another.'

Steere 1985

We believe that therapy at its deepest and most meaningful level is not primarily about symptom relief or problem-solving. At its heart, it is a profoundly creative, existential and spiritual process which has to do with being and becoming, with connecting with that which is to be found at the core of human being, with attending to 'the voices' of the soul and trusting its natural wisdom, with listening to and heeding the subtle prompting of our spirit which impels us towards growth. Therapy at this deeper level is not about ego; it is about soul. It is soul work and as such is imbued with mystery—both the mystery of the unfolding of an individual soul and the mystery of a 'soul-to-soul' encounter between two human beings who are both engaged in their own unique ways in the process of becoming a person.

In this module, we will explore what it might mean to 'put the soul back in psychotherapy'. We will consider the fundamental importance of embracing the spiritual dimension of our being in therapy. We will explore in depth the nature of both religious and non-religious spirituality and the concepts and experience of soul and spirit. We will attempt to arrive at an image of the person that draws the psychological and the spiritual together and acknowledges the inter-connectedness of body, mind, soul and spirit. And finally we will look at the concept of soul work and consider how this might be incorporated into our work with clients.

At a more practical level, we will explore the concept of soul listening and the particular qualities a therapist needs in order to facilitate the 'disclosure and discovery' of the soul. We will look at the concept of soul love and its relationship with psychotherapeutic concepts such as presence, tenderness and relational depth. We will consider the importance of learning the language of spirituality as well as the language of psychology if we are to work effectively with the spiritual dimension of people's lives and will explore a range of different spiritually-oriented interventions. We will also consider the issues and challenges in drawing on spiritual resources such as prayer and sacred texts in the context of therapy.

Finally, we will also focus on a number of key areas relating to our own personal and spiritual development work. We will explore our own experience and understanding of spirituality and the implications of this for our practice. We will consider our own attitudes and prejudices in relation to religion and spirituality, and particularly to forms of spirituality which are very different from our own. And finally we will explore how we might further develop our capacity to create a 'sacred space' for the other in which they may find the freedom to discover their own spiritual path.

Module 2 Spiritual experience and development

The paths are many, but the goal is the same.

Hindu maxim

'Our unique human capacity for change and transformation is reflected in our human spirituality.

Throughout the ages, deep-thinking people looking at themselves have come to discern that we are not all at the same place spiritually or religiously. There are different

stages of spiritual growth or religious development.'

Scott Peck 1997

In this second module, we will explore the richness and diversity of human spiritual and religious experience. We will look at individual differences in spirituality through a number of different lenses and at how our gender, culture, personality and life experiences shape our unique spiritualities. We shall also study spirituality as a developmental process, drawing on a number of different maps of the spiritual journey – both religious and psychological. Finally, we will explore the relevance of the journey from false self to true self for our spirituality and the complex interweaving of psychological and spiritual growth.

At a practical level, we will focus on the challenges of working with people who are struggling to make sense of and come to terms with aspects of their spiritual experience, whose faith is in some way in crisis or in transition from one stage of development to another or who are in the process of converting from one faith to another or of moving away from faith altogether. We will also look at the issues involved in working with clients whose religious or spiritual traditions differ significantly from our own.

Finally, as part of our personal and spiritual development work, we will explore in some depth our own spiritual journeys, seeking to identify the many factors that have shaped our emerging spirituality and the way in which this impacts on our lives and our work as therapists. We will consider to what extent the various maps of the spiritual journey we have encountered fit with our personal experience and will look at where we are in our own journeys from false self to true self.

Module 3 Spirituality, mental and physical health and wellbeing

Religion is 'the universal obsessional neurosis of humanity'

Freud 1961

'I am compelled to believe that I, like many others, have underestimated the importance of this mystical, spiritual dimension.'

Rogers 1980

These two quotes represent very different perspectives on the healthiness of religion and spirituality. The relationship between spirituality and mental and physical health and well-being is a highly complex one. In this module, we will explore this complex relationship in some depth, drawing on the growing body of research findings and on our own personal and practical experience as therapists. We will look at the concepts of salogenic (health-promoting) and pathogenic (health-destroying) religion and spirituality and will explore the phenomenon of spiritual abuse and its impact on spiritual and psychological growth and well-being.

At a practical level, we will focus on the key issues and challenges involved in working with such spiritual issues as existential anxiety, meaninglessness, forgiveness, guilt and shame and making sense of suffering. We will explore different ways of working with aspects of the client's theological or spiritual framework and will consider the difficulties and challenges of working with spiritual abuse survivors. We will also look at the issues around holding the boundaries between therapy and spiritual direction, accompaniment or discipleship.

Finally, as part of our personal and spiritual development work, we will explore the healthiness of our own spiritualities. We will work to identify our own spiritual issues and growing edges and will consider how well we care for ourselves spiritually. We will also look at how embracing some form of spiritual discipline may enhance our therapeutic practice.

Assessment

There will be no formal assessment and no written or practical assignments to complete. You will, however, be encouraged to keep a learning journal for the duration of the course.

Course fees

Cost per module £225 (£75 per month)

Overall cost if all three modules are booked in one year: £600 (£60 per month)

Fees can be paid on a monthly basis.

Applications:

Application forms are available from Network Counselling & Training on request. They can also be downloaded directly from the Network web site.

The maximum group size will be 16 students.

The course leaders

Kaitlyn Steele

Ma Hons Psychology; M Phil Clinical Psychology; MCSAcc; MBACP

Background and experience

Kaitlyn is an experienced person-centred therapist who has been involved in the counselling world for most of her adult life. Initially, she trained in the 1970s as a clinical psychologist and was employed for a number of years in the NHS before moving into working as a person-centred counsellor and supervisor in the 1980s.

Some ten years later, she moved into working as a trainer and has been involved in the training of professional counsellors both at Further and Higher Education levels. She is currently Head of the Training Department at Network Counselling and Training in Bristol and an associate lecturer in counselling with the University of Gloucestershire. She is also an experienced workshop leader and has led workshops and short courses for people working in a variety of different roles – for example, counsellors, trainee GPs, psychiatric nurses, spiritual directors and support workers. In addition, she has substantial experience of leading groups of varying kinds – for example, support groups, therapeutic groups, personal and spiritual growth groups. She is currently completing a Diploma in Person-Centred Spiritual Accompaniment. She is also the author of a forthcoming book entitled 'Sacred Space: Embracing the Spiritual in Person-Centred Therapy.' For further information, please visit her website at www.kaitlynsteele.co.uk

Stephan Griffiths

LLB; Postgraduate Diploma in Counselling; MSc in Counselling; Postgraduate Diploma in Research Methods

Steve is an experienced integrative counsellor, trainer and supervisor who has been involved in the counselling world for over thirteen years. Initially, he read law at Bristol University and then in 1998, took up a second career in counselling. He studied pastoral counselling for two years at

Network before returning to Bristol University to complete a Postgraduate Diploma and MSC in counselling.

Over the years, Steve has been employed in a number of roles at Network including volunteer counselling, fundraising, administration and working as a core tutor on both the Certificate and Diploma courses for five years. More recently, he held the position of Head of Counselling at Network for a year before embarking on a Postgraduate Diploma in Research Methods, again at Bristol University. He has a small private practice as a counsellor and supervisor and also has considerable experience of facilitating both supervision and personal development groups. His current areas of interest lie in the inter-connectedness of body, mind and spirit and in researching the part that spirituality plays in recovering from and being reconciled to traumatic life experiences.