

Friday Seminars

Dr. John Casson was our special guest speaker at our seminar on the 10th of May 2013. There is a report on his talk below. This was held at our comfortable regular venue at the Manchester Institute for Psychotherapy in Chorlton.

We have already planned our seminars up to July 2013. We will have a break in August. The direction we take from September onwards will as always depend on the interests and contributions of our members. Please join in this debate. If you have an interest in particular topics or speakers, or would like to present a seminar yourself, please let us know.



Dr. John Casson: Working in Miniature



John's enthusiastically received talk was small only by title and an entrance into a world of therapeutic wisdom. He has been a dramatherapist for 30 years and a psychodrama psychotherapist for 21 years. In 2012 he received a Life Time Achievement Award from the British Psychodrama Association.

John brought some of the collection he uses in his therapeutic work. Small objects that can carry a powerful punch. After his introduction he invited us to talk about small objects that interested us and did the same himself. This experience illuminated the points he made about working in miniature. He also pointed out that it might not seem proper for therapists to work with such small objects, but clients find them very useful. I have taken the picture of the communicube above from John's website so you have an idea of the kind of objects that he uses. He does not usually introduce these objects when first meeting a client and will do so in the second and third session.

It was clear throughout this seminar that client choice and empowerment are central to his work. That objects are miniature means they are less threatening. One early choice he offers is from objects that are containers, patterns or landscapes. One example of a container is a worry doll. In Guatemalan culture you give your worries to the doll at bedtime and they sort them out while you sleep. Clients readily identify these objects with real or imagined persons in their lives and tell stories. They do this in a way that would take more sessions to reach in other kinds of therapy.

With patterned objects, like a collection of triangles, clients will put them together or fragment them in their own way. These patterns are abstract enough not to represent anything in themselves, but as with the other objects allow conscious material to emerge. This has links to the psychoanalyst Donald Winnicott's use of drawn squiggles with his patients.

The landscape John brought was a myriamama. This is a Victorian parlour game with cards with landscapes on which can be arranged in any order. Again this does not have particular associations itself but like the patterns it does allow unconscious thoughts to emerge. Being small it is also less threatening. These objects are placed within a contained space. John invited us to choose objects and place them using a sheet of A4 paper as the container.

The seminar participants experienced how quick, unthreatening, involving, powerful and creative this process of choosing and placing can be. For John psychotherapy is about destabilising fixed patterns and making choices. Miniature objects help with this process and facilitate playfulness in a contained and safe way. One of the objects was an Aladdin lamp and if you imagine this it will help make this point about containment, change and creativity.

You can find out more about John and his work at <http://www.creativepsychotherapy> and <http://www.communicube.co.uk/>

An example of the less threatening nature of working in miniature is that clients can place abusers in miniature chairs. John also uses this kind of creative therapy with clients who hear voices and they have found it very helpful. This creative therapy trusts unconscious processes, trusts material to emerge and fosters our interest in ourselves and others. Because it is beyond words it means clients can recognise the emergence of unconscious processes without needing to tell the therapist (yet).

The connection of images to our earlier and preverbal inner world allows patterns and stories to emerge which have personal, familial and archetypal meanings. And of course our early life is full of the sensory experience of the small objects in our world; the things we hold, bite and manipulate.

If you look at the picture of the cummunicube you can imagine how the layering and patterning of small objects within the levels of the cube could evoke very complex layers of meaning. John said that he can work with a client for months with the same cummunicube.

John made a number of general points relevant to this kind of creative therapeutic work. I might add that what John has learnt from experience is helpful with therapy generally.

Some clients make associations very quickly and others slowly, so pacing is critical. Importantly working in miniature encourages playfulness. He originally used this method for people who hear voices and conventionally are not thought of as playful.

Never ever underestimate clients and their creativity. This is play therapy for adults. If you have any doubts about this, ask the people who attended this seminar. They readily engaged with John's invitations. In fact the invitation was hardly needed because our own curiosity drew us into this miniature world. I can also say from my own experience that this method is powerful and in a way I felt I could use without overtly sharing. It also struck me as an uncreative therapist that my clients take an interest in the small objects in my counselling room. These are communications that remain unexplored.

As with the best seminars John left us at the end with the experience of being fully involved and wanting more.

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Book now for the following NWRPA Friday Seminars or join us on the day.

Helen Rowland

Where Truth Lies: The Postmodern Turn in Psychotherapy

Friday 14 June 2013

Helen Rowland is a psychotherapist, trainer, supervisor and Clinical Director of The Lightwell Practice in Skipton, North Yorkshire. She is a transactional analyst with a particular interest in body psychotherapy.

Amelia Mangani

The function of money in the analytic treatment.

Friday 12 July 2013

Venue: The Manchester Institute for Psychotherapy, 454 Barlow Moor Road, Chorlton, Manchester M21 0BQ.

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