

NWRPA Friday Evening Seminars

Three More Words in Therapy

Friday 11 December 2015, 6.30pm-8.30pm

Cost £7.50 or free to members. This includes light refreshments

Three therapists speak for 15-20 minutes each on a single word from the world of psychotherapy and counselling. They'll be plenty of time for questions and discussion, and light refreshments are available.

This event represents **2 hours of continuing professional development.**

Katherine Skaife on *Dissociation*

Katherine will talk about dissociative identity disorder as a multiple response to early trauma. Katherine is a psychologist in secondary care with the NHS Mental Health Services in Bolton and has a specialist interest in trauma.

Frank Kelley on *Unconscious*

As therapists we are aware of the richness and usefulness of the ideas about the unconscious from the founding of psychoanalysis onwards. Frank has some reservations about the nature of the unconscious. These were originally theoretical but later came to cast a different light on therapeutic practice and a different answer to the question of where do unconscious thoughts come from. Frank Kelley is a retired NHS psychodynamic counsellor.

Paul Melia on *Mistake*

"Honour your mistake as a hidden intention." On the function in therapy of the mistake, accident, blot, blunder, boo-boo, boob, botch, bummer, bungler, clanger, cock-up, error, faux pas, fiasco, fluff, forgetting, gaffe, goof, howler, lapse, mislaying, misreading, misspelling, misunderstanding, mix-up, muddle, muff, omission, overlooking, screw-up, slip and stumble. Illustrated with examples and with time to share your own favourite mistake. Paul Melia is counsellor and psychotherapist at TherapyInManchester.co.uk

Venue:

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

Reflective Writing and Side Glances

Dr. Alan Priest

Friday 13 November 2015

Alan offered a very engaging, clear and structured account of his work, research and therapeutic approach. He spoke on the effectiveness of reflective writing as a means for clients to process and symbolise trauma. This included helpful advice on how reflective writing can become integrated into talking therapy.

Alan is a UKCP Registered integrative psychotherapist and BACP Accredited counsellor. He teaches at the University of Salford and runs a private practice in Yorkshire.

Alan began with idea that we do not store experiences we "story experiences." Of course talking is one way of telling a story and this form of expression is the basis of psychotherapy. This storying allows us us to re-assimilate our experiences. However if we do not express how we feel our defences against unintegrated experiences keeps our energy engaged rather than freed up.

Alan used Weinstein, N., Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (2011). *Motivational determinants of integrating positive and negative past identities. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, which summarises the physical costs of these defences and particularly unexpressed anger.

Renew your membership or join the NWRPA for 2016

From January 2016 new memberships and membership renewal are welcome

Our £25.00 annual membership will save you a generous 66% on the cost of the ten NWRPA workshops held each year.

Contact Frank Kelley at nwrpa2010@ntlworld.com

Reflective Writing and Side Glances

The risk of having common illnesses, including cancer, is doubled and recovery from illness is slower.

Paul Ware describes the respective approaches for making contact (the Open Door) and those to avoid (the Trap Door) with the client. The Open Door is often where clients have cognitions OR feelings but cannot give a cognitive structure to feelings. Writing is a way of opening this door and can be good for clients who have florid feelings. (*Transactional Analysis Journal January 1983 vol. 13 no. 1 11-19.*) One exercise that Alan uses it is to ask his students to imagine themselves coming through a door, other people seeing this and to write from their perspectives.

James Pennebaker is a pioneer of writing therapy. He researched the link between language and recovering from trauma and has studied the nature of physical symptoms, health consequences of secrets, expressive writing, and natural language. He showed that people using lie detectors, which actually measure physiological stress, had a real drop in scores when they confessed. He found his research subjects who used writing therapeutically had fewer visits to doctors and improved markers of immune response. They were all students and they also got better grades.

Pennebaker thought that the more perspectives were included in his subjects writing the bigger the health benefits. He also concluded that trying to get people to write in this perspectival way rarely works as it is a spontaneous process.

Alan made a distinction between two types of writing therapy. This can be either structured (guidance) or non structured (journalism.)

Pennebaker's method is structured. He asked his research subjects to write for a minimum of fifteen minutes three times a week with a minimum of ten minutes separation between writings, and preferably one or two days. Unless they were touch typists he asked them to write with pens and not to worry about spelling and grammar.

By contrast Alan uses a non structured approach. He was also conducting research and his research question was *how do clients experience a writing intervention in therapy?* For therapeutic and for research reasons he asked the following of his clients:

How to use this book

This book is yours to keep as your own personal record of your journey in therapy. I would like you to write in it after each session, or between sessions, as much or as little as you like. If you fill the book I will provide you with another one! Please record anything which you feel is significant or important to you; any thoughts, realisations, things you wish to talk about next time -- anything -- it's up to you. At the end of our work together, we have agreed that I will interview you about your experiences in working with me

Alan's instructions

I will ask you about what felt helpful or significant and indeed what was less helpful or even unhelpful (I hope there won't be too much of that but if there is it's important that I know about it). It's crucial to my research that you are completely honest and that you remember it is more important to me to know about your experiences accurately, than it is to hear you saying "nice things" about your experience of the work.

Confusion between the NWRPA and the MIP

**The NWRPA uses the meeting room of the MIP for our Friday evening seminars
Because of this some people attending our seminars think the NWRPA and the MIP are the
same organisation**

So to clarify that we are different

**The North West Regional Psychotherapy Association is an independent interest group for all
counsellors and psychotherapists and is run by it's members.**

**The Manchester Institute for Psychotherapy is training body
and offers a four year training in Transactional Analysis Psychotherapy.**

Reflective Writing and Side Glances

Alan also used Pennebaker's Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count (LIWC; pronounced "Luke"), a text analysis program that outputs the percentage of words in a given text that fall into one or more of over 80 linguistic (e.g., first-person singular pronouns, conjunctions), psychological (e.g., anger, achievement), and topical (e.g., leisure, money) categories. It builds on previous research establishing strong links between linguistic patterns and personality or psychological state, but makes possible far more detailed results than did hand counts.

Pennebaker found that people following his method could feel a failure and also very powerful emotional responses which could be either distressing or cathartic. This is less likely to happen with Alan's less structured method. He also accepts his clients using a sealed disclosure which he does not see.

Alan found that women tended to use more emotional words than men, while men had a more structured narrative. There were also stylistic variations that vary with age. In line with therapeutic ideas of taking responsibility for our thoughts and feelings he found that changing pronoun use over the course of therapy was highly correlated (0.85) with an improvement in CORE outcome measure scores. Also his clients felt less need to write when therapy was helpful and they were feeling better.

Surprisingly there were few people who engaged in obsessive writing. However childhood bereavement was something clients did feel stuck with and were pessimistic that this could ever change. There is also the possibility of the frozen response of PTSD leading to to an inability to write and be expressive. While writing is generally helpful he thought it should be avoided for people with a fragile sense of self and he found this method of therapy can impede recovery after divorce.

Alan thinks that writing helps by activating the audio, aural and kinaesthetic parts of the brain, especially if read aloud. A literal tracing of the words with fingers can also help. Clients found writing helped them be congruent and gain new awareness. As he pointed out at the beginning of the seminar, where he talked of storying experiences, writing helped his clients express their experiences in a narrative where troubling experiences undergo a cognitive reconstruction. The conditioned link between experience and anxiety eases and the energy bound up in defences is freed and clients have an increased tolerance of their disturbing thoughts.

Alan ended with the source of the title of his presentation. This is a quotation from *Dubliners* by James Joyce.

"He [regarded] ... his own acts with doubtful side-glances. He had an odd autobiographical habit which led him to compose ... a short sentence about himself containing a subject in the third person and a verb in the past tense."

It struck me when writing this summary that Alan's medium and his message were the same. He had skilfully integrated the structured narrative of the seminar with a continuing spontaneous conversation which joined us all together. Generously he also provided a copy of the slides he used for his talk which is emailed as an attachment with this newsletter.

**If you would like a CPD certificate for any of the NWRPA seminars
email Frank Kelley at nwrpa2010@ntlworld.com**

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