

Newsletter December 2017

15 January 2017

Our last seminar of 2017 was **Three Words in Therapy** on Friday 8 December 2017. Three therapists spoke for 15 minutes each on a therapy word of their choosing. Here's a summary of the evening prepared by Frank Kelley.

Hannah Legge on #metoo

Hannah is a Transactional Analyst Psychotherapist (CTA) and Person-Centred Counsellor. She has been in private practice in south Manchester since 2003. She skilfully wove a clear overview of a complex social movement.

Since October 2017 millions of people have used the hashtag *#metoo* on social media to publicise their experiences of sexual abuse. This was prompted by the news about Harvey Weinstein's persistent abuse of women. Hannah considered the effects of this sharing on a world-wide scale.

This huge debate has highlighted culturally ingrained myths about rape. The Crown Prosecution Service has compiled the following list of rape myths. The persistence of these false beliefs has led to complaints of rape not being properly acknowledged, investigated and prosecuted. None of these myths are supported by evidence. They also shift the blame from the offender to the victim. *#metoo* is doing a lot to debate and dispel these unfounded beliefs.

- Myth 1: Rape occurs between strangers in dark alleys
- Myth 2: Women provoke rape by the way they dress or act
- Myth 3: Women who drink alcohol or use drugs are asking to be raped
- Myth 4: Rape is a crime of passion
- Myth 5: If she didn't scream, fight or get injured, it wasn't rape
- Myth 6: You can tell if she's 'really' been raped by how she acts
- Myth 7: Women cry rape when they regret having sex or want revenge
- Myth 8: Only gay men get raped/only gay men rape men
- Myth 9: Prostitutes cannot be raped
- Myth 10: If the victim didn't complain immediately it wasn't rape

#metoo is connected to actions which can combat sexual abuse. Men are setting up groups to protect potential victims. Victims are sharing experiences and boys are being educated so they do not become perpetrators. Toxic views are challenged.

Because of its widespread impact, especially across social media, this campaign has an unknown audience and unpredictable responses. There is some possibility that men sharing experiences of rape are criticised because it should be a safe space for women. In more conservative countries there is significant social criticism and shaming of victims. There is concern about the relative silence of non-celebrity victims. There is also concern that the increasing social acceptance of porn is

affecting sexual relationships, making sexual aggression socially acceptable and increasing the objectification of women.

Kieran Nolan on Pain

Kieran has been working as a psychotherapist in Chorlton since 2002. He adroitly helped us think in a different way about pain. He drew on the work of the French philosopher Emmanuel Levinas for whom pain creates consciousness.

Kieran read Levinas at a difficult time in his life. This book, *Beyond Being (or Otherwise than Being)* was a hard read and took him two years. For more you can read Kieran's article on his website at:

<https://manchesterpsychotherapist.com/compassion/>

Consciousness is created by pain and by feeling others pain. We live in an anonymous, silent and isolated world. We are exposed to outrage, insults and wounding. This is a passive process where we end up feeling responsible for others.

The quality of perceived pain leads to time, consciousness and the ego and the unity of sensing and the sensed. This unity means that therapists can feel clients' pain in their own body.

Our self cannot form itself. Our ego is continually destroyed by the feeling the pain of others. Vulnerability in others leads to vulnerability in our selves. Our sensibility of others vulnerability is prior to any communication through words and is *otherwise than being*. Ethics comes before language.

Our inescapable responsibility to others is a restlessness which drives me outside the nucleus of my substantiality. It is a cellular irritability which is necessary to stop the rigid ego taking over. All vulnerability is a threat to the ego. Our duty is to wage peace not to distance ourselves from others vulnerability.

The need to understand the body, respect the body and listen to the body seems to be increasingly important in an age where more and more people experience pain on a daily basis, both through recognised medical conditions but also, and much more increasingly, through somatic ailments and the realisation that the body often feels pain.

Peter Lindsay on Affair

Peter trained as a relationship counsellor with Relate and now works with college students as well as in private practice. He drew on his expertise and experience to share his views on how affairs can have many reasons and differing outcomes.

Between 20% and 50% of us have affairs. Generally this is a secretive sexual relationship with a third party. The harm usually comes when the affair is found out.

Affairs happen when people are unhappy, fall out, and are workaholic, mentally unstable or unable or uninterested in communicating. Affairs are discovered by information on the internet and in texts, by the build up of guilt leading to a compulsion to tell and by being told by family, friends and strangers. Disclosure can come when the third party resents their exclusion from their lover's family and wider

life. This discovery of an affair can then lead to divorce or separation or to a re-energisation and revival of the original couple's relationship.

The therapist's task is to find out why the affair happened. It helps for clients to talk about who knows about the affair and who found out. This needs enough detail to make the origins clearer but not so much detail as to be unnecessarily harmful.

Another task is to help the person having the affair to apologise. Clients need help as they often avoid apologising. There has been a lot of past denial. This needs to be overcome and trust needs to be rebuilt. This can include providing direct proof that an affair has actually ended.

Peter works on a change plan with couples which helps them recover after the affair. This process may not work and it may turn out to be best for the couple to separate. About a third of affairs involve people who are serial cheaters who would not come to counselling.

They couple need to confirm they love each other. They need to communicate and understand each other no matter how painful this is. Emotions will run strong and deep. They need to be honest and keep their word. Not answering questions is a bad idea. Even if there is a fix there are still ups and downs. Communication with the third party needs to end.

The couple also need to be patient. There is no time limit to hurt and anger. However when counselling works relationships can be re-animated.
