

Training for Gestalt Supervisors Third Seminar

Supervising traumatic situations, risk of re-traumatizing and support to resilience

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Rationale: Clients presenting with trauma require an approach that takes this particular experience into account; the same is true for supervision of trauma. We can conceptualise this in different ways: it is about providing a relational context when the client has been isolated from the givens of safety and predictability in the world; it is about reconfiguring the ground of experience in order to support the subsequent sharpening of the traumatic figures; and it is about providing resources that have been absent or out of awareness, in order to widen the field of choice, loosening fixed gestalts. In each of these, the therapist/supervisee and the client are seen through similar lenses, and the supervisor is included as a part of the relational field and the processes therein.

Content: The module will establish some core principles of trauma theory and practice, based on current neurobiological research. With this as background, supervision of trauma will be considered appreciatively through three different lenses, which I have learnt to think of as poetry, policing and plumbing (though I realise these three 'P's' are unlikely to translate neatly!) How can trauma be reflected, made figural and transformed in each of these dimensions, and what are the challenges to be faced by therapist and supervisor alike?

Theory: Relevant trauma theory, relational Gestalt theory (field, phenomenology and dialogue) and supervision theory will be referred to.

Methodology: A combination of didactic teaching, demonstration, clinical examples, case study, experiential exploration, discussion and live supervision practice will bring the topic to life.

Competencies: These will need to focus on the holding capacity along with the experience, understanding and knowledge of the supervisor in thinking clearly about trauma and its effects. Modelling of these core competencies by the trainer will be an implicit part of the process.