



PCE Conference
Cologne 2026

6-12 JULY 2026
COLOGNE • GERMANY



A CHANGING WORLD

**WHAT IT DOES WITH US
AND WHAT WE DO WITH IT**



**17th World Conference on Person-Centered and
Experiential Psychotherapy and Counseling**

pceworld 

Welcome

Dear colleagues, participants, and friends,

Welcome to the 17th World Conference on Person-Centered and Experiential Psychotherapy and Counseling.

Before you lies the Program and Abstract Book for PCE2026 – a collection of ideas, experiences, research, workshops, encounters, and conversations brought together by colleagues from around the world.

Over the coming days, participants from many countries, professional backgrounds, and fields of practice will gather in Cologne and online to explore the conference theme:

A CHANGING WORLD

...what it does with us and what we do with it

After twenty years, the PCE World Conference returns to Germany. Some of you may remember the conference in Potsdam in 2006. We are delighted to welcome you again and equally excited to meet those joining us for the first time.

Cologne, situated in the heart of the Rhineland, is known for its openness, diversity, humour, and hospitality.

The conference you are about to experience is the result of several years of planning, collaboration, and commitment by many individuals, teams, and organisations.

We hope that the following pages will inspire you, support your journey through the conference, and perhaps spark conversations, collaborations, and friendships that continue long after the event itself.

Welcome to Cologne.

Welcome to PCE2026.

The core Organising Team

Till Schultze-Gebhardt & Meike Braun

About PCE2026

A CHANGING WORLD

... what it does with us and what we do with it

The person-centered and experiential approach offers a unique and hope-inspiring perspective on how sustainable change can be understood, supported, and facilitated.

Climate change, military conflicts, humanitarian crises, racism and discrimination, digitalization, social media, misinformation, and artificial intelligence are transforming the world around us at a remarkable pace.

At the same time, these changes are not merely external forces. They are also shaped by human choices, actions, and relationships.

As individuals, communities, and professionals, we are challenged to respond to these developments in ways that are responsible, creative, and deeply human.

The PCE2026 World Conference invites participants from around the globe to experience, explore, discuss, understand, celebrate, and question what it means to become agents of change in a changing world.

To facilitate this process, the conference combines keynote presentations, dialogue keynotes, workshops, scientific contributions, encounter groups, community meetings, creative formats, and opportunities for informal exchange.

Our hope is that PCE2026 will not only be a place of learning, but also a place of encounter, inspiration, dialogue, and community.

Together, we invite you to explore what a person-centered and experiential response to a changing world might look like.

Person to Person. We trust the process.

Conference Overview

PCE2026 at a Glance

More than a conference

PCE2026 brings together participants from around the world for a week of learning, encounter, dialogue, creativity, reflection, and community.

Under the theme A CHANGING WORLD – what it does with us and what we do with it

the conference offers opportunities to explore current societal challenges and their implications for psychotherapy, counseling, education, institutions, associations, and everyday life.

Participants can look forward to:

- An international community: More than 550 participants from around 35 countries and diverse professional backgrounds.
- Keynotes and Dialogue Keynotes: Internationally recognised speakers and innovative dialogue formats connecting the person-centered and experiential approach with perspectives from climate science, social justice, and artificial intelligence.
- Workshops and Presentations: More than 150 workshops, papers, panels, experiential sessions, and creative contributions.
- Encounter and Community: Spaces dedicated to dialogue, encounter groups, community meetings, and informal exchange.
- Pre-Conference: Three days of in-depth learning, workshops, and encounter opportunities hosted in cooperation with TH Köln.
- Online Conference: A parallel online program enabling participation from around the globe.
- Social Program: Music, readings, city tours, cycling tours, bowling, shared meals, and many opportunities to connect beyond the conference sessions.
- Cologne: A city known for openness, diversity, hospitality, and dialogue.

We invite you to explore, participate, connect, and contribute to making PCE2026 a meaningful and memorable experience for all.

Acknowledgements

PCE2026 is the result of the commitment, trust, expertise, generosity, patience, and enthusiasm of many people who have contributed their time, energy, and creativity over several years. Bringing together an international conference of this scale is only possible through collaboration. We are deeply grateful to all those who have supported, encouraged, challenged, inspired, and accompanied this journey.

Our sincere thanks go to the board and members of PCE World and to the board, management, and members of the Gesellschaft für Personzentrierte Psychotherapie und Beratung e.V. (GwG) for their partnership, trust, and ongoing commitment to the person-centered and experiential approach.

We thank the members of the Scientific Committee, the Steering Group, and the Encounter Groups Organizing Committee (EGOC) for their expertise, thoughtful contributions, and dedication throughout the planning process.

We are grateful to TH Köln, especially the Faculty of Applied Social Sciences for hosting the Pre-Conference and for the spirit of cooperation that has supported this collaboration.

We thank the team of Maternushaus for their hospitality, cooperation and patience and RheinlandAkustik for technical production and support.

We warmly acknowledge Nicole Meusch (Square Visuals) for the conference design and visual identity. Furthermore Ralf Hüskes (Ideengestalten!) for his creative and technical support, and Stefan Bublies (D&T) for developing the registration area. We would like to thank Niels Bagge for his assistance in setting up Oxford Abstracts.

Our heartfelt thanks go to our catering partner Kati Hodde (Petit Peut Catering) and all those who contribute to the wellbeing of participants through hospitality, care, and practical support throughout the conference.

We are grateful to graphic recording artist Till Lassmann, photographer Judith Mengel, and her assistant Charlotte for documenting the conference through words, images, and visual impressions that will help preserve its spirit and memories.

A heartfelt thank you to the artists and performers who enrich the conference through music, creativity, and moments of shared joy and connection.

We would also like to thank the many members of the GwG community and other colleagues who contribute to the Social Program through readings, city tours, cycling tours, music, encounters, and other activities that enrich conference life beyond the formal program.

A special word of appreciation goes to our feel good volunteer team, with the team coordinators Sarina Führ and Helena Twachtmann. Through their presence, attentiveness, flexibility, and willingness to help, they contribute significantly to creating a welcoming and supportive atmosphere for everyone involved.

Finally, we thank all presenters, facilitators, authors, researchers, practitioners, students, online participants, conference guests, and colleagues from around the world.

You are the conference. Thank you for helping keep the person-centered and experiential approach alive, relevant, and visible in a changing world.

Teams & Committees

A conference such as PCE2026 is the result of the commitment, collaboration, and contributions of many people working in different roles and capacities.

Over several years, colleagues from around the world have helped shape the conference program, support organisational processes, review submissions, coordinate activities, develop ideas, and create spaces for dialogue, encounter, and learning.

The following pages introduce the teams and committees whose work has contributed to making PCE2026 possible.

We are grateful for their expertise, dedication, generosity, and shared commitment to the person-centered and experiential approach.

Teams & Committees – Lists

Conference Leadership

Till Schultze-Gebhardt — Chair of the board, GwG e.V.

Meike Braun — Chair of the board, PCE World; Conference Organisation GwG e.V.

Steering Group

Till Schultze-Gebhardt (Chair)

Sheila Haugh

Lena Mazurkiewicz

Prof. Dr. Jens Gaab

Scientific Committee

Till Schultze-Gebhardt (Management)

Prof. Dr. Jeanette Bischof

Prof. Dr. Jeffrey Cornelius-White

Heinke Deloch

Prof. Dr. Robert Elliott

Prof. Dr. Jens Gaab

Prof. Dr. Silke Gahleitner

Yana Gololob

Sheila Haugh

Dr. Imke Herrmann

Stephanie Hutchinson

Dr. Ernst Kern
Prof. Dr. Renate Kosuch
Prof. Dr. Ueli Kramer
Neena Kurl
Jana Lammers
Makiko Mikuni
Lena Mazurkiewicz
Dr. Christian Metz
Prof. Dr. William R. Miller
Dr. Dagmar Nuding
Dr. David Oberreiter
Jean-Marc Randin
Dr. Brian Rodgers
Prof. Dr. Meike Rönnau-Böse
Prof. Dr. Ulrich Siegrist
Dr. Susan Stephen
Prof. Dr. Ladislav Timulak
Prof. Dr. Yvette Völschow
Prof. Dr. Emmanuelle Zech

Encounter Groups Organizing Committee (EGOC)

Pit Batura
Flora Gavand
Yotam Hod
Makiko Mikuni
Charlie Norman
Gillian Proctor
Jean-Marc Randin
Krista Susman
Anke Wegener-Sorge
Luke Williams

Core Organising Team

Sarina Führ (Main Conference)

Helena Twachtmann (Main Conference)

Ayleen Hodel (Pre Conference)

Online Conference Team

Susanna Hauf

Petra Schweizer

Silvia Schleder-Grundmann

Brendon Murley

Volunteers from A-Z

Antje Azraq

Ulrike Backhaus

Julia Bartoschek

Maria Einax-Wagner

Martin Fedler-Raupp

Sarina Führ

Regina Heilmann

Maren Krause

Helena Krenzer

Judith Mengel

Doris Meyer-Ritzenhoff

Brendon Murley

Phillip Panhans

Ellen Prange

Sylvia Rasch

Carmen Rosen

Selina Tilhein

About This Reader

This Program and Abstract Book is intended as a companion throughout your PCE2026 conference experience.

It brings together practical information, conference highlights, keynote presentations, program overviews, committee information, and the abstracts of workshops, papers, panels, experiential sessions, and other contributions.

The book is designed to help participants navigate the many opportunities offered throughout the conference week. We encourage you to browse, explore, discover unexpected interests, and create your own individual conference journey.

The program overviews provide orientation and scheduling information, while the abstracts offer a first insight into the diverse contributions presented by colleagues from around the world.

Whether you use this book to plan your days in advance, to find your next session, or simply to discover new ideas and perspectives, we hope it will support your experience of learning, encounter, dialogue, and community at PCE2026.

Please note that last-minute program changes may occur. The most up-to-date program information will be available through the conference communication channels.

We wish you an inspiring conference.

For the PCE2026 team

Till Schultze-Gebhardt & Meike Braun

Pre-Conference

Arriving, Encountering, Exploring

The PCE2026 Pre-Conference offers participants an opportunity to arrive, connect, and immerse themselves more deeply in the person-centered and experiential tradition before the Main Conference begins.

As guests in the halls of the TH Köln, the Pre-Conference creates a space for focused learning, encounter, and community. Participants can choose between experiential workshops led by internationally recognised colleagues and participation in an Encounter Group that unfolds over the course of the three days.

Whether through the exploration of Motivational Interviewing with Bill Miller, Emotion-Focused Therapy with Robert Elliott, or through the shared experience of Encounter, the Pre-Conference invites participants to slow down, engage deeply, and begin the conference journey together.

For many participants, these days provide an opportunity not only for professional development, but also for meaningful connection, reflection, and community-building before the wider conference begins.

The following pages provide information about the Pre-Conference offerings and facilitators.

Pre Conference: Workshop 1 – William R. Miller

Motivational Interviewing in a Changing World: An Experiential Workshop

Motivational Interviewing (MI) is a person-centered method of communication for strengthening people's own motivation and commitment to change. It was first described by William Miller in 1983 and has since evolved through practice, research, and application in many different fields.

This experiential workshop offers an opportunity to explore the spirit, principles, and practical skills of Motivational Interviewing. Participants will be introduced to key concepts and invited to experience MI through demonstration, reflection, and practice.

Particular attention will be given to the person-centered foundations of MI and to the ways in which empathy, acceptance, partnership, and compassion can support people in finding their own direction and resources for change.

The workshop will provide both conceptual understanding and opportunities for active participation, enabling participants to experience MI as a living and relational approach rather than merely a set of techniques.

Bio:

William R. Miller, Ph.D., is Emeritus Distinguished Professor of Psychology and Psychiatry at the University of New Mexico. He is best known as the co-founder of Motivational Interviewing.

Pre Conference: Workshop 2 – Robert Elliott

Emotion Focused Therapy in a Changing World: A Person-Centered-Friendly Introduction

Overviews of EFT generally emphasize differences between EFT and PCT. This hands-on workshop takes the opposite approach of focusing on common elements, offering a PCT-friendly introduction to EFT.

Emotion-Focused Therapy (EFT) has inherited the rich tradition of Rogers' Person-Centered Therapy (PCT) and Gendlin's Focusing-oriented therapy, along with influences from gestalt and existential approaches. Overviews of EFT generally emphasize what distinguishes EFT from PCT. However, in this workshop I am going to take the opposite approach of focusing on common elements, which are often obscured by differences in terminology.

After outlining the shared history and neohumanistic values of EFT I will provide translations and bridges between EFT and PCT theory and practice, including emotions as expressions of and vehicles for the growth tendency, emotion response types as forms of incongruence; shared forms of empathic response, the central role of therapist empathic attunement with the client, the attention given to supporting client personal agency and authentic relating between client and therapist.

After this, we will move on to a description of PCT versions of key EFT tasks, with skill practice on two of these:

- (a) EFT-style deep empathic immersion via evocative reflections and empathic affirmation responses;
- (b) speaking your truth in imagination to important others.

I conclude with a discussion of issues in learning EFT, including strategies for dealing with its complexity of language and practices.

Bio

Robert Elliott (preferred pronouns: they/them) is professor emeritus of Counseling at the University of Strathclyde (Glasgow, Scotland) and professor emeritus of psychology at the University of Toledo (Ohio).

Their main interests are practice, supervision, training, and research on EFT and related therapies. Their books include **Learning Emotion-Focused Psychotherapy** and **Emotion-Focused Counseling in Action**, as well as more than 200 journal articles and book chapters.

Robert is past president of the Society for Psychotherapy Research and previously co-edited the journals **Psychotherapy Research** and **Person-Centered and Experiential Psychotherapies**. They have received the Distinguished Research Career Award of the Society for Psychotherapy Research and the Carl Rogers Award from the Division of Humanistic Psychology of the American Psychological Association.

They now live in Northern California, where they continue to enjoy developing, writing about, and running EFT training, as well as walking, running, science fiction, poetry, and all kinds of music.

Encounter Group & Community Meetings

Organized and accompanied by the Encounter (Group) Organizing Committee

Encounter

To enter an encounter group is to enter the unknown: to meet oneself and others as we are, in this moment. It is an invitation to openness, to sharing experiences and emotions as they arise, and to allow something new to unfold in the space between us. Such encounters can be rich, challenging, and unpredictable, offering opportunities for growth, learning, and deeper understanding of ourselves and others.

The encounter group is an open space for all participants. There is no agenda, preplanned content, or assumed outcome — themes and directions emerge organically. We do not know what we will do or how we will be; this is for us to create together.

There are no designated facilitators. All members may be facilitative at any point, and no one holds more power or responsibility than others do by assigned roles. The “encounter group preparation committee” will open each meeting, welcome everyone, then participate equally alongside all.

We invite participants to:

- Commit to being present and engaged within our differences
- Risk expressing emotions as they arise
- Remain open and attempt to understand others’ responses
- Be as congruent as possible, expressing what is alive in the moment, being ourselves rather than talking about ourselves or others.

To encounter is to express oneself openly, honestly, and clearly while being open to experience the other. These groups offer the chance to explore power, identity, and difference, including differences of language, within an environment free of structural hierarchy. Encounter groups are an opportunity to practice being present to oneself and others whilst trying to empathically understand and value our interconnectedness.

Encounter groups are unpredictable and may be exciting, risky, and powerful experiences. We warmly welcome everyone to join in this opportunity to meet oneself and others — and to discover what can emerge from our shared human diversity.

Community Meeting

The Community Meeting is an open space for all conference participants to come together as ourselves and connect. No one leads — the space is shaped collectively, alive with everyone’s presence. It brings together the threads of our diverse conference experiences, creating a shared moment of reflection, connection, and co-creation.

As part of the Main Conference, they take place in the Main Conference Room at the end of each evening.

For participants of the Pre-Conference that means:

The Community Meeting at the end of the Pre-Conference is an open gathering for all participants of the Pre-Conference. It’s a shared space where we come together as ourselves and connect with one another. This is not a guided session – no one has the function to direct the interaction. Instead, the space is shaped together, alive with the presence and contributions of everyone.

It offers a moment for shared attention and collective presence, allowing participants to engage with the richness of diverse experiences. For some, the meeting marks the conclusion of their Pre-Conference journey; for others, it contributes to the ongoing formation of a community that will continue into the Main Conference.

The gathering unites participants from different Pre-Conference micro-cultures — those who have attended Workshops, those who have spent several days in Encounter, and those who have moved between both.

About Keynotes & Dialogue Keynotes

The keynote program of PCE2026 reflects the diversity, depth, and international character of the person-centered and experiential community.

The conference brings together internationally recognised practitioners, researchers, educators, and scholars whose work has shaped the development of person-centered and experiential psychotherapy, Counseling, and related fields.

Alongside traditional keynote presentations, PCE2026 introduces a series of Dialogue Keynotes. These conversations bring together one representative from the person-centered and experiential community and one expert from a field directly related to the conference theme.

This format reflects a central conviction of the person-centered and experiential approach: that learning, growth, and self-actualisation emerge through dialogue, encounter, and genuine openness to different perspectives.

Together, the speakers explore some of the most pressing questions of our time – including climate change, social justice, and artificial intelligence – from different professional, theoretical, and experiential perspectives.

The keynote program reflects the conference theme:

A CHANGING WORLD – what it does with us and what we do with it

and invites participants into dialogue, reflection, learning, and encounter throughout the conference week.

Opening Keynote – Susan Stephen

Being Human in a Changing World: A Person-Centered-Experiential Perspective

As person-centered and experiential (PCE) practitioners, we know something (theoretically, experientially, empirically) about how humans respond to change. In this keynote, I will start by grounding us in PCE theory that connects us with worldviews that change is a natural, inevitable process. Next, I will introduce an ongoing example of change within our own PCE World community and reflect on it, alongside some of the global challenges we face, through three aspects of change: that change is liminal, painful and complicated. Staying with, and working through, the discomfort that change can bring is difficult and indeed counter-cultural in Western society but, I will argue, is understood and honoured in PCE theory and practice. Inspired by Peter Schmid, I will argue for the potential of PCE practitioners as socio-political change agents, inside and outside our therapy rooms, fostering congruence in our changing world.

Bio

Dr Susan Stephen is a senior lecturer in Counseling at the University of Strathclyde (Glasgow, Scotland) and director of the Strathclyde Counseling and Psychotherapy Research Clinic where she leads research in the process and outcome of person-centered-experiential therapy. Her main research interest is the concept of congruent functioning as a contemporary redefining of the developmental process at the heart of Rogers' person-centered theory and its intercultural implications. She is a co-editor of the journal, *Person-Centered and Experiential Psychotherapies* and of the third edition of *The Handbook of Person-Centered Psychotherapy and Counseling*. She is also a former Chair of the board of the World Association for Person-Centered and Experiential Psychotherapies and Counseling (PCE World).

Honoring Eugene Gendlin – Akira Ikemi

Eugene Gendlin and Change: How Every Human Experiencing Is a Changing Process

Eugene Gendlin guided us “to think about human experience in a new way. Every bit of human experience has a possible further movement implicit in it. Human experience is never complete (FOT, p.13).” He warned us not to think of experience and personality as static contents. In this presentation, I will present how Gendlin originally conceived of experience as implying change. He articulated ‘continuous focusing’, aka ‘the four phases of focusing’ which I have come to call ‘focusing-alpha’. I will show how focusing-alpha functions naturally in therapy and how experiential exercises can be developed from focusing-alpha without ‘focusing instructions’. Furthermore, several updated innovations of the Experiencing Scale (EXP Scale), such as the 5-stage EXP Scale (Miyake, Ikemi & Tamura 2008) and the EXP Checklist (Kubota & Ikemi 2017) will be introduced. The EXP Scale, which Gendlin and his colleagues developed, demonstrated the importance of the experiencing dimension, and impacted many ‘tribes’ of the person-centered approach. The presentation will conclude by introducing how I incorporate the legacy of Eugene Gendlin with Asian mindfulness practices.

Bio

Akira Ikemi, Ph.D., Professor Emeritus, Kansai University Japan. Akira has studied with Eugene Gendlin at the University of Chicago. Since then, he has worked as a psychologist in hospitals, corporations, and has taught full time at universities in Japan. He is a prolific writer who writes mainly about psychotherapy and focusing in Japanese and English. Recently he has been offering in-person focusing workshops and trainings in several cities in Japan and Europe, in Hong Kong and in mainland China, as well as online in USA, Australia, Hong Kong and Japan, where he lives.

About the Dialogue Keynotes

The Dialogue Keynotes are among the distinctive features of PCE2026.

Reflecting the conference's commitment to dialogue, encounter, and multiple perspectives, each Dialogue Keynote brings together two voices: one from the person-centered and experiential community and one from a field directly related to the conference theme.

Together, they explore some of the most pressing questions of our time from different professional, theoretical, and experiential perspectives.

Rather than presenting a single viewpoint, the Dialogue Keynotes invite participants into a living dialogue – one that values curiosity, openness, and the possibility that new understanding may emerge through genuine encounter.

In this way, the format reflects a central conviction of the person-centered and experiential approach: that meaningful understanding often develops not through certainty, but through dialogue.

The Dialogue Keynotes address three themes that are central to the conference theme *A CHANGING WORLD – what it does with us and what we do with it*: the climate crisis, social justice, and artificial intelligence.

Dialogue Keynote 1 – Climate Crisis

Dr Gillian Proctor and Prof. Dr. Ulf Hahnel

In this presentation, we will take a conversational approach.

We will explore why climate change matters and is relevant for psychotherapists, both as people who are citizens of the universe, and as experts in psychological change.

Bio

Dr Gillian Proctor is a lecturer in Counseling and psychotherapy at the University of Leeds, UK. She is passionate about ethics, power and politics in therapy. She has written textbooks on the dynamics of power in therapy (PCCS Books) and values and ethics in therapy (Sage), and edited books on politics, feminism and the PCA (PCCS Books).

She is currently writing a book on the illusion of separateness and the implications of intraconnection for therapy practice. She has also worked on anti-racist education and is researching the emotional impact of working in equity, diversity and inclusion in higher education.

Prof. Dr. Ulf Hahnel is Full Professor for Psychology of Collective Action and Sustainability at the School of Sustainability of Leuphana University Lüneburg, Germany.

He has published more than 60 peer-reviewed articles on individual and collective human behaviour and the underlying psychological mechanisms in the context of global climate change and other pressing sustainability-related issues.

By combining research from psychology, sustainability science, and economics, his work aims to develop evidence-based interventions that promote more sustainable behaviour worldwide.

Dialogue Keynote 2 – Social Justice

Dr. Lou Cooper and Dr. Dwight Turner

An experience with our clients is an encounter with the other, and an encounter with ourselves.

The world is an unsafe space for so many in the present era. From the attacks on trans persons, to the marginalisation of racialised groups, the fight to be acknowledged as human in a time of rising populism speaks to the fear and powerlessness of so many.

Given the undoubted power dynamics in our profession, it would be naïve to assume that simply because of who we are that our clients feel free to bring the fullness of their identities to the therapeutic space. Masking, code-switching, performance, are just some of the ways clients may hide aspects of their identity out of a fear of being at best rejected, or at worst, annihilated.

This keynote dialogue between two experienced practitioners considers how difficult it is to see the range of intersectional identities in our clients when we meet them, and challenges practitioners to consider the fullness of their own varying identities and how owning these may assist our clients to feel safer and increasingly met by all of us.

Bio

Dr. Lou Cooper is a Counseling Psychologist and Lead Trainer and Presenter at the Australian Institute of Emotion Focused Therapy (AIEFT).

For over a decade, Lou has facilitated training in LGBTQ-inclusive practice, trauma-informed practice, and mental health in the workplace. All their teaching is now informed by Emotion Theory and Emotion Focused Therapy (EFT), and Lou has a particular interest in using an emotion-focused approach to work with marginalised communities.

Lou is the host of the **Emotion Focused Podcast** and appears regularly on radio in Australia talking about emotions.

Dr. Dwight Turner is Course Leader on the Humanistic Psychotherapy Course at the University of Brighton, and a psychotherapist and supervisor in private practice.

Dr. Turner is the author of **Decolonising Counseling and Psychotherapy: Depoliticised Pathways Towards Intersectional Practice** (2025), **The Psychology of Supremacy** (2023), and **Intersections of Privilege and Otherness in Counseling and Psychotherapy** (2021). All are published by Routledge.

An Intersectional Psychotherapist, Dr. Turner is an experienced conference speaker. He can be contacted via his website (see link below) or on social media on LinkedIn, Threads, or on BlueSky at @dturner300.

Dialogue Keynote 3 – Artificial Intelligence

Jeffrey H. D. Cornelius-White, PsyD, LPC and Charlotte Blease, Ph.D.

AI is transforming therapy, reshaping how mental health care is delivered and experienced. This keynote examines its benefits, risks, and the opportunities it creates for practitioners and patients. From chatbots offering immediate support to AI-driven tools assisting clinicians, these technologies are altering the therapeutic landscape.

The focus is on access, quality of care, safety, and social justice. AI has the potential to bridge critical gaps in mental health services, but it also carries the risk of deepening inequalities. Beyond the clinic, AI is influencing our relationships, and the very nature of seeking help.

This talk provides a clear, comprehensive introduction to AI in therapy—what is known, what remains uncertain, and what must be addressed. As AI advances, its role in mental health care must be critically examined to ensure it strengthens, rather than undermines, human connection.

Bio

Jeffrey H. D. Cornelius-White, PsyD, LPC is a Distinguished Professor and Program Director of Counseling at Missouri State University, USA. He is a former Chair of the Board of PCE-World, co-editor of **Person-Centered and Experiential Psychotherapies**, and has held several other editorial roles at related journals, including currently serving as an Associate Editor of the **Journal of Humanistic Counseling**.

Jef has over 100 publications in person-centered counseling, therapy education, and interdisciplinary studies, including **Carl Rogers: The China Diary** (PCCS), **Person-Centered Approaches for Counselors** and **Learner-Centered Instruction** (Sage), and **Interdisciplinary Handbook of the Person-Centered Approach** and **Interdisciplinary Applications of the Person-Centered Approach** (Springer).

Dr Charlotte Blease is a health informaticist, Associate Professor at the Department of Women's and Children's Health, Uppsala University, Sweden, and Research Affiliate at Digital Psychiatry, Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center, Boston.

She has held academic posts in the United States, including at Harvard Medical School, as well as in Europe and the United Kingdom. Blease has a diverse publication portfolio of more than 160 journal articles across AI, ethics, health psychology, and placebo studies. She co-edited **The Nocebo Effect: When Words Make You Sick** (Mayo Clinic Press, 2024) and has a forthcoming book, **Dr Bot: Why Human Doctors Fail Us and How AI Can Save Lives** (Yale University Press, September 2025).

Final Panel

Beyond the Echo: A Global Dialogue on the PCE Experience

As we draw our time together in Cologne to a close, we invite you to a final session designed to be as dynamic and interconnected as the Person-Centered approach itself.

The closing panel features a pre-convened group of practitioners and thinkers from Argentina, Australia, Japan, and our host nation, Germany.

Moderated by Sheila Haugh, our panelists will explore the emerging themes of the conference, the possible impact of this work across different borders, and the future of the PCE movement.

We will then open the floor to the room, inviting all participants to weave their own reflections into this final time together.

Please join us for this interactive and forward-looking conclusion to the World Conference.

Panel Members

Martin Lange — Argentina

Akira Ikemi — Japan

Imke Herrmann — Germany

Ulrich Siegrist — Germany

Jana Lammers — Germany

Lou Cooper — Australia

Moderator

Sheila Haugh — Czechia / UK

Programme Structure PCE 2026 Main Conference (changes possible)

WED 8 July	THU 9 July	FRI 10 July	SAT 11 July	SUN 12 July
	Registration	Registration	Registration	Social & Cultural Programme offers, Social Gatherings and Leisure Time
6 – 8 July Pre- Conference (closing TH Cologne)	9.00 – 10.15 am Dialogue Keynote „Climate Crisis“	9.00 – 10.15 am Dialogue Keynote „Social Injustice“	9.00 – 10.15 am Dialogue Keynote „Artificial Intelligence“	
	Break	Break	Break	
	10.45 – 11.45 am Talks/Symposia/ Lectures	10.45 – 11.45 am Talks/Symposia/ Lectures	10.45 – 11.45 am Talks/Symposia/ Lectures	
	Break	Break	Break	
	12.00 – 1.00 pm Talks/Symposia/ Lectures	12.00 – 1.00 pm Poster session Talks/Symposia/ Lectures	12.00 – 1.15 pm Experiential or Creative Workshops/ Encounter	
12.00 – 2.00 pm Registration (Maternushaus)	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	
2.00 – 2.45 pm Opening				
2.45 – 3.45 pm Entry Keynote	2.30 – 3.45 pm Experiential Workshops	2.30 – 3.45 pm Experiential Workshops	2.30 – 4.00 pm Final Keynote/ Panel 'reflections and implications'	
Break	Break	Break	Break	
4.15 – 5.15 pm Honouring Gendlin Keynote	4.15 – 5.45 pm Creative Workshops / Encounter	4.15 – 5.45 pm Creative Workshops / Encounter	4.20 – 5.20 pm Community meeting	
5.15 – 6.00 pm Community meeting	Break	Break	5.20 – 6.00 pm Presentation PCE2028 Joint Closure	
6.00 – 7.00 pm Standing Buffet	6.00 – 7.00 pm Community meeting	6.00 – 7.00 pm Community meeting	7.30pm – PCE2026 Party (At 7.00pm Shuttle bus departure to the event venue)	
7.00 pm - Social / Cultural space	8.00pm – 10.00pm PCE World General Assembly (Members only; Up from 7.30pm registration / snacks)	8.00pm – 10.00pm PCE World General Assembly (Members only; Up from 7.30pm registration / snacks)		

Programme Overview

Talks/Symposia/Lectures

Thu, 9 July, 10:45 – 11:45 am

185 Direction in Person-Centered Counseling <u>Prof William R. Miller Ph.D.</u>	Individual Lecture (60 min)	Maternussaal
57 Reakiro: how can person-centred therapists relate to persons with unbearable psychiatric suffering and persistent death wishes? <u>Eva Depoortere MA¹, Kim Snoeks MA², Thijs Vanhie MA^{2,3}, Sofie Verdegem MA^{2,3}</u>	Symposium (60 min)	Dreikönigssaal
136 Expanded Focusing Task: Highlighting safety in deepening emotion and optimising experiential work <u>Dr Bronte McLeod PhD (Clinical Psychology)^{1,2,3}, Vivienne Wisniewski MPsych (Educational and Developmental)³, Prof Lou Cooper DPsych (Counselling)^{3,1}</u>	Symposium (60 min)	Adelheid
164 Body Listening. Distancing. Disentangling: Can German questionnaires inspire you to better think about and teach Focusing? <u>Danny Gehlen M.Sc.^{1,2}, Sophia Franziska Herbst M.Sc.², Olaf Georg Scholtyssek M.Sc.², Vera Rolfine Fryd Lyngmo M.Sc.³</u>	Symposium (60 min)	Quirinus
37 Integrating Nature in Psychotherapy: Experiences of 1100 Austrian Therapists amid Urbanisation and Climate Changes <u>Sandra Elisabeth Aigner MSc. / Master of Science in Psychotherapy</u>	Individual Lecture (60 min)	Laurentius
50 Trajectories of Change in Person-Centred Psychotherapy: The Role of Client Self-Regard and the Therapeutic Relationship <u>Dr Shun Chen PhD</u>	Individual Talk (20 min)	Gereon
115 Exploring therapists' experiences of empathy blocks in psychotherapy <u>Simran Chatha MPhil^{1,2}, Dr Susan Stephen¹, Dr Anna Robinson¹, Prof emeritus Robert Elliott¹</u>	Individual Talk (20 min)	
162 Structure-Bound Experiencing in Humanistic Psychology: Validation of the SBES-G Using Rasch Analysis <u>Sevgi Baris Sahin B. Sc. Psychology</u>	Individual Talk (20 min)	
118 Eco-EFT. Explorations into Emotion-Focused Therapy (EFT) informed by Ecopsychology and Climate Psychology <u>Niels Bagge MA</u>	Individual Lecture (60 min)	Suitbertus

55 Psychotherapists' views in Japan and Switzerland on the person-centered approach: A comparative study on cultural adaptation <u>Gudrun B Karbe M.Sc.; M.A.</u>	Individual Talk (20 min)	Heribert
109 Focusing on the Internal Frame of Reference in PCA Training: Through Cultural Metaphors <u>Moe Kumagai Master of Psychology</u>	Individual Talk (20 min)	
142 Cultivating Climate Agency: A Person-Centered Design for Aligning Student Identity and Inquiry <u>Dr Yotam Hod PhD, Dr Liat Rahmian PhD</u>	Individual Talk (20 min)	
54 Existential Empathy in Psychotherapy: Insights from Qualitative Research <u>Gianina Frediani</u>	Individual Lecture (60 min)	Bruno

Talks/Symposia/Lectures

Thu, 9 July, 12:00 – 1:00 pm

51 May I exist: Three Experiential-Existential Psychotherapy (EEP) Case Studies <u>Prof Siebrecht Vanhooren PdD¹, Sofie Verdegem^{1,2}, Gianina Frediani¹</u>	Symposium (60 min)	Maternussaal
111 The Continuum of Contact: Pre-Therapy and Advanced Person-Centered Practice <u>Rab Erskine^{1,2}, Chip Ponsford^{3,4}, Mathias Dekeyser MS^{5,6,7,8}, Dion Van Werde MA⁹</u>	Symposium (60 min)	Dreikönigssaal
187 Working with existential crises following traumatic life events: Meaning Re-Creation Work for Meaning Protest in EFT <u>Dr Juliette Becking</u>	Individual Lecture (60 min)	Adelheid
108 Board members of PCE World – Invitation to podium and dialogue <u>Meike Braun</u> PCE World Board Members	Individual Talk (20 min)	Quirinus
40 An information session about PCE World's journal, Person-Centered and Experiential Psychotherapies <u>Dr Jeannette Bischkopf PhD¹, Dr Jeffrey H. Cornelius-White PhD², Dr Maria Kefalopoulou PhD³, Dr Jason Sharbanee PhD⁴, Dr Susan Stephen PhD⁵</u>	Individual Talk (20 min)	

119 Use of AI in Cross Lingual Translation and Reliable Content Building of the PCE-Literature Database <u>Niels Bagge MA^{1,2,3}, Dr David Oberreiter⁴, Dr Brian Rodgers PhD⁵, Patrick Akrivos MA^{6,7,8,9}, Dr Sophia Balamoutsou¹⁰, Takahiro Namiki¹¹</u>	Individual Talk (20 min)	
16 Person Centred Experiential Therapy for Trauma - A Multiple Baseline Trial <u>Jen S Holland MA</u>	Individual Lecture (60 min)	Laurentius
145 Congruence and Vulnerability in the Therapeutic Process: An Act of Courage for Authentic Connection <u>Sheila Haugh MA Psychotherapy & Counselling¹, Martin A Lange Counsellor²</u>	Individual Lecture (60 min)	Gereon
166 Person-centred creative arts therapy (PCCAT) in a changing world: origins, present challenges and future edges <u>Charlotte Farish-Edwards MA^{1,2,3,4}, Leonore Langner BA^{5,3,6,4,7}, Fleur Farish-Edwards MSc^{4,1,2,3}</u>	Symposium (60 min)	Suitbertus
31 Teaching + Learning Person-Centered Counseling in Higher Education – Discrimination-Sensitive, Empowering Approaches in Bachelor + Master Social Work Programs <u>Prof Renate Kosuch Dr., Sabine Dael MA</u> 194 Training person-centred psychotherapists in Switzerland within the Swiss health system : embracing success between compromise and submission <u>Olivier Siegenthaler Msc</u> 56 Teaching the Person-Centered Approach: Exploring Beliefs and Practices in PCA Training Programs <u>Dr Stefan Stuetzle¹, Ulrike Fessler²</u>	Individual Talk (20 min) Individual Talk (20 min) Individual Talk (20 min)	Heribert
82 Perceiving Suffering: Interpersonal Signals, Clinical Meaning, and Implications for Therapeutic Change <u>Emil Kane Nissen MSc</u> 26 To Guide or Not to Guide? – Measuring Therapist Directivity in Carl Rogers' Work and Beyond <u>Michael Kelber M.A., MSc</u> 177 The need for competence in a changing world: When experience meets the three basic psychological needs. <u>Matthias Guillod M.Sc.</u>	Individual Talk (20 min) Individual Talk (20 min) Individual Talk (20 min)	Bruno

Experiential/Creative Workshops

Thu, 9 July, 2:30 – 3:45 pm

184 <u>Lecture: Working with the Inner Critic in Complex Trauma from an EFT perspective</u> <u>Dr Kurt Renders Clinical Psychologist/ person-centered, existential and Emotion-focused therapist</u>	Experiential Workshop (75 min)	Maternussaal
170 <u>Relational Shame, disconnection and social justice.</u> <u>Krista Susman MAG¹, Dr Gillian M Proctor D Clin Psych²</u>	Creative Workshop (90 min)	Dreikönigssaal
43 <u>FACING YOUR EXISTENTIAL DEMONS. Experiential workshop on focusing from your safe place</u> <u>Claude Missiaen Master</u>	Experiential Workshop (75 min)	Adelheid
24 <u>An introduction to motivational interviewing with couples: Helping relationship partners change together in a changing world</u> <u>Dr Tyrel J Starks PhD</u>	Experiential Workshop (75 min)	Quirinus
101 <u>From Dilemma to Delivery: An Outpatient Clinic Model Redefining Access to Psychotherapy</u> <u>Patricia Kleinwaechter, Leon Kohn B.Sc., B.A., Mariella Koller B.A., Dagmar Thaa</u>	Experiential Workshop (75 min)	Laurentius
129 <u>A changing world in psychiatry. Experience report from a person-centered, non-directive psychotherapy ward.</u> <u>Dr Albert Lauss¹, Dr Katharina Raninger¹, Manuel Haderer Mag. Msc¹, Johanna Mayr Msc²</u>	Experiential Workshop (75 min)	Gereon
76 <u>Seven Didactic Principles for Person-Centered Experiential Trainings: An Interactive Workshop</u> <u>Michael Kelber M.A., MSc^{1,2}, Prof Renate Motschnig Dipl.-Ing. Dr.³, Ludger Verst QTS (StR)⁴</u>	Experiential Workshop (75 min)	Suitbertus
138 <u>The Expanded Focusing Task: An experiential workshop with live demonstration and interactive discussion and Q&A</u> <u>Vivienne Wisniewski MPsy (Educational and Developmental)¹, Dr Bronte McLeod^{2,3,1}</u>	Experiential Workshop (75 min)	Heribert
15 <u>Accompanying and facilitating organizational change</u> <u>Prof Ulrich Siegrist Master of Organizational Psychology; Doctorate in Counselling Science</u>	Experiential Workshop (75 min)	Bruno

75 Person-Centered & Experiential Counselling for Relational Trauma (PCE-rt): Intensive Lab Practice Alex Vallidis MSc	Experiential Workshop (75 min)	Lambertus
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Creative/Experiential Workshops/Encounter

Thu, 9 July, 4:15 – 5:45 pm

13 The Actualising Journey: Exploring PCA Through Cards Sara A. Cagliesi	Creative Workshop (90 min)	Maternussaal
ENCOUNTER	90 min	Dreikönigssaal
144 Motivational Interviewing (MI) for Sustainability: An experiential workshop for change Lena Glaser Msc , Lina Zimmermann BSc , Prof Jens Gaab PhD	Experiential Workshop (75 min)	Adelheid
158 Open-Label Placebos in Psychotherapy: Nothing is what you want it to be Dr Antje Frey Nascimento PhD , Bojana Degen MSc , Clara Wehlage BSc	Creative Workshop (90 min)	Quirinus
168 Art as inner resource: A person-centred creative arts therapy workshop for a changing world Charlotte Farish-Edwards MA ^{1,2,3,4} , Fleur Farish-Edwards MSc ^{4,2,3,1}	Creative Workshop (90 min)	Laurentius
35 Embracing Change – IDG as a Bridge to a Volatile Future Martin Heyer	Creative Workshop (90 min)	Gereon
134 From EGO to ECO – Let's talk about Climate Emotions Thomas Schweinschwaller Prof. (FH) Mag. , Bettina Fleischmann	Creative Workshop (90 min)	Suitbertus
171 Being together around the fire: cultivating presence within the inner light Thomas A Broughton ¹ , Graham Westwell ²	Creative Workshop (90 min)	Heribert
160 Sound Space – A Creative Pause to Strengthen Inner Connectedness Leonore Langner BA	Creative Workshop (90 min)	Bruno
64 Workshop WITH Focusing (Workshop MIT Focusing) Thomas S. Franke Dipl.-Psych.	Creative Workshop (90 min)	Lambertus

Talks/Symposia/Lectures

Fri, 10 July, 10:45 – 11:45 am

186 <u>Exploring Stuckness in Emotion-Focused and Related PCE Therapies</u> <u>Prof emeritus Robert Elliott PhD^{1,2}, Dr James Macdonald PhD³, Dr Jan Reidar Stiegler PhD⁴, Simran Chatha MPhil⁵</u>	Individual Lecture (60 min)	Maternussaal
107 <u>Person-centered therapists and researchers confronting personal and ideological challenges</u> <u>Hubert de Condé Ms in psychological sciences, George (Prem Adri) Fragakis Ms, Prof Emmanuelle Zech PhD, Prof Emmanuelle Zech PhD</u>	Symposium (60 min)	Dreikönigssaal
86 <u>Authoritarianism and the Person-Centered Approach: A Firsthand Account of the L.A. Protests</u> <u>Maple Moriji M.A. Clinical Psychology</u> 49 <u>The Final Taboo: Politics and the incongruent Therapist</u> <u>Patrick Akrivos Mag.</u>	Individual Talk (20 min) Individual Talk (20 min)	Adelheid
106 <u>Bringing the Person-Centered Approach (Back) into Organizational Consulting in a Changing World</u> <u>Dr Robert Waldl MBA¹, Sylvia Karantani Msc. MBA²</u> 120 <u>Translating Experiential-Existential Psychotherapy from Academia to Main Street</u> <u>Hein Zegers M.A. & M.Sc.¹, Evi Van Mierlo M.Sc.²</u> 58 <u>Motivational Interviewing for informal caregiver counseling – a new area of application?</u> <u>Johanna Schmidt, Dr Anna Pendergrass PD, Sophia Boesl, Natascha Lauer, Antonia Keck</u>	Individual Talk (20 min) Individual Talk (20 min) Individual Talk (20 min)	Quirinus
66 <u>Maladjustment as Process: Understanding Fragile Experience Under Conditions of Social Strain in Contemporary Greece</u> <u>Eleftheria Petrakaki BSc, MSc, ECP</u> 137 <u>Mental illness stigma in low and middle-income countries: First insights of a systematic review</u> <u>Dr Antje Frey Nascimento PhD</u> 140 <u>The Encounter Group in the Classroom: Embodied Resistance and Subjugated Knowledge in Conflict-Marked Communities</u> <u>Dr Yotam Hod PhD¹, Sahar Tueg MA²</u>	Individual Talk (20 min) Individual Talk (20 min) Individual Talk (20 min)	Laurentius

133 Changing emotions with emotions - Introduction to Emotion-Focused Therapy <u>Dr Imke R. Herrmann PHD, Dr Lars Auszra PHD</u>	Individual Lecture (60 min)	Gereon
89 Posttraumatic growth as a paradigm case of person-centred therapy as an pedagogical praxis. <u>Prof David Murphy PhD</u>	Individual Talk (20 min)	Suitbertus
71 A Non-Directive, Person-Centred View On The Neoliberal Capitalist Manufacturing Of Psychopathology <u>Marc A Dreßler MA, Pg Dip., BSc (Hons.)</u>	Individual Talk (20 min)	
161 Meeting the Dodo with 6 conditions - PCA as a metatheory for all counselling modalities. <u>Dr Sebastian Heid Dr.phil</u>	Individual Talk (20 min)	
99 Confidence - An Effective Factor in Therapy with Children? How to keep confident in our Changing World <u>Ulrike Hollick</u>	Individual Talk (20 min)	Heribert
169 Listening in a changing world: Centring adult adoptees' voices through person-centred Narrative Inquiry <u>Fleur Farish-Edwards MSc</u>	Individual Talk (20 min)	
176 The Therapy Session as a Changing World: A Pre-Therapeutic Understanding of Connectedness <u>Leonore Langner BA</u>	Individual Talk (20 min)	
73 Assessing Experiential Change: A new EXP Framework for Imagery-Based Narratives <u>Prof Miwa Nakanishi Ph.D. in Psychology¹, Prof Tsuyoshi Aoki Ph.D. in Psychology², Shuting Jiang³, Prof Ao Guo Ph.D.³, Prof Ryuichiro Higashinaka Ph.D.³</u>	Individual Lecture (60 min)	Bruno

Poster Session

Fri, 10 July, 12:00 – 1:00 pm

8 The Storyteller's Couch: Fairytale, Shadow, and the Person-Centred Journey Through a Changing World. <u>Dr Pearl Dawn Brock Doctor of Philosophy</u>	Poster	Maternussaal
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22	<u>Development and Validation of the Shortened Version of the Integrated Scale on Focusing Attitude 1 (ISFA1)</u> Prof Hiroyuki Uenishi Ph.D. ¹ , Prof Aoki Tsuyoshi Ph.D. ² , Prof Koshikawa Yosuke Ph.D. ³ , Prof Hideaki Fukumori Ph.D. ⁴	Poster
48	<u>Only one? Existential challenges as a mother of one in a society of more.</u> Evi Van Mierlo MA	Poster
59	<u>Regardful Curiosity as the Act of Gazing upon the Irreplaceable Other</u> Prof Takashi Oshie Ph.D.	Poster
72	<u>Embodied Contact in a Changing World: Practical Implications of Movement Coordination Research for Online Psychotherapy</u> Dr Joanna Komorowska-Mach PhD	Poster
81	<u>Employing novel ways to establish the specificity of psychotherapy components: Open/hidden Administration of psychotherapeutic alliance</u> Emil Kane Nissen MSc, Silvana Gross MSc, Theresa Zehnder MSc, Clara Wehlage BSc, Prof Jens Gaab Dr. phil.	Poster
93	<u>An empirical examination of central assumptions of person-centred and experiential personality theory using path analysis</u> Ivan Leonardelli MSc, MSc, MSc	Poster
94	<u>Effectiveness of person-centred and experiential psychotherapy in a training setting – changes beyond symptom reduction</u> Ivan Leonardelli MSc, MSc, MSc	Poster
96	<u>Person-centered theory meets Self-Determination Theory: The role of psychological need frustration for authenticity</u> Ivan Leonardelli MSc, MSc, MSc	Poster
105	<u>Why Do We Have the "Linking Experience of Object and Self (LEOS)"?</u> Sakura Marumoto Ph.D. Student	Poster
152	<u>A Mixed Methods Approach to Enhancing Student Well-Being: Exploring and Comparing Mindfulness and Focusing.</u> Prof Ellen Gunst ¹ , Prof Marie Vandekerckhove ² , Prof Filip Raes ³ , Dr Marisa Hoslet ¹	Poster
155	<u>Eating Insights: Changers as an Experiential Open-Label Placebo Intervention to Support Self-Actualization</u> Frederic Linssen Psychologist	Poster

Experiential Workshops/Talks

Fri, 10 July, 12:00 – 1:00 pm

97 There is always someone inside... <u>Regina Marge Juergens</u>	Experiential Workshop (75 min)	Quirinus
80 Bored in the room <u>Barbora Hrdlickova</u>	Experiential Workshop (75 min)	Laurentius
12 Untangling in a Changing World: Inner Relationship Focusing as a Pathway to Presence and Agency <u>PANOS ROKIDIS MSc / ECP</u>	Individual Talk (20 min)	Gereon
69 Actualizing from Person-Centered to Being-Centered: What if we co-create change with animals, nature, and collective processes? <u>Juliane von Crailsheim</u>	Individual Talk (20 min)	
38 Voice and Communication – The Sound of Authentic Mood in a Changing World <u>Susanne U. Hauf</u>	Individual Talk (20 min)	

Experiential Workshops

Fri, 10 July, 2:30 – 3:45 pm

68 Prouty's PRE-THERAPY: "the technique is easy but the art is difficult". <u>Dion Van Werde M.A.</u>	Experiential Workshop (75 min)	Maternussaal
110 Supervision in Emotion-focused Therapy (EFT) <u>Dr Lars Auszra PHD¹, Dr imke R. Herrmann PHD¹, Prof emeritus Robert Elliott PhD^{2,3}</u>	Experiential Workshop (75 min)	Dreikönigssaal
6 Principles of Queer and Trans Affirming Therapy <u>Sara Stanizai MA, LMFT</u>	Experiential Workshop (75 min)	Adelheid
104 Doing social justice! What person-centered counseling can learn from social work <u>Laura Grünert M.A. Psychosocial counseling and social rights^{1,2,3}, Prof Ulle Jäger¹</u>	Experiential Workshop (75 min)	Quirinus

78 Decolonising Practitioners; Practicing Decolonising – developing an embedded approach to decolonisation in training courses. <u>Terry Daly¹, Barbara Malinen²</u>	Experiential Workshop (75 min)	Laurentius
74 Helping Employees Without Reinforcing Unhealthy Work Cultures: Using Focusing to Empower Workers <u>Prof Akiko Doi Ph.D.</u>	Experiential Workshop (75 min)	Gereon
157 The Art of Being Present: Re-examining Rogers' Therapeutic Presence Through a Contemporary Lens <u>Dr Harald Erik Tichy PhD¹, Dr Christian Metz PhD², Patrick Akrivos Mag.²</u>	Experiential Workshop (75 min)	Suitbertus
122 Academic Seminars as Significant Learning Communities: Practice and Research Perspectives <u>Prof Renate Motschnig Dr.</u>	Experiential Workshop (75 min)	Heribert
85 Applying Empathic Responses in diverse social situations <u>Dr Sarah Elisabeth Fruehauf PhD</u>	Experiential Workshop (75 min)	Bruno
167 „The Bodying Person“- Focusing with the Whole Body (FWB) – Sensing the living process within and without <u>Astrid A. Schillings Dipl.Psych.</u>	Experiential Workshop (75 min)	Lambertus

Creative/Experiential Workshops/Encounter

Fri, 10 July, 4:15-5:45 pm

61 The person-centred approach – elitist niche or potential for peacemaking? <u>Barbara Wirkner¹, Arne Klein²</u>	Creative Workshop (90 min)	Maternussaal
ENCOUNTER	90 min	Dreikönigssaal
173 A CHANGING WORLD... from Personal Stories to Collective Power: PCE and Theatre of the Oppressed <u>Dr Audace Manirahinyuza Dr. phil.¹, Katrin vom Hoff Master²</u>	Creative Workshop (90 min)	Adelheid
47 Power Sensibility: Counselling Practice Between Relationship and Responsibility <u>Lena Mazurkiewicz</u>	Experiential Workshop (75 min)	Quirinus

103 Fragmented realities: Developing dis/continuous dis/jointed perspectives on self-plurality in a changing world <u>Yana Gololob</u>	Experiential Workshop (75 min)	Laurentius
90 Thinking-at-the-Edge about the 'Changing World' - resonances, action steps, research ideas <u>Till Schultze-Gebhardt M.A.</u>	Creative Workshop (90 min)	Gereon
88 Empathy in Practice: A Creative Workshop on Intuition and Shared Problem-Solving <u>Prof Bernhard Standl</u>	Creative Workshop (90 min)	Suitbertus
151 Meditative Watercolors: Calming in chaos <u>Dr Christine Abassary PhD</u>	Creative Workshop (90 min)	Heribert
46 True Colors – Feel and Unfold Your Own Unique Sound <u>Susanne U. Hauf</u>	Creative Workshop (90 min)	Bruno
63 From Inner Knowing to Collective Action: Person-Centered Constellations & Focusing in a Changing World <u>Michael Schöling M.A. or M.Sc. in Psychology¹, Juliane von Crailsheim Diploma²</u>	Online Creative Workshop (90 min)	Laurentius

Talks/Symposia/Lectures

Sat, 11 July, 10:45 – 11:45 am

77 Experiential-Existential Psychotherapy and the Great Unknown <u>Prof Siebrecht Vanhooren PdD</u>	Individual Lecture (60 min)	Materussaal
192 Reimagining EFT for Marginalised Populations: Creating Inclusive Therapy Spaces <u>Prof emeritus Robert Elliot¹, Dr Tim van Wanrooij DCounsPsych², Dominique Mertens Psychologist^{3,4}</u>	Individual Lecture (60 min)	Dreikönigssaal
139 Nothing works better? Effects of open-label placebo in diverse populations, conditions and settings <u>Prof Jens Gaab PhD, Bojana Degen MSc, Nadja Heimgartner MSc</u>	Symposium (60 min)	Adelheid
113 What Kind of Helpers Does the Future Need? <u>Dr Christopher C Wagner PhD</u>	Individual Lecture (60 min)	Quirinus

121 How authenticity grows in person-centred therapy: insights from the Human Flourishing Project <u>Dr Richard Doyle PhD, Jen Holland, Dr Shun Chen PhD, Prof David Murphy PhD</u> 163 The Authenticity Scale may help you track how your clients are doing in a complex world <u>Danny Gehlen M. Sc.</u> 135 The Effects of Interactive Focusing-Oriented Counseling (IFC) on Authenticity and Self-Compassion. <u>Prof KUMIYO SAKAI Ph.D.</u>	Individual Talk (20 min) Individual Talk (20 min) Individual Talk (20 min)	Laurentius
174 Person-Centered Education meets Motivational Interviewing and generative AI <u>Prof Renate Motschnig Dr.</u> 141 Fostering Person-Centered Classroom Learning Communities in Times of Crisis: A Resilience-Focused Middle School Intervention <u>Dr Yotam Hod PhD¹, Dr Shiri Kashi PhD², Dr Liat Rahmian PhD², Adiel Benjamin Tammam MA¹, Sahar Tueg MA¹</u> 143 On Becoming a Clown: An Autoethnographic Exploration of Clowning and Psychological Support in Social Injustice <u>Dr Shimpei Okamura Ph.D.</u>	Individual Talk (20 min) Individual Talk (20 min) Individual Talk (20 min)	Gereon
41 Long Covid and Me/CFS in Psychotherapy <u>Beate Weissinger Mag</u> 179 Person-centered therapy of a patient with persistent major depressive disorder: a case report <u>Prof emeritus Hans-Jürgen Luderer MD</u> 114 Neuroemergence: A call to action for the client-centered community <u>Dr Christine Abassary PhD</u>	Individual Talk (20 min) Individual Talk (20 min) Individual Talk (20 min)	Suitbertus
154 Ways of being – and being away. Some existential questions for navigating presence in turbulent times. <u>Trees Depoorter</u> 178 The Free Energy Principle: Does it change how we can refine the organismic valuing process constructs ? <u>Matthias Guillod M.Sc.</u>	Individual Talk (20 min) Individual Talk (20 min)	Heribert
70 Fragmented Wholeness in a Changing World: A Molecular View on Growing and Shrinking in Person-Centered Being <u>Christina Maria Busch Mag.rer.nat., MSc</u>	Individual Lecture (60 min)	Bruno

65 <u>Innovation and Social Inclusion in Training the Person-Centred and Experiential Psychotherapist</u> Dr Maria Kefalopoulou PhD ¹ , Alex Vallidis MSc ^{2,3} , Eleftheria Petrakaki MSc ¹	Symposium (60 min)	Lambertus
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Experiential Workshops

Sat, 11 July, 12:00 – 1:15 pm

195 <u>War: Intercultural Dialogue Through Images. Workshop using Artificial Intelligence</u> Valeriia Pryhozhyna	Experiential Workshop (75 min)	Maternussaal
ENCOUNTER	75 min	Dreikönigssaal
112 <u>Why artificial intelligence cannot replace reading: A workshop on experiential learning</u> Prof Ulle Jäger PhD	Experiential Workshop (75 min)	Adelheid
188 <u>Beyond AI. Stimulating Self-Reflection in Clients as a Method of Establishing Contact with their own Experience</u> Piotr Dariusz Fijewski MA ^{1,2} , Maria Fijewska MA ³	Experiential Workshop (75 min)	Quirinus
95 <u>Gendered Journeys in a Changing World</u> Katharina Schwarz, Lian H. Walter	Experiential Workshop (75 min)	Laurentius
147 <u>Fragile process: a personal experience</u> Martin A Lange Counsellor	Individual Lecture (60 min)	Gereon
83 <u>Reclaiming the Emotional Self: Integrating Children Focusing with EFT for Youth in Hyperconnected World</u> Krzysztof D Błazejewski M.A	Experiential Workshop (75 min)	Suitbertus
165 <u>The Quiet Radicalism of Remembering: Tenderness as Method, Faith as Felt Sense</u> Graham Westwell MSc Counselling	Experiential Workshop (75 min)	Heribert
126 <u>The changing world of experiences in suicidal crises. How the person-centered approach can prevent suicides</u> Dr David Oberreiter	Experiential Workshop (75 min)	Bruno
27 <u>Self of the Therapist: Exploring the Limbic System of the Practitioner</u> Christine W Powers MA, MS.Ed., MHC-LP ¹ , Mizuho Kanazawa LPC, LCAT, MA-BCT ²	Experiential Workshop (75 min)	Lambertus

The Online Conference overview 8-11 July 2026

Preliminary Programme Structure PCE 2026 Online Conference

(programme changes possible)

WED 8 July	THU 9 July	FRI 10 July	SAT 11 July
	9.00 – 10.15 am Dialogue Keynote „Climate Crisis“ - streamed -	9.00 – 10.15 am Dialogue Keynote „Social Injustice“ - streamed -	9.00 – 10.15 am Dialogue Keynote „AI“ - streamed -
	Break	Break	Break
	10.45 – 11.45 am Talks/Symposia/ Lectures - online -	10.45 – 11.45 am Talks/Symposia/ Lectures - online -	10.45 – 11.45 am Talks/Symposia/ Lectures - online -
	Break	Break	Break
	12.00 – 1.30 pm Experiential & Creative Workshops - online -	12.00 – 1.30 pm Experiential & Creative Workshops - online -	12.00 – 12.40 pm Talks/Symposia/ Lectures - online -
			1:00pm - 2:00pm Community meeting - online -
2.00 – 2.45 pm Opening - streamed -			2.30 – 4.00 pm Final Keynote/Panel 'reflections and implications' - streamed -
2.45 – 3.45 pm Entry Keynote - streamed -			Break
Break			4.20 – 5.20 pm Community meeting - streamed -
4.15 – 5.15 pm Honouring Gendlin Keynote - streamed -			5.30 – 6.00 pm Presentation PCE2028 Joint Closure - streamed -
5.15 - 6.00 pm Community meeting - streamed -			
	8.00pm – 10.00pm PCE World General Assembly <i>PCE World members only</i>	8.00pm – 10.00pm PCE World General Assembly <i>PCE World members only</i>	

Online Lectures/Symposia/Talks

Thu, 9 July, 10:45 – 11:45 am

42 Collaborating With The Client: An Integrative Person-Centered Approach To Psychotherapy <u>Dr arthur c bohart PhD</u>	Online Individual Lecture (60 min)	ONLINE 1
153 Relational Safety, Emerging Agency, and Growth: An Integrated Mixed-Methods Synthesis of Change in Person-Centred Experiential Therapy <u>Vallidis Alex MSc.^{1,2}, Chara Rontouli - Bacher BSc^{3,4}, Adonis Labrinos MSc.^{1,5}</u>	Online Symposium (60 min)	ONLINE 2
98 Immersive virtual nature to promote mental health and nature connectedness in youths: a scoping review <u>Mostafa El Madani¹, Branislav Kaleta Master², Prof Jelle Van Cauwenberg PhD¹, Prof Jennifer Foucart PhD¹, Prof Jolanta Burke PhD², Prof Malgorzata Klass PhD¹</u>	Online Individual Talk (20 min)	ONLINE 3
131 Person-centred debriefing intervention: Integrating core conditions into critical incident stress management <u>Hein Htet Lwin Oo MBBS¹, Dr Myint Myint Win MBBS², Khin Moh Moh Kyaw B.A Psychology¹, Dr Tin Ko Latt MBBS¹</u>	Online Individual Talk (20 min)	
132 A Changing world: Growth amidst uncertainty, person-centered approach and therapist <u>Dr Myint Myint - Win M.B.,B.S; M.A(Health Social Science)¹, Hein Htet Lwin Oo HS-BCP²</u>	Online Individual Talk (20 min)	

Online Workshops

Thu, 9 July, 12:00 – 1:30 am

19 Understanding Developmental Stages and Dissociation- ever more important in our changing world - A Person-Centred Perspective <u>Jan S Hawkins MA Person-Centred Counselling Studies</u>	Online Creative Workshop (90 min)	ONLINE 1
33 Pleasure as an Anchor in a World of Fake-news: Embodied Presence for Therapists in Uncertain Times <u>Wajan J Hale BA, Grad Dip Edu, Grad Dip Counselling, EFCT Externship</u>	Online Experiential Workshop (90 min)	ONLINE 3

Online Lectures/Symposia/Talks

Fri, 10 July, 10:45 – 11:45 am

79 The Actualising Tendency Under Cultural Fragmentation <u>Zaid Al-Nayazi MSc Counselling & Psychotherapy</u>	Online Symposium (60 min)	ONLINE 1
7 In the Language of the Soul: Person-Centered Psychotherapy in the Native Language of War-Traumatized Refugees <u>Dr Viktoriya Zipper-Weber</u>	Online Individual Talk (20 min)	ONLINE 2
127 Trusting the Organism in a Changing World: Applying Wu-wei to Person-Centered Therapy <u>Dr Cui Jing PhD</u>	Online Individual Talk (20 min)	
130 “Being With” Before “Doing For”: Person-Centred Approach in Creative Expressive Mental Health Workshops in Myanmar <u>Khin Moh Moh Kyaw B.A Psychology¹, Hein Htet Lwin Oo MBBS¹, Dr Myint Myint Win MBBS², Dr Tin Ko Latt MBBS¹</u>	Online Individual Talk (20 min)	
67 Happiness and the Person-Centred Perspective: A Polyvagal and Neuropsychophysiological Understanding of Well-Being <u>Dr Maria Kefalopoulou PhD¹, Alex Vallidis MSc.^{1,2}</u>	Online Individual Lecture (60 min)	ONLINE 3

ONLINE: Fri, 10 July, 12:00 – 1:00 pm

53 Crash course: Person-centered therapy for clients in psychotic process. <u>Mathias Dekeyser MS</u>	Online Experiential Workshop (90 min)	ONLINE 1
32 UnWorlding the Changing: Disrupting Discourses of a Changing World <u>Dr Brian Rodgers PhD¹, Prof Keith Tudor PhD²</u>	Online Experiential Workshop (90 min)	ONLINE 3

ONLINE: Sat, 11 July, 10:45 – 11:45 am

123 Person-Centered Approach as a Catalyst for Change <u>Dr Tin Ko Latt M.B.B.S</u>	Online Symposium (60 min)	ONLINE 1
124 Exploring fear and self-healing in a changing world <u>Dr Ross Crisp Ph.D</u>	Online Individual Lecture (60 min)	ONLINE 2

ONLINE: Sat, 11 July, 12:00 – 12:20 pm

180 <u>"At the Threshold of Meaning": Natural Pause at the Intersection of Human Reflection and Generative AI</u> <u>Prof Soti Grafanaki PhD¹, William Hernandez²</u>	Online Individual Talk (20 min)	ONLINE 1
30 <u>Between Coaching and Therapy: A Reflexive Thematic Analysis of Clients' Lived Experience of First-Time Coaching</u> <u>Kate H Brassington MSc¹, Dr Tia Moin PhD²</u>	Online Individual Talk (20 min)	ONLINE 2

6

Principles of Queer and Trans Affirming Therapy

Sara Stanizai MA, LMFT

Prospect Therapy, Long Beach, CA, USA



Sara Stanizai

Author Bio

Sara Stanizai, LMFT is an Afghan-American speaker, coach and a licensed therapist who founded Prospect Therapy to create a queer- and trans-affirming practice that focuses specifically on serving first-generation American and immigrant communities. As a queer first-gen herself, Sara's clinical and professional work focuses on serving intercultural couples, particularly in the LGBTQ+ communities. Through therapy, intensives and group experiences, she helps participants find reconciliation with self, culture and relationships. Sara is passionate and knowledgeable about entrepreneurship in marginalized communities, and believes in the importance of lived experience in the professional world. In addition to running her group practice, she currently serves on the board of Asian Mental Health Collective, Mind-1-1, and previously served on the Board of Directors of the Los Angeles Bi+ Task Force. She holds an advanced certificate in transgender affirming therapy from Widener University. She completed her MA in Clinical Psychology from the Chicago School of Professional Psychology and her undergraduate degree at Mount Holyoke College.

Abstract

Providing affirming care for queer and trans communities requires more than just good intentions; it demands a nuanced understanding of evolving identity models and a high degree of clinician self-awareness. This experiential workshop offers an overview of research-based frameworks for queer and trans identity development (updated through 2021), designed to help clinicians move beyond basic competency toward clinical fluency.

Participants will engage in structured self-reflection exercises to explore their own "use of self" and identify potential strengths and biases that impact the therapeutic alliance. We will outline core principles of affirming care that transcend specific therapeutic modalities, providing a flexible blueprint for strong case conceptualization. By bridging the gap between theoretical research and practical application, this session equips practitioners to navigate complex identity intersections with greater fluency and confidence. Attendees will leave with a robust toolkit of affirming frameworks and actionable strategies to enhance their practice immediately.

Learning Objectives:

1. Identify and compare at least two modern frameworks of queer and trans identity development to enhance clinical assessment.
2. Apply three core principles of affirming care to clinical practice, including the removal of the "burden of education" from the client.
3. Demonstrate increased "use of self" fluency by identifying personal strengths and biases through experiential reflection exercises.

Submission type

Experiential Workshop (75 min)

Keywords

queer, trans, identity, framework, relational

7

In the Language of the Soul: Person-Centered Psychotherapy in the Native Language of War-Traumatized Refugees

Dr Viktoriya Zipper-Weber

University for Continuing Education Krems, Krems an der Donau, Austria



Dr Viktoriya Zipper-Weber

Author Bio

Author: Dr. Viktoriya Zipper-Weber is a senior scientist and MSc program director in Health Care Management at the Department of Economy and Health at University for Continuing Education Krems as well as a person-centered psychotherapist in private practice in Vienna and Lower Austria. She also works as a freelance intercultural psychotherapist for the Diakonie Refugee Service (Jefira Association) and volunteers as a district coordinator for the Lower Austrian Provincial Association for Psychotherapy (NÖLP).

Abstract

In the Language of the Soul: Person-Centered Psychotherapy in the Native Language of War-Traumatized Refugees

Dr. Viktoriya Zipper-Weber

University for Continuing Education Krems (UWK), Austria

Senior Scientist, Department for Economy and Health

Abstract

What does it mean to encounter the other person in their own language – not only linguistically, but existentially? In a world marked by war, displacement, and fragmentation, person-centered psychotherapy is challenged to offer connection, safety, and dignity to those whose lives have been uprooted.

This presentation draws on a multiple case study approach with war-traumatized refugees receiving psychotherapy in their native language. Across several therapeutic encounters, clients described how the possibility to speak in their mother tongue created space for more authentic emotional expression, enabled the symbolization of overwhelming experiences, and fostered a sense of continuity in disrupted lives. The case material demonstrates how shared language deepens empathic resonance, strengthens the therapeutic alliance, and supports the restoration of agency and identity.

The findings highlight that therapy in the client's native language is not merely a technical adaptation, but a person-centered response to existential dislocation. It affirms dignity,

acknowledges cultural belonging, and reduces the risk of retraumatization. Meeting the client in their own language thus becomes an act of affirmation and relational ethics within the therapeutic encounter.

In a rapidly changing world, these case-based insights invite practitioners to re-examine the person-centered core conditions through the lens of linguistic congruence — and to advocate for training, structures, and policies that ensure refugees have access to psychotherapy in their own language.

Keywords:

person-centered psychotherapy, displacement, native language, case study, war trauma, empathic resonance, existential dislocation

Submission type

Online Individual Talk (20 min)

8

The Storyteller's Couch: Fairytale, Shadow, and the Person-Centred Journey Through a Changing World.

Dr Pearl Dawn Brock Doctor of Philosophy

IICP, DUBLIN, Ireland. GCAS, Dublin, Ireland



Dr Pearl Dawn Brock

Author Bio

Pearl Brock is a Consultant Clinical Psychotherapist, Senior Lecturer, and Clinical Director of ThinkWell Psychotherapy Clinic in Ireland. She completed her doctoral research with the Global Center for Advanced Studies, exploring the therapeutic application of symbolic narrative and fairytale writing within person-centred and experiential psychotherapy. Pearl's work is grounded in a commitment to depth, autonomy, and ethical integrity, with particular emphasis on facilitating the client's unique way of being within the therapeutic space. Integrating Jungian, post-Jungian, and narrative approaches, her research examines how symbolic storytelling supports clients in engaging with unconscious material, shadow dynamics, and processes of individuation. Pearl is also the founder of Personal Philosophy Focused Psychotherapy, an evolving practice model that invites clients to explore, articulate, and embody their own philosophical position as a foundation for psychological growth, self-understanding, and relational depth. Her clinical and academic work reflects a dedication to creativity, meaning-making, and the evolving possibilities of person-centred and experiential psychotherapy.

Abstract

In an increasingly fragmented and unpredictable world, psychotherapists must support clients in cultivating psychological resilience, coherence, and self-understanding. This presentation draws on my doctoral research exploring the use of symbolic narrative within person-centred and experiential psychotherapy, specifically through fairytale writing as a method for engaging unconscious material.

Grounded in Jungian and narrative traditions, this work demonstrates how fairytale creation offers a structured, non-pathologising space for clients to explore internal conflicts, shame-bound material, and shadow aspects of the self. Through symbolic storytelling, clients encounter archetypal patterns that support processes of individuation and integration. Clinical examples and research findings will illustrate how client-generated narratives reveal unconscious dynamics, facilitating self-awareness, relational depth, and autonomy. This approach offers psychotherapists a creative, ethically grounded means of responding to the psychological impact of a rapidly changing world, while remaining aligned with the core values of person-centred and experiential practice.

Submission type

Poster

Keywords

Narrative therapy , Jungian , Experiential , Individuation , Understanding Differently

12

Untangling in a Changing World: Inner Relationship Focusing as a Pathway to Presence and Agency

PANOS ROKIDIS MSc / ECP

Athens, Greece



PANOS ROKIDIS

Author Bio

Panos Rokidis is a Person-Centred Psychotherapist based in Athens, Greece. He holds the European Certificate of Psychotherapy and an MSc in Psychodynamics of Human Development from Birkbeck, University of London. He is currently training in Focusing-Oriented Psychotherapy and Emotion-Focused Therapy. Panos has a background in teaching and acting in theatre. He values deep connection, presence, and the transformative power of relationship.

Abstract

Untangling in a Changing World

In a world increasingly marked by ecological crisis, social fragmentation and emotional overwhelm, the challenge of staying grounded and responsive—rather than reactive—seems more urgent than ever. This presentation explores **Untangling**, an advanced process within **Inner Relationship Focusing** (IRF), developed by Barbara McGavin and Ann Weiser Cornell (Cornell & McGavin, 2008). IRF is rooted in Eugene Gendlin's **Focusing** method (Gendlin, 1978).

Untangling offers a way to engage with complex inner states (Tangles) by cultivating a radically accepting, embodied relationship with them. Rather than attempting to resolve inner conflict through analysis or willpower, Untangling invites presence: a spacious, compassionate attention that allows even the most painful parts of the self to be heard and transformed through empathic contact and Presence (McGavin & Cornell, 2024).

Drawing from personal experience in the "Untangling Retreats", I reflect on the profound impact of being invited to welcome every part of one's experience—even those characterized by ambiguity or emotional paralysis. The process, by emphasizing the cultivation of **radical acceptance** (Cornell, 2025), **embodied presence** and **non-judgmental awareness**, has reshaped not only my relationship with myself but also how I accompany clients navigating fragmentation during external crises.

In a time demanding urgency, Untangling offers an invitation to slow down, listen inwardly, and trust the body's knowing. Cultivating such presence supports deeper integration, resilience, and agency.

Untangling becomes not only a therapeutic method but a life practice for navigating inner complexity in a rapidly changing world.

References

Cornell, A.W. (2005). *The Radical Acceptance of Everything: Living a Focusing Life*. Calluna Press, Berkeley, CA.

Cornell, A. W., & McGavin, B. (2008). *Inner Relationship Focusing*. Retrieved from <https://focusingresources.com/inner-relationship-focusing/>

Gendlin, E. T. (1978). *Focusing*. Everest House, New York.

McGavin, B., & Cornell, A. W. (2024). *Untangling: How you can transform what's impossibly stuck*. Calluna Press, Berkeley, CA.

Submission type

Individual Talk (20 min)

Keywords

Untangling, Inner Relationship Focusing, Presence, Acceptance, Awareness

13

The Actualising Journey: Exploring PCA Through CardsSara A. Cagliesi

pcaSuisse, Zurich, Switzerland



Sara A. Cagliesi

Author Bio

Sara Cagliesi is a Trainer in professional education in the canton of Vaud, Switzerland, and a certified Person-Centered Counsellor. Born in 1983 and mother of two, she has been running her private counselling practice since 2023. Sara published "An Authentic Life: The Person-Centered Approach Cards (Carl Rogers)" — a deck of 50 illustrated cards accompanied by a booklet.

Abstract

This workshop presents the journey that led to the creation of a unique deck of 50 illustrated cards, designed during PCA counselling training at pcaSuisse. Drawing on both theoretical foundations and personal experiences, the deck — accompanied by a booklet — offers a hands-on way to explore and embody the Person-Centered Approach (PCA).

You'll discover the inspiration behind the project and learn how to apply the cards in diverse settings: individual therapy, group work, self-reflection, and everyday life.

An experiential segment will invite participants into a creative exploration of selected cards, using metaphor and artistic expression to connect more deeply with core PCA values and stimulate personal insight.

Join us to experience how this original tool can support presence, authenticity, and growth in your person-centered practice — and in life.

Submission type

Creative Workshop (90 min)

Keywords

Creative tool , Creativity, Theoretical foundations , PCA outreach, Living PCA daily

15

Accompanying and facilitating organizational change

Prof Ulrich Siegrist Master of Organizational Psychology; Doctorate in Counselling Science

Catholic University of Applied Sciences, Freiburg, Germany



Prof Ulrich Siegrist

Author Bio

see here: <https://www.kh-freiburg.de/de/hochschule/profil/personen/siegrist-ulrich>

Abstract

A changing world also requires organizations to change. Adaptation and further development are necessary and sometimes decisive for the future. How can PCE contribute to shaping this change and to making it effective and sustainable?

In the journal "Person" (2024, Vol. 28, No. 1, 31-38), I have presented a person-centered-experiential model of change tailored to organisations. It goes back to my research on change processes in coaching and assumes that the process of change must not only consider external demands, but should also take into account that exploring the internal experience of the organisation, its differences, needs and dynamics, is crucial to finding coherent solutions.

After a short introduction to the PCE model of change, the discussion will deal with two main questions:

1. To what extent does the model coincide with the experience from consulting practice, and to what extent would it need to be further developed?
2. Which conceptual and methodological aspects are relevant when it comes to the practical application of the model? A best practice exchange would be desirable here.

At the end, a joint poster should be created, containing the main points of the discussion. It can then serve as a basis for further developments in consulting practice.

Submission type

Experiential Workshop (75 min)

Keywords

organisation, organizational development, model of change, consulting practice, workplace counselling

Person Centred Experiential Therapy for Trauma - A Multiple Baseline Trial

Jen S Holland MA

University of Nottingham, Nottingham, United Kingdom



Jen S Holland

Author Bio

Jen Holland is an early career researcher and academic with a special interest in human flourishing and The Person-Centred Approach. A practicing Psychotherapist and PhD Scholar, her research focus is on understanding trauma through the Person-Centred lens. Jen is an Assistant Professor of Human Flourishing at The University of Nottingham teaching on the MA Person Centred Experiential Counselling and Psychotherapy Program, committed to a person-centred pedagogy focussing on psychological growth and human development. Co-founder of The Human Flourishing Project, providing accessible psychotherapy to the community of Nottingham city

Abstract

In this changing world, traumatic experiences continue to be part of life, yet the language of trauma and post traumatic growth is understood through an increasingly medicalised lens. Little research has been dedicated to Person Centred Experiential Therapy within the trauma field. Despite trauma recovery being at the very centre of the theory underpinning the person centred approach. This empirical research adds to the existing body of work within this field.

In the UK healthcare system CBT, EMDR are recommended treatments for post traumatic stress, but we also know that these approaches might not be right for everyone. It is possible to offer an alternative understanding of the psychological impact and recovery from traumatic experiences, one that centres on a growth paradigm. We know that Person-Centred therapists routinely work with traumatised clients, although understanding how Rogers' theory accounts for the phenomenology of traumatic experiencing and post traumatic stress is often less clear to therapists.

I present the findings of a staggered multiple baseline trial conducted in a UK research clinic between 2024-2025. The research includes 13 cases, each met the diagnostic criteria for PTSD at intake. Following a non-concurrent staggered baseline phase, clients were randomly allocated to receive 20 sessions of person-centred therapy with post graduate person-centred experiential therapists. Therapists had been specially trained in principles of person-centred therapy for trauma that were identified in an earlier study examining good outcome trauma cases. The results were analysed using multi-level modelling, comparing different timepoints, this included wait list control, treatment and 6 month follow up. Finally, the reliable change index was calculated. The results showed strong evidence for the effects of this therapy, examining both measures of psychological distress and psychological growth. This research offers unique empirical evidence that Person Centred Experiential Therapy is effective as a trauma therapy.

Submission type

Individual Lecture (60 min)

Keywords

Trauma, PTG, Person-centred Psychotherapy, Recovery, Empirical Research

19

Understanding Developmental Stages and Dissociation- ever more important in our changing world - A Person-Centred Perspective

Jan S Hawkins MA Person-Centred Counselling Studies

The Foundation for the Developing Person, London, United Kingdom. tPCA, London, United Kingdom. NCPS, West Sussex, United Kingdom



Jan S Hawkins

Author Bio

Jan Hawkins is a Person-Centred therapist, supervisor, author, group facilitator and trainer in independent practice. Jan ran groups for adult Survivors of childhood abuse during the early nineties, controversially with women and men together, for those who had experienced any type of trauma. In response to the expressed need of practitioners, in 1994 Jan created, and co-facilitated, a Diploma course in Counselling Survivors of Childhood Abuse, the first initiative of its kind in Europe. Since then, through FDP, Jan has continued to offer study days with a conviction that experiential learning is imperative for the continued development and deepening of the core attitudinal qualities of the Person-Centred-Approach. For publications, see www.janhawkins.co.uk

Abstract

This session will invite participants to focus on the long term sequelae of childhood trauma. As our world becomes ever more traumatising, more infants, children and young people are affected daily. We will explore the effects which can last into adulthood, and sometimes throughout life, of having been traumatised as children. We will focus too, on how we as person-centred practitioners may empower and support clients who want to heal these long terms wounds, and live their lives more fully and creatively.

One of the issues facing therapists supporting Survivors of childhood trauma with dissociative identity experiencing (a term I prefer to DID, the last D meaning 'disorder') and other dissociative events, is how to respond to the younger selves in their clients. We may be meeting with an adult who has a self who functions well in the world of work, yet who suffers from isolation in their personal life. That same person may be experiencing flashbacks, losing time, times of anxiety, terror, lostness and/or disconnection with self and other. Lacking the ability to self soothe, they may be overwhelmed with feelings of fear, rage or despair and find no way forward. Diligently they work in our verbal therapy yet cannot heal those aspects of self. This session will include discussion of childhood developmental stages to highlight the needs of each stage in the healing process, and how we as therapists can come alongside each of the inner selves most effectively, this can sometimes feel like group therapy.

A short demonstration video, a presentation drawing on broad developmental psychology theory, Rogers' person-centred personality development theory, and more recent person-centred positive psychology research, there will be time for discussion, process and practice.

My emphasis is on being alongside as a fearless companion in the journey to healing and recovery.

Submission type

Online Creative Workshop (90 min)

Keywords

demonstration, practice, discussion, dissociation, contact

Development and Validation of the Shortened Version of the Integrated Scale on Focusing Attitude 1 (ISFA1)

Prof Hiroyuki Uenishi Ph.D.¹, Prof Aoki Tsuyoshi Ph.D.², Prof Koshikawa Yosuke Ph.D.³, Prof Hideaki Fukumori Ph.D.⁴

¹Osaka Ohtani University, Osaka, Japan. ²Ryukoku University, Kyoto, Japan. ³Kansai Medical University, Osaka, Japan. ⁴Kyushu University, Fukuoka, Japan



Prof Hiroyuki Uenishi

Author Bio

Hiroyuki Uenishi is an Associate Professor in the Department of Psychology and Social Welfare at Osaka Ohtani University, Japan, and a practicing psychologist at a psychiatric hospital. His research focuses on experiential and person-centered approaches, with particular emphasis on the development and validation of the Integrated Scale of Focusing Attitude (ISFA1), which integrates multiple focusing-oriented scales in daily life. In addition, he conducts clinical and empirical studies on other therapeutic modalities, including Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) and related approaches.



Prof Aoki Tsuyoshi

Author Bio

Tsuyoshi Aoki is an Associate Professor in the Faculty of Psychology at Ryukoku University. He has conducted extensive research on focusing and scale development. He translated the Focusing Attitude Scale into English and has presented it at international conferences in connection with various related studies.



Prof Koshikawa Yosuke

Author Bio

Yosuke Koshikawa is a psychologist and research fellow in the Department of Psychiatry and Neurology at Kansai Medical University. He has been engaged in focusing research, contributing to studies on focusing attitude and interoceptive sensitivity, as well as to the integration of the Focusing Attitude Scale in the present project. He is also well-prepared to contribute to future clinical trials.



Prof Hideaki Fukumori

Author Bio

Hideaki Fukumori is a Professor of Counseling and Health Center, Graduate School of Human-Environment Studies Department of Clinical Psychology Practice, and Graduate School of Human-Environment Studies Department of Clinical Psychology and Community Studies, Kyushu University, Japan. His well-known work is the development of the Focusing Manner Scale (FMS), a measure of the focusing attitude. He has also participated in research concerning students' Quality of Student Life (QOSL) within the field of student counselling.

Abstract

Focusing is known not only as a psychotherapeutic method but also as a naturally occurring experiential process. The internal attitude underlying this process, referred to as a “focusing attitude,” has been studied for its psychological significance. Previous findings have shown positive associations with mental health, resilience, alexithymia, self-affirmation, and self-efficacy, suggesting that stronger focusing attitudes contribute to psychological well-being.

In Japan, research on focusing attitude measurement began with the Focusing Manner Scale (FMS; Fukumori & Morikawa, 2003). Since then, multiple scales have been developed, yet no integrated framework existed. To address this, we developed the Integrated Scale of Focusing Attitude 1 (ISFA1). From seven existing scales, 150 items were collected and reduced to 100. A survey of 456 participants and factor analysis yielded eight factors with 72 items: **Attention to body sense, Acceptance of experiencing, Attention to inner sense, Cleared a space, Clearing a space, Experiential distress, Sense of experience, and Epiphany**. Construct validity was supported through correlations with measures such as structural constraint, sense of authenticity, and general mental health. These results were presented at WAPCEPC 2024 in Greece, where the study received international attention and led to fruitful academic exchange.

However, the 72-item ISFA1 is lengthy for clinical and cross-cultural use. This study aims to develop a shortened version by selecting about four items per factor (30–33 total). Its construct validity will be examined using related measures (SOC-13, Self-Stabilization, Self-Concept Clarity, and Attitude toward Ambiguity). This work is expected to improve the feasibility of focusing attitude research and promote international collaboration.

Submission type

Poster

Keywords

Focusing Attitude, Scale, ISFA 1

An introduction to motivational interviewing with couples: Helping relationship partners change together in a changing world

Dr Tyrel J Starks PhD

Hunter College, CUNY, New York City, USA



Dr Tyrel J Starks

Author Bio

Dr. Starks obtained his PhD in Clinical Psychology (specializing in work with children and adolescents) from Southern Illinois University Carbondale in 2009. Currently, he is a Professor of Psychology at Hunter College of the City University of New York; a New York State licensed clinical psychologist; and certified trainer and member of the Motivational Interviewing Network of Trainers (MINT). For more than a decade, Dr. Starks has conducted research funded by the National Institutes of Health focused on sexual-romantic relationships and health, with a particular emphasis on the development of substance use and sexual health interventions for couples. This work is ongoing and includes the 2022 publication of his book, *Motivational Interviewing with Couples*, by Oxford University Press.

Abstract

Motivational interviewing (MI) was developed as an approach to engaging individual clients in conversations about behavior change. Scholarship on MI with couples has expanded vigorously over the past decade and drawn on client-centered couples therapy. Interest has been spurred in part by research documenting health disparities in substance use and HIV infection risk impacting sexual and gender minority couples.

MI with couples draws upon established MI practice components familiar to any experienced practitioner (e.g., MI spirit, processes, and skills like OARS). At the same time, working with a couple means forming an alliance with both of the partners (individually) as well as with the couple as a whole. It involves allowing partners to speak to one another and helping them to communicate more effectively. This workshop will discuss how established MI practices are adjusted in response to these considerations especially when working with couples in which partners feel differently about behavior change.

Helping couples change and grow requires attention to cultural contexts that influence perceptions of relationship quality, the intersection of gender (and other identities) with relationship power, and subgroup norms that inform decisions about behaviors like substance use or sexual risk taking. Aligned with a focus on social justice, this workshop describes how formative research with diverse populations informed the development of MI with couples and culturally humble approaches to practice.

This workshop is a practical introduction designed for providers familiar with MI who are (or wish to begin) integrating couples' services into their practice. It will therefore devote substantial time to demonstration, role-play practice, and discussion.

LEARNING GOALS

- Explain the counselor's role in a couples MI session
- Describe the relevance of relationship quality to couple's ability to form shared goals and work together towards change.
- Utilize and recognize basic skills essential to MI practice with couples

Submission type

Experiential Workshop (75 min)

Keywords

Couples, Substance use, Motivational interviewing, Relationships, sexual and gender minorities

To Guide or Not to Guide? – Measuring Therapist Directivity in Carl Rogers' Work and Beyond

Michael Kelber M.A., MSc

FORUM, Vienna, Austria. MedUni Wien, Vienna, Austria



Michael Kelber

Author Bio

Michael Kelber, M.A., MSc, is a registered psychotherapist in private practice in Vienna. In addition to his training in Person-Centered Experiential Psychotherapy in Germany (GWG) and Austria (FORUM), he completed further training in Humanistic Psychotherapy (AGHPT) and Emotion-Focused Therapy (DeGEFT). Since receiving his MSc in Psychotherapy Research at the Medical University of Vienna, he has been active in clinical practice, teaching, and research in German-speaking countries – among them as Research Officer of FORUM. His research interest focuses on the tension between a person-centered attitude and process-directive therapeutic practice, including theoretical and empirical reflection on this issue.

Abstract

Should therapists rather empathically follow the client or also guide the therapeutic process? That very question is not only a matter of considerable theoretical debate but a question therapists face in every moment of their work: Am I too far ahead of my client, too slow, too repetitive, too cautious, or perhaps too fast? Such questions about therapist directivity —how strongly therapists consciously or unconsciously influence the trajectory of a client's speech acts —are central to the history of psychotherapy and remain highly relevant within the person-centered-experiential (PCE) tradition.

This presentation introduces a methodological approach to measuring therapist directivity and presents initial empirical findings. Directivity is conceptualized as a continuum, ranging from client-following to guiding interventions, depending on the extent to which therapist utterances shift the client's process. For this purpose, a five-point Likert-type *Scale of Directivity* was developed, using a saturated sequence of Emotion-Focused Therapy interventions as anchors. Item sequencing was based on pairwise dominance comparisons rated by 23 psychotherapists, reaching saturation after the eleventh matrix. Pilot applications include Carl Rogers' original sessions as well as transcripts from Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy, Psychodynamic Therapy, and Psychoanalysis.

Descriptive analyses of Rogers' transcripts illustrate how his therapeutic stance can be located along the directivity continuum, offering insights into potential changes in his style over time. Further preliminary findings suggest that while levels of directivity differ across therapeutic approaches, the overall sessional patterns appear broadly similar. Practically, the findings may help therapists identify moments when guiding interventions could open new pathways in therapy.

At the end of the presentation, I wish to discuss with the audience particularly how following-oriented and guiding-oriented therapeutic stances in PCE might enrich one another and when they seem to be indicated.

Submission type

Individual Talk (20 min)

Keywords

Directivity, Experiential, Relationship, Process Research, Dropout

Self of the Therapist: Exploring the Limbic System of the Practitioner

Christine W Powers MA, MS.Ed., MHC-LP¹, Mizuho Kanazawa LPC, LCAT, MA-BCT²

¹Carmel, USA. ²New York, USA



Christine W Powers

Author Bio

Christine Powers holds a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in Theatre from the Tisch School of the Arts at New York University. She earned her Master's degree in Performance Studies from NYU and Certificate in International Trauma Studies in 2011. Christine also attained a Master's degree in Clinical Mental Health Counseling in 2024 and works as a Trauma Therapist with victims of crime. Christine is passionate about transformative therapeutic processes involving experiential and somatic practice that foster empathy and understanding. Christine has been a playback theatre practitioner and member of Big Apple Playback Theatre since 2009.



Mizuho Kanazawa

Author Bio

Mizuho Kanazawa is a Japanese native who has lived in the U.S. for over 28 years. She studied stage acting at Marymount Manhattan College, and later completed her M.A. in Drama Therapy at NYU. Mizuho has been performing and teaching Playback Theater in New York City since 1999 and maintains a private psychotherapy practice with adults and interracial and/or intercultural couples. Mizuho specializes in clients who feel they live "between cultures" and uses a therapeutic approach informed by her drama therapy training, psychodrama, IFS, her extensive background in improvisational theater, and her lived experience navigating cultures herself. Learn more: www.dramaforhealing.com

Abstract

In today's shifting landscape of increased isolation, digital disconnection and collective trauma, both clients and clinicians are navigating heightened nervous system activation. This evolving global context calls for therapists to move beyond purely cognitive approaches and toward practices that support regulation, presence, and authentic human connection.

In this experiential workshop we will create a space for practitioners to develop and explore their limbic system as a reflective and therapeutic tool. In taking an "inside to outside" approach, participants will develop the capacity to counteract disembodiment by restoring felt experience and creativity.

Using Playback Theatre - a form of improvisational storytelling - and embodied exercises, participants will develop tools to encourage empathy, attunement, self-regulation, reciprocity and reflection...essential core competencies to the "self as therapist." This workshop will also include discussion aligned with the foundational principles of person-centered therapy, namely, congruence, empathy, and unconditional positive regard. Using additional concepts of attachment theory and playback theory, therapists will be encouraged to practice being rather than *doing*, a framework that creates genuine therapeutic presence, elevating emotional intelligence, and human connection.

At the completion of the workshop, participants will be able to:

- List and perform 3 tools of co-regulation and attunement
- Illustrate the importance of "cross reciprocity"
- Identify the basic tenets of attachment theory
- Share 2 examples of reflection using metaphor

In this creative and impactful session, participants will be given the opportunity to rethink the space of therapeutic healing as one that involves their vulnerability, creativity and nervous system regulation.

This workshop is for therapists and facilitators who wish to explore creativity and embodiment at any and all experience levels.

Submission type

Experiential Workshop (75 min)

Keywords

Coregulation, Attunement, Attachment, limbic system, Embodiment

Between Coaching and Therapy: A Reflexive Thematic Analysis of Clients' Lived Experience of First-Time Coaching

Kate H Brassington MSc¹, Dr Tia Moin PhD²

¹RCSI, Dublin, Ireland. ²University of Reading, Reading, United Kingdom



Kate H Brassington

Author Bio

Kate Brassington is a PhD Scholar at the Centre for Positive Health Science in Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland, researching Forest Based Interventions for Adolescent Mental Health and Wellbeing. This is part of a major EU and Interreg funded project "Forest4Youth". She is a Coaching Psychologist (GMBPsS) and PCC ICF-certified Trauma-Informed Coach. From her attic in Luxembourg, she works worldwide with non-traditional leaders, solo entrepreneurs, and couples, helping people face major life changes. Her previous research on resilience training in high-risk occupations was published in JPP (2020).



Dr Tia Moin

Author Bio

PhD, chartered coaching psychologist (RAPPs supervisor) and registered psychologist (AU) specialising in Coaching Psychology, Positive Psychology with 20+ years experience in organisational consulting. With international consulting experience, I have had exposure to businesses in the Asia Pacific Region as well as the UK. I have a strong background in executive and professional coaching, personality, cognitive ability, values and behavioural assessments for selection and development. I am committed to supporting professionals to reach optimal performance and wellbeing through the use of evidence based theories and techniques. PhD Psychology - Conversations that Facilitate Change: The Interpersonal and Intrapersonal Effects of High-quality Listening. As a distinction level Master of Science in Applied Positive Psychology and Coaching Psychology, I apply the science of setting motivating goals, overcoming challenges, leveraging strengths, fulfilling potential and achieving meaningful goals in order to help clients achieve sustainable engagement, wellbeing and performance. My interest is in diversity and inclusion, engagement and performance and my dissertation (completed in 2019) explored the experience of Positive Psychology Coaching to develop inclusive mindsets and attitudes. I continue to conduct research on coaching and high quality listening as postdoctoral researcher at the University of Reading. If you are a professional or business leader interested in participating in my research and / or receiving coaching or supervision then do get in touch by emailing tia@theinclusioncoach.co.uk for further details.

Abstract

Importance

Adversity/trauma is reshaping our world. People in distress turn to coaching because it feels accessible and carries less stigma. Lines between coaching and psychotherapy are blurring faster than professional boundaries adapt. We urgently need to respond to the ethical issues that emerge.

Problem

Clients with histories of adversity often seek coaching in good faith to work on non-clinical goals. Coaches, meanwhile, are often unprepared for the depth of distress now entering their practice. In a world that is changing us as much as we are trying to change it, understanding how adversity shapes the coaching relationship requires listening first to lived experience rather than professional authorities.

Aim

This study addresses a significant gap by foregrounding the client's voice in first-time coaching after adversity.

Method

Participants ($n = 16$) with past adversity and no prior coaching experience received two coaching sessions. Qualitative data collected via post-session semi-structured interviews ($n = 32$). Reflexive Thematic Analysis generated themes for analysis.

Findings

Two Master Themes were identified: 1. "Sensitivity to Coach Behaviours", with subordinate themes "On the Same Wavelength", and "Out of Sync". 2. "Processing Issues Beneath the Surface", with subordinate themes "Open Disclosure of Past Adversity", and "Keeping the Past Hidden".

Participants often processed their past alongside everyday goals. Some declared this to the coach, others not, seemingly using coaching to self-author recovery.

Conclusions / Recommendations / Implications for Practice

Coaches may benefit from increasing capacity in staying attuned and non-directive; and preparing to hear adversity safely. We recommend Trauma-Informed Practices (non-pathologising approach); Polyvagal and Somatic Theories (body-based models for safety and co-regulation); and the role of Expert Companion (fostering posttraumatic growth).

Discussion

What does it mean when people *choose* coaching as the place to bring their pain?

How can we, as helping professionals, evolve fast enough to meet this moment?

Submission type

Online Individual Talk (20 min)

31

Teaching + Learning Person-Centered Counseling in Higher Education – Discrimination-Sensitive, Empowering Approaches in Bachelor + Master Social Work Programs

Prof Renate Kosuch Dr., Sabine Dael MA

TH Köln, Cologne, Germany



Prof Renate Kosuch

Author Bio

Prof. Dr. Renate Kosuch, Professor of Psychology, at the Faculty of Applied Social Science, TH Köln, University of Applied Sciences, Cologne, Germany



Sabine Dael

Author Bio

Sabine Dael, M.A., lecturer at the Faculty of Applied Social Science, TH Köln, University of Applied Sciences, Cologne, Germany

Abstract

Person-centered counseling offers a practical and theoretically grounded response to the rapid pace of societal changes. It fosters individual authenticity while enabling collective transformation in an era marked by complexity, uncertainty, and global crises.

Drawing on 15 to 20 years of teaching experience in social work degree programs at a German University of Applied Sciences, this presentation highlights key elements of person-centered counseling that address social injustice and inner conflicts through a power-sensitive practice.

Central aspects will include:

- Active, paraphrasing, and radical listening to identify and disrupt habitually entrenched citation chains—social and cultural repetitions that reinforce fixed identities and power relations
- Incorporation of gender-sensitive, anti-racist, and queer perspectives alongside consciously reflective language use that creates empowering spaces for clients
- Cultivation of a serene attitude in mental self-regulation, supporting the regulation of proximity and resonance within the learning as well as the counseling process

We will provide insights into how these components facilitate encounters that transcend stereotypical role patterns and promote psychological growth.

The goal of this presentation is to offer both theoretical and practical impulses for teaching and learning person-centered counseling while fostering empowerment, discrimination-sensitive mindfulness, and transformative potential in social work higher education.

Submission type

Individual Talk (20 min)

Keywords

Person-centered counseling, university teaching and learning , Gender-sensitive and anti-racist perspectives, Discrimination-sensitive approaches , Empowerment

UnWorlding the Changing: Disrupting Discourses of a Changing World

Dr Brian Rodgers PhD¹, Prof Keith Tudor PhD²

¹University of Auckland, Auckland, New Zealand. ²Auckland University of Technology, Auckland, New Zealand



Dr Brian Rodgers

Author Bio

Brian Rodgers is senior lecturer on the counsellor education programmes at the University of Auckland. Brian has been involved with counsellor education since 2001 at several institutions in New Zealand, Australia and the UK. His research interests include person-centred and experiential counselling, pluralistic practice, technology and counselling, and decolonising approaches.



Prof Keith Tudor

Author Bio

Keith Tudor, PhD, CQSW, CTA(P, TSTA(P), Dip. Psychotherapy, is professor of psychotherapy and co-lead of Moana Nui, a research group for the psychological therapies at Auckland University of Technology, Aotearoa New Zealand. He is the author/editor of over 50 peer-reviewed publications on person-centred psychology, including seven books. He is also the recipient of the 2025 Carl Rogers Award (bestowed by the Humanistic Psychology Division of the American Psychological Association) "in recognition of distinguished lifetime contributions to humanistic psychology." Keith has a small private practice in West Auckland as a health care provider. He can be reached at Private Bag 92006, Auckland 1142, Aotearoa New Zealand; email: keith.tudor@aut.ac.nz.

Abstract

In this workshop we will be disrupting normative discourses about 'a world', 'changing', 'person-centred', and 'becoming agents of change'. We will present ideas about the formative tendency – or, the view that the world tends to form and actualise – and aspects of formation, organisation, integration, and entropy.

The workshop will comprise some presentation, discussion, and, depending on the size of the audience, some work in breakout rooms.

Submission type

Online Experiential Workshop (90 min)

Keywords

formative tendency, changing world, organism, disruption, agents of change

33

Pleasure as an Anchor in a World of Fake-news: Embodied Presence for Therapists in Uncertain Times

Wajan J Hale BA, Grad Dip Edu, Grad Dip Counselling, EFCT Externship

Hobart, Australia



Wajan J Hale

Author Bio

Wajan Hale is an experienced counsellor, Emotionally Focused Couples Therapist, and embodied coach. She lives in Nipaluna/Hobart, lutruwita/Tasmania, Australia with her family. Wajan is a life long lover of nature and movement and she is committed to weaving this into every aspect of her life. With over 15 years of experience, Wajan integrates person-centred and experiential approaches with embodied practices, including dance and sensory-based methods, to support therapists and clients in cultivating presence, regulation, and relational connection. Wajan's work focuses on helping people navigate relationships, uncertainty, build resilience, and reconnect with pleasure and ease in their bodies. Committed to creating safe, inclusive, and experiential learning spaces, Wajan shares practical tools for embodied awareness, self-regulation, and therapeutic resonance. As part of her commitment to holistic pleasure as medicine, Wajan is currently completing a professional certification in Integrative Sexual Intimacy Coaching and Sex Education.

Abstract

In an era of fake news, social media overload, and global uncertainty, therapists themselves often experience tension, disconnection, and hyper-vigilance. These internal states can challenge presence, attunement, and relational resonance with clients. This experiential workshop explores how therapists can draw on holistic pleasure as an embodied resource, using integrative approaches to foster safety, groundedness, and relational connection in therapeutic practice.

Drawing on person-centred and experiential theory, including Rogers' conditions of empathy, congruence, and unconditional positive regard, alongside Wajan's training in EFCT and Integrative Sexual Intimacy Coaching, this workshop is a holistic, and somatic way of working with pleasure. Through an integrative lens, pleasure is understood not as an indulgence, but as a multidimensional resource-supporting nervous system regulation, emotional integration, relational safety and vitality.

Participants will engage in guided movement, sensual embodied exercises, and reflective partner inquiry. By exploring rhythm, flow, breath, touch, and subtle bodily sensations, therapists learn to cultivate pleasure and ease in their own bodies. This approach draws on Sensual Embodied Dance principles and Integrative Intimacy frameworks, highlighting the role of aliveness, sensory awareness, and connection in accessing internal resources.

By the end of the session, participants will understand how cultivating holistic pleasure can serve as a stabilizing anchor, enabling therapists to remain grounded and present even amidst uncertainty, misinformation, and digital overload. They will leave with practical, embodied tools to enhance self-regulation, model safety, and support relational resonance with clients.

Learning Objectives:

- Recognise how digital overload, misinformation, and uncertainty affect therapists' nervous systems and capacity for embodied presence
- Understand holistic pleasure as a multi-dimensional resource supporting regulation, connection, and wellbeing
- Practice embodied tools to model safety, groundedness, and relational resonance with clients
- Apply person-centred principles through a grounded, sensory-rich, and experiential therapeutic presence

Submission type

Online Experiential Workshop (90 min)

Keywords

Embodied practice , Therapist self-regulation , Pleasure as resource, Experiential learning, Relational presence

Embracing Change – IDG as a Bridge to a Volatile Future

Martin Heyer

masskonzept, Bonn, Germany



Martin Heyer

Author Bio

Martin Heyer studied law, philosophy and sociology and trained as a person-centred counsellor, adult educator and Gestalt therapist. He works in his own practice in Bonn as a coach, communication trainer and organisational development consultant. His main areas of focus are personal development, crisis management and the Inner Development Goals. Together with his colleague Brigitte Peter, he has published a trainer's book on IDG.

Abstract

In an increasingly volatile world, the ability to plan for the future is becoming ever more uncertain — and this affects psychotherapy and counseling on multiple levels. Practitioners are challenged not only to support clients in dealing with instability, but also to adapt the very foundations of their professional practice: its content, methods, and frameworks.

The Inner Development Goals (IDG) emerged from the field of Education for Sustainable Development, offering an inner counterpart to the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals. They provide a lens for navigating uncertainty — not as instruments of prediction or control, but as inner capacities that enable us to engage creatively and meaningfully with the unpredictable.

This shift from *knowing* to *being* resonates deeply with the essence of the person-centered approach, where presence, authenticity, and trust in the process replace the search for predefined answers. By cultivating these qualities, practitioners can strengthen their ability to stay connected, compassionate, and resilient amidst change.

In this 90-minute creative workshop, participants will explore how the IDG framework can inspire new visions for the ongoing evolution of the person-centered approach. Through guided reflection, dialogue, and creative expression, they will be invited to connect personal experience with collective inquiry — and to imagine how inner development might serve as a bridge between therapeutic presence and social transformation.

Ultimately, this workshop invites participants not merely to cope with change, but to consciously *embrace* it — within themselves, their practice, and the wider world.

Submission type

Creative Workshop (90 min)

Keywords

Inner-Development-Goals, Dealing with ambiguity, Sustainability, Transformation Skills

Integrating Nature in Psychotherapy: Experiences of 1100 Austrian Therapists amid Urbanisation and Climate Changes

Sandra Elisabeth Aigner MSc. / Master of Science in Psychotherapy

ÖGWG, Austrian Association for Scientific Person-Centered Psychotherapy, Linz, Austria



Sandra Elisabeth Aigner

Author Bio

State-approved person-centred psychotherapist and journalist, certified in botany, based in Italy and Austria. The presentation is based on one study and two papers that emerged from it: a quantitative study published in 2025 in *Counseling and Psychotherapy Research* (lead authorship) and a qualitative study currently under review.

Abstract

Global demographic trends indicate that an increasing proportion of the population is becoming progressively distanced from nature, a phenomenon accelerated by the urban population exceeding two-thirds by 2050. Consequently, a lack of connection to nature has been associated with increased mental health issues. Integrating natural environments into therapeutic practices is recognised for its curative effects on mental health recovery. However, there is limited research on how nature is utilised in psychotherapeutic treatments. Previous studies have often focused on a single psychotherapy modality, a single client group or small sample sizes.

An explorative, cross-sectional online survey was conducted with N = 1,190 psychotherapists trained in different modalities (humanistic, behavioral, psychodynamic, systemic), with an overrepresentation of humanistic therapists (47.9%), to examine the prevalence, perceived value and challenges of integrating nature in therapeutic methods. Overall, 13.19% of the total sample were person-centred psychotherapists. Data included personality traits (Big Five Inventory), connectedness to nature (NCI), professional experiences in nature-based interventions and estimated potentials and risks of such approaches.

The majority reported experience of conducting psychotherapy outdoors (65.9%) and using nature-related materials (79.1%). Qualitative analyses highlighted perceived benefits, including strengthening the therapeutic relationship and opening up new experiential spaces. Results indicate support for clients' personal development and therapeutic progress.

Nature-connecting methods were judged to foster ecological awareness, sustainable attitudes and to positively affect emotional responses to the climate crisis in clients. Study participants also detected a lack of structured training opportunities and a range of challenges and risks (e.g. contraindications, loss of therapy room as safe space, legal issues).

The presentation invites discussion on how therapists can be supported in implementing nature-based approaches and on how these practices can respond to societal and environmental changes affecting mental health.

Submission type

Individual Lecture (60 min)

Keywords

nature, climate change, connectedness, urbanisation, therapists' attitudes

Voice and Communication – The Sound of Authentic Mood in a Changing World

Susanne U. Hauf

GwG, Freelancer, Berlin, Germany



Susanne U. Hauf

Author Bio

Susanne Hauf is a professional voice-over artist, communication specialist and trainer with over 25 years of experience in broadcasting and live performances. Her work focuses on the interaction of voice, authenticity and emotional presence in interpersonal and professional contexts. Based on person-centred and experience-based approaches as well as the principles of non-violent communication. She supports individuals and organisations in developing authentic communication, self-awareness and resonant expressiveness through the conscious use of the voice. Her approach combines scientific findings, artistic practice and person-centred values to promote empathy, clarity and connection in a changing world.

Abstract

The human voice is more than just a way to talk – it is a vibrant expression of our inner selves. Voice and communication are inseparably linked: the way we speak is just as important as what we say.

In times of global crisis, social isolation and digital noise, the voice becomes both an instrument of connection and a mirror of our emotional and interpersonal state.

This lecture explores the voice as a central dimension of authentic, person-centred communication, based on Carl Rogers' core conditions – empathy, congruence and unconditional positive regard – and Marshall Rosenberg's principles of non-violent communication. It shows how our vocal mood and tonality reflects and frames our self-image as well as our human relationships. Tone, rhythm and resonance reveal whether we are aligned with ourselves or acting from disconnection. In today's world of sensory and emotional overload along with negativity, authenticity is often silenced. Many people lose confidence in their inner voice and experience a growing distance from genuine contact. Through the conscious use of the voice – based on self-awareness, empathy and mindful presence – communication can become an act of self-empowerment and mutual recognition.

This lecture highlights the transformative potential of authentic voice expression: it builds a bridge between the inner and outer world, creating spaces of safety, creativity and solidarity. Participants gain practical insights into how their voice can strengthen personal identity and social interactions. Short experience-based exercises and moments of reflection provide concrete insights, forming the basis for discussion and exchange.

Clear, resonant communication is not only a professional skill, but also an act of courage and presence that enables us to be heard as whole, authentic individuals in a rapidly changing world.

Submission type

Individual Talk (20 min)

Keywords

Authentic Voice in a Changing World, Voice, Identity and Emotional Resonance, Presence and Inner Alignment, Transformative Power of Expressive Communication, Resilience through Genuine Connection

An information session about PCE World's journal, *Person-Centered and Experiential Psychotherapies*

Dr Jeannette Bischkopf PhD¹, Dr Jeffrey H. Cornelius-White PhD², Dr Maria Kefalopoulou PhD³, Dr Jason Sharbanee PhD⁴, Dr Susan Stephen PhD⁵

¹Kiel University of Applied SciencesS, Kiel, Germany. ²Missouri State University, Springfield, USA. ³ICPS - College for Humanistic Sciences, Athens, Greece. ⁴Curtin University, Perth, Australia. ⁵University of Strathclyde, Glasgow, United Kingdom



Dr Jeannette Bischkopf

Author Bio

Jeannette Bischkopf, PhD, is a professor of psychology at Kiel University of Applied Sciences (Germany), where she teaches psychological foundations of social work, self-competences and counseling skills. Her research has focused on service user perspectives, mental illness and family caregivers, and the role of emotions in counseling and therapy. She is a co-editor of the journal, *Person-Centered and Experiential Psychotherapies*.



Dr Jeffrey H. Cornelius-White

Author Bio

Jeffrey H. D. Cornelius-White Psy.D LPC is Distinguished Professor at Missouri State University. Jef is former chair of the board of the World Association for Person-Centered and Experiential Psychotherapy and Counseling, former editor of *The Person-Centered Journal*, and an editorial reviewer for about 50 journals. He has published about 100 works, including the *Interdisciplinary Handbook of the Person-Centered Approach* (Springer), the *Carl Rogers: China Diary* (PCCS), and *Person-Centered Approaches for Counselors* (Sage). Jef is husband to Yasuko, the most wonderful woman in the world, and father of Avery and Evan, two fabulously amazing humans!



Dr Maria Kefalopoulou

Author Bio

Maria is a social psychologist and person-centered counselor/psychotherapist and supervisor in Athens. After studying and living for some years in Paris, she has worked as a coordinator of the Gender and Equality Office at the Municipality of Athens. Now, she is Academic Lead in Psychotherapy and PCE trainer at the ICPS- College for Humanistic Sciences, Greece. She is a co-editor of the international journal, *Person-Centered & Experiential Psychotherapies*.



Dr Jason Sharbanee

Author Bio

Jason Sharbanee is a clinical psychologist and senior lecturer at Curtin University, Perth, Australia, where he teaches psychotherapy to postgraduate students, and conducts psychotherapy research. He is certified as an Emotion-focused Therapy trainer for individuals and couples by the International Society of Emotion Focused Therapy, and is a co-editor of the journal, *Person-Centered and Experiential Psychotherapies*.



Dr Susan Stephen

Author Bio

Susan Stephen is a senior lecturer in counselling at the University of Strathclyde (Glasgow, Scotland) and director of the Strathclyde Counselling and Psychotherapy Research Clinic where she leads research in the process and outcome of person-centered-experiential therapy. Her main research interest is the concept of congruent functioning as a contemporary redefining of the developmental process at the heart of Rogers' person-centered theory and its intercultural implications. She is a co-editor of the journal, *Person-Centered and Experiential Psychotherapies* and of the third edition of *The Handbook of Person-Centred Psychotherapy and Counselling*. She is also a former Chair of the board of the World Association for Person-Centered and Experiential Psychotherapies and Counseling (PCE World).

Abstract

The journal, *Person-Centered and Experiential Psychotherapies* (PCEP), meets one of the primary goals of the World Association for Person-Centered and Experiential Psychotherapy and Counseling (PCE World) through the production of a high-quality peer-reviewed journal that fosters the exchange of research, theory and practice in the field of person-centered and experiential psychotherapies.

During this information session, the PCEP co-editors will update delegates on the status of the journal with an overview of its current global reach (e.g., downloads, submissions), citation metrics, top cited articles, social media impact, production speed and author feedback. The editors will welcome questions, feedback, and encourage discussion of the range of ways to be involved in the journal, such as volunteering to co-edit special issue topics, serving as reviewers, and authoring papers.

Any presenters at PCE 2026 who are interested in developing their presentation into a published paper are especially invited to participate and ask any questions that might foster a successful submission. All conference delegates are invited to participate in the discussion and promote the journal in social media, in their own research, teaching, and practice, and directly with their colleagues and students.

Please come to learn about, support, and be a part of this central function of PCE World!

Submission type

Individual Talk (20 min)

Keywords

PCEP journal, impact, authors, peer reviewers, citation metrics

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Long Covid and Me/CFS in PsychotherapyBeate Weissinger Mag

IPS, Vienna, Austria



Beate Weissinger

Author Bio

Mag. Beate Weissinger is a psychotherapist specializing in person-centered therapy with a strong intercultural background. Growing up in Libya and being shaped by diverse cultural contexts early in life fostered her deep interest in human diversity and her conviction that there is no single universal pathway to a meaningful life. She studied Psychology at Alpen-Adria University Klagenfurt and Psychotherapy Science at the Sigmund Freud Private University Vienna. Her academic training was complemented by the general psychotherapy preparatory program (SFU) and a specialization in person-centered psychotherapy at the IPS of the APG. Professionally, she has gained experience across a wide range of settings, including the Caritas crisis center, a street children's shelter in Kinshasa (DR Congo), the SFU outpatient clinic, Promente Reha, and the association IWIK. She currently works in private practice and serves as a cooperation partner at the Center for Counseling, Training & Development. As someone personally affected by Long Covid since the early days of the pandemic, Beate Weissinger has become a recognized resource for both professionals and affected individuals. She actively contributes to raising awareness of the condition through lectures and training formats.

Abstract

Long Covid is a complex condition with many faces. It is a medical phenomenon that, upon closer examination, is not quite as new as it may initially seem. However, since the pandemic, it has gained unprecedented urgency. Those affected, as well as professionals, are confronted with a multifaceted issue characterized by great uncertainty and unpredictability.

This lecture will focus particularly on Long Covid of the ME/CFS type. The emphasis of this short talk will be on the most important aspects of psychotherapy with affected individuals. Special attention will be given to the cardinal symptom PEM and its therapeutic approach, pacing. The perspective of a psychotherapist and someone affected by the condition will provide insight into the lived reality of patients, as well as convey professional particularities of psychotherapy in the context of this illness.

In this way, the lecture aims to prepare participants for encountering a condition that challenges societal principles and requires a rethinking of established structures—both for those affected and for relatives and therapists. The goal is to establish a foundation that provides confidence and facilitates meaningful engagement with those affected.

Submission type

Individual Talk (20 min)

Keywords

Long Covid, Me/CFS, Pacing, Lived Experience, Liveliness

Collaborating With The Client: An Integrative Person-Centered Approach To Psychotherapy

Dr arthur c bohart PhD

Santa Clara University, Santa Clara, California, USA



Dr arthur c bohart

Author Bio

Arthur C. Bohart is Professor Emeritus at California State University Dominguez Hills. He is semi-retired doing some part-time teaching at Santa Clara University. He has published numerous articles and books on empathy, the client as active self-healer, person-centered therapy, and psychotherapy integration. His most recent book is *The Art Of Bohart: Person-Centred Therapy And The Enhancement Of Human Possibility*. His latest book, with two co-authors, is "Collaborating With The Client: An Integrative Approach To Therapy," in press with Routledge.

Abstract

Collaborating With The Client: An Integrative Person-Centered Approach To Psychotherapy

Carl Rogers held that it is ultimately clients who make therapy work. Research has shown that clients are active self-healers. They do not merely absorb and respond to interventions. It is clients who breathe the life into interventions. If clients do not use them they have no potency. How they use them determines what they get out of them. Clients also manage the relationships with therapists. Therapy is a living, person-to-person encounter, not a matter of one person (the therapist) "operating on" another with presumably potent interventions that do the work of change. Rogers' method of empathic following was designed to maximally support clients' intrinsic self-healing process without interference from the therapist about how they should change or what they need to do to change. However, research has also shown that many clients want therapists to take the lead and to suggest ideas and interventions. How do we do offer interventions from a person-centered base? This is important in a changing world where not all clients want therapists to only provide an empathic listening relationship. In this talk, I will start by giving a brief overview discussing the nature of humans as living, growing processes with potential for change. I will explore the idea that people are self-organizing systems, capable of generating their own growth. I will then note how it follows that therapy is intrinsically collaborative, two minds and hearts working together. Following on this I will discuss how therapists can utilize interventions and ideas from other therapy approaches from a person-centered base while working with clients as self-generating active self-healers.

Submission type

Online Individual Lecture (60 min)

Keywords

client as active self-healer, person-centered, collaboration, psychotherapy integration, empathy

43

FACING YOUR EXISTENTIAL DEMONS. Experiential workshop on focusing from your safe place

Claude Missiaen Master

Catholic University, Leuven, Belgium. Focus on Emotion, Tessenderlo, Belgium



Claude Missiaen

Author Bio

Client-centered, existential, and focusing-oriented psychotherapist and supervisor Focusing trainer and coordinator Staff member, Postgraduate Program in Client-Centered Psychotherapy, KU Leuven Trainer of experiential and existential workshops Private practice

Abstract

In this workshop there is an invitation to make contact with a *bodily felt safe place*. From here on we can go back and forth in the direction of *our existential demons* (like the fear of being abandoned and really be on your own in our life, the inevitable losses we had and that we will have, the horrible awareness that our life will stop at some point, the universe that is watching indifferently when our life falls apart...). Mostly, we prefer not to go into these difficult feelings and convictions. But at some point in our life, maybe we have to face them, like several existential therapists advise us to do so. In the polarised world we live in, with a threatening climate crisis, *the need for meeting our existential demons seems bigger than ever*.

We look for safe ways to contact our experience of *our existential givens* (death and the limitations of our existence, freedom connected to responsibility, meaning(-lessness) and existential isolation) in order to have a non-threatening dialogue with them. Focusing is our guide in this adventurous journey. During this dialogue between 'I' and 'my existential demon' intense transformation processes often take place. We will zoom in on the nature of this change processes.

We *present a method to navigate* through this fascinating and sometimes frightening journey. This is helpful for your own experiential process and for you as facilitator when you want to support your clients in this matter. It brings a combination of the experiential and existential dimensions in psychotherapy.

Claude Missiaen

Submission type

Experiential Workshop (75 min)

Keywords

existential, demons, focusing, safe place, dialogue

True Colors – Feel and Unfold Your Own Unique Sound

Susanne U. Hauf

GwG e.V., Berlin, Germany



Susanne U. Hauf

Author Bio

Susanne Hauf is a professional voice-over artist, voice and communication specialist and trainer with over 25 years of experience in broadcasting and live performances. Her work focuses on the interaction of voice, authenticity and emotional presence in interpersonal and professional contexts. Based on person-centred and experience-based approaches as well as the principles of non-violent communication. She supports individuals and organisations in developing authentic communication, self-awareness and resonant expressiveness through the conscious use of the voice. In December 2024, she published her first book, 'Echt!Hauf – wie wir sprechen und wie wir etwas sagen' (Real!Hauf – how we speak and how we say something), with novum Verlag. Her approach combines scientific findings, artistic practice and person-centred values to promote empathy, clarity and connection in a changing world.

Abstract

True Colors – Feel and Unfold Your Own Unique Sound is a creative and experiential workshop designed to help participants connect with the depth, resonance and authenticity of their own unique voice.

Participants are invited on an exciting journey of discovery to explore their own voice and thus their communication style.

In a world characterised by acceleration, digital overstimulation and emotional instability, where artificial intelligence is increasingly changing listening and viewing habits and the climate crisis is becoming ever more apparent, many people are losing touch with the subtle inner signals that also shape the expression of their voice. This VOICESHOP invites participants to discover their 'true colors' through physical exploration, attentive listening and mindful presence.

Based on person-centred principles and body-oriented voice work, this workshop offers practical exercises that awaken voice awareness: grounding the voice through the pelvic floor, experiencing the stabilising power of the breath, exploring the transformative quality of pauses, and feeling how sound is created when body, mind and soul work together. By tuning into these sensory processes, participants can approach their own voice with curiosity, compassion, and playfulness.

This voice workshop offers a safe, creative space to explore personal voice patterns, expand expressive possibilities, and strengthen inner alignment. Through practical exercises, short improvisations and guided reflection, participants learn how authentic vocal presence promotes resilience, emotional clarity and deeper interpersonal connections. 'True Colors' encourages each voice to unfold naturally – as an expression of identity, ability to act and genuine openness.

Submission type

Creative Workshop (90 min)

Keywords

Embodied Vocal Presence in a Changing World, Resonant Self-Expression and Inner Grounding, Authentic Voice Awareness, Somatic Communication Resilience, Experiential Transformation Through Sound

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Power Sensibility: Counselling Practice Between Relationship and ResponsibilityLena Mazurkiewicz

University of Siegen, Siegen, Germany



Lena Mazurkiewicz

Author Bio

Lena Mazurkiewicz is an educational scientist and lecturer at the University of Siegen in the Department of Social Work and Social Pedagogy and works as a counsellor and supervisor. In addition she is currently doing her doctorate at the Goethe University Frankfurt in Germany. Her research interests focus on professionalization processes in counselling training. She is a member of the scientific advisory board of the Society for Person-Centered Psychotherapy and Counseling in Germany (GwG).

Abstract

Social inequalities are becoming increasingly relevant, being (mis)used politically, and the discourse on intersectionality and decolonization is gaining importance. Moreover counselling settings are becoming more complex. Therefore power sensibility will be a necessary component of professional relationship building. It challenges us as professionals to ask not only how we counsel, but also under what conditions, with what attitude, and with what view of the world. In this context, counselling can be understood as a complex structure of action. It is composed of social discourses and power relations, structural levels of power, the process level at which counsellors have creative power, and the personal level of relationship and encountering.

This workshop therefore deals with the question of how a power-sensitive attitude and approach can deepen person-centred practice. A brief introduction to the concept will be given. Afterwards we will explore the social significance of belonging, privilege, and marginalization in an experiential way through an exercise. Subsequently, joint reflection will provide space for discussing power, inequality, and discrimination, as well as for considering one's own professional practice and relationship building. The goal is to encourage resonance and develop orientation for our own professional actions in dealing with diversity. The safe space in person-centred counselling takes on a new depth: it means not only accepting the other person, but also actively striving to make stereotypes, discrimination, and exclusion visible - and to counteract them constructively by creating a space of possibility. All interested persons are invited to join this workshop and create a brave space together.

Submission type

Experiential Workshop (75 min)

Keywords

brave space, diversity, power relations, intersectionality, orientation in practice

Only one? Existential challenges as a mother of one in a society of more.

Evi Van Mierlo MA

EEP Psychotherapy training institute, Focus on Emotion, Antwerp, Belgium. Center for EEP, KUL University, Leuven, Belgium. Lannoo Publishers, Tielt, Belgium



Evi Van Mierlo

Author Bio

Evi Van Mierlo is a Belgian clinical psychologist, person-centered psychotherapist, experiential-existential psychotherapist (EEP) and author. She is founding member of the Center for Experiential-Existential Psychotherapy (Center for EEP, KU Leuven University) and coordinator, staff member and teacher of the EEP Specialisation Training for psychotherapists and counselors (Psychotherapy Training Institute, Focus on Emotion). She also runs a private practice for EEP and supervision, where she mainly provides therapy to colleagues. She recently wrote a book about being the parent of an only child (Lannoo Publishers, April 2026, <https://www.lannoo.be/nl/evi-van-mierlo>).

Abstract

Becoming a mother of 'only' one child in a world expecting me to have more children confronted me with normative societal ideas: 'When will you have another?' strangers ask me and 'isn't it a pity for a child to be alone?' These questions represent stereotypes about only children (needing a sibling) and their parents (being selfish).

As an experiential-existential psychotherapist (EEP), I am interested in how people cope with feeling different from the society they live in. I set out to interview (semi-structured) 32 West-European single-child parents and 3 adult only children by snowball sampling to explore how life with onlies looks like. This poster shares the insights of this qualitative research and literature review (Lannoo Publishers, <https://www.lannoo.be/nl/evi-van-mierlo>)

It explores the phenomenology of singleton parents in Belgium (Statbel, 2025), The Netherlands (CBS, 2025), broader Europe (ELFAC, 2022), Great-Brittain, Amerika (Newman, 2025) & China and of dropping birthrates worldwide in this age and time below replacement level (Japan). It also tries to capture how we can understand these worldwide tendencies (UN, 2025) by exploring global (American) and national research from China, UK, Sweden, Belgium and The Netherlands.

It studies the stereotypes about onlies and refutes them all by including American, Asian and South-African literature on the topic.

We explore the developmental challenges and unique dynamics in - and advantages of - single-child families by research from all around the globe: the UK, Northern Europe (Finland, Denmark), Western Europe, South-Afrika, Asia, Amerika, and India.

We conclude by pointing out some (existential) implications on living life with a singleton to the fullest and how to cope with being not so different after all. Societal norms are constantly changing and changeable. This poster broadens perspective and challenges fixed norms in an everchanging world.

Submission type

Poster

Keywords

existential, meaning-making process, societal norms, single-child parent, life-imposed limitations

The Final Taboo: Politics and the incongruent Therapist

Patrick Akrivos Mag.

Forum, Vienna, Austria



Patrick Akrivos

Author Bio

Patrick Akrivos is an Austrian-Greek psychologist and person-centered psychotherapist, licensed in both Austria and Greece, with a strong cross-cultural orientation. He is also trained in person-centered child and youth psychotherapy and has completed additional specializations, including Emotion-Focused Couples Therapy. Patrick has extensive experience educating parents, teachers, and professionals in Greece and internationally. He has published widely, presented at numerous conferences, and continues to expand his psychotherapy expertise with a deep commitment to cultural sensitivity. For more information visit: praxis-akrivos.at

Abstract

Psychotherapy, despite its deep humanistic roots, rarely dares to turn toward politics as a field of inquiry and self-critique. This issue remains one of the last taboos in the therapeutic world.

This presentation explores the fundamental premise that every political theory contains a particular view of human nature; in other words, every ideological current presupposes a specific answer to the question “what is the human being?” Likewise, every psychotherapeutic approach rests on its own conception of human nature and offers its own answer to the same question.

Carl Rogers’ Person-Centered Approach—grounded in unconditional acceptance, trust in the human being’s innate tendency toward self-actualization, and, by extension, in their capacity for self-regulation—is paralleled with the political ideology that most fully embodies these values.

The presentation seeks to address the possible inconsistencies between therapists’ therapeutic philosophy and their likely political positioning.

Some of the questions this presentation seeks to explore are:

- What is the political implication of acceptance, empathy and dialogue?
- Which political system aligns with the belief in the inherent worth and autonomy of every human being?
- And what does this mean for the therapist’s own authenticity?

It is proposed, ultimately, that political consciousness is an integral element of the therapist’s professional coherence—and that, in practice, the therapist often experiences the turmoil of an internal dissonance that frequently remains unconscious.

Submission type

Individual Talk (20 min)

Keywords

Politics, Incongruence, Responsibility

Trajectories of Change in Person-Centred Psychotherapy: The Role of Client Self-Regard and the Therapeutic Relationship

Dr Shun Chen PhD

University of Nottingham, Nottingham, United Kingdom



Dr Shun Chen

Author Bio

Dr Shun Chen is an Assistant Professor in Person-Centred Experiential Counselling and Trauma-Informed Practice at the University of Nottingham, UK. He is a Chartered Psychologist with the British Psychological Society. He is a person-centered practitioner and educator with a particular interest in gender, sex, and relationship diversity (GSRD), and serves on the editorial board of the journal *Psychology & Sexuality*. His research focuses on GSRD, authenticity in close relationships, psychometric development, and the cross-cultural adaptation of psychological measures.

Abstract

In a changing world where individuals increasingly face instability, evaluation, and conditional standards of worth, the capacity to hold an unconditional and accepting stance toward the self may become particularly significant.

This study explores how changing psychotherapy outcomes are predicted by two dimensions of client self-regard: the valence of self-regard (positive to negative) and the degree of unconditionality (unconditional to conditional). Grounded in person-centred theory (Rogers, 1959), these constructs are theorised to influence individual psychological functioning. While past research has established links between self-esteem, self-acceptance, and wellbeing (Chamberlain & Haaga, 2001; Murphy et al., 2020), the independent and joint contributions of positive self-regard and unconditionality of that self-regard to therapeutic change remain underexamined.

Using a longitudinal design, this study tracks 184 clients engaged in person-centred psychotherapy. Self-regard valence and unconditionality are assessed pre-treatment using the Unconditional Positive Self-Regard Scale (UPSRS; Patterson & Joseph, 2006) and the Depressive Experience Questionnaire Self-Criticism 4 (DEQ-SC4; Tibubos et al., 2022). Therapeutic outcomes are measured across six time points (sessions 1, 3, 5, 10, 15, 20, 25) via the CORE-OM (Evans et al., 2002) and the Strathclyde Inventory -12 Items (SI-12; Stephen & Elliott, 2022), while the therapeutic relationship is assessed using the Therapeutic Relationship Scale (TRS). The study investigates whether initial levels of positive/negative self-regard and unconditionality of self-regard predict distinct change trajectories, and whether the quality of the therapeutic relationship mediates these associations.

Findings are expected to advance person-centred theory by identifying how specific self-related processes contribute to changing patterns of psychological improvement over the course of therapy.

Submission type

Individual Talk (20 min)

Keywords

Change trajectories, Self-regard, Unconditionality, Therapeutic relationship, Psychotherapy outcomes

May I exist: Three Experiential-Existential Psychotherapy (EEP) Case Studies

Prof Siebrecht Vanhooren PdD¹, Sofie Verdegem^{1,2}, Gianina Frediani¹

¹KU Leuven, Leuven, Belgium. ²UPC Leuven, Leuven, Belgium



Prof Siebrecht Vanhooren

Author Bio

Siebrecht Vanhooren (PhD) is professor of clinical psychology at the University of Leuven (KU Leuven) in Belgium. He teaches counseling skills, psychological interventions, and humanistic, person-centered, experiential, focusing and existential psychotherapies at undergraduate, graduate and postgraduate level. He is the director of the person-centered therapy training programs and the existential well-being counseling program at KU Leuven. He is a senior staff member of the Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences, the Research Group Clinical Psychology, the Meaning & Existence research center, and the Center for Experiential-Existential Psychotherapy at KU Leuven. He is a committee member of The Eugene T. Gendlin Center for Research in Experiential Philosophy and Psychology at The Focusing Institute (New York). His research includes existential concerns, meaning in life, posttraumatic growth, experiential-existential psychotherapy, focusing, dreamwork, and existential empathy. He also works as a person-centered experiential-existential psychotherapist, supervisor, and dream-work facilitator at PraxisP (KU Leuven). Last but not least, he loves spending time with his family and friends, hiking in nature, gardening, stargazing, and volunteering in his local community.



Sofie Verdegem

Author Bio

Sofie Verdegem is a Belgian clinical psychologist and a client-centered, emotion-focused, focusing-oriented, and experiential-existential psychotherapist and supervisor. She works as both a researcher and clinical psychologist at Reakiro, a drop-in center affiliated with UPC KU Leuven that offers existential care, information, and both group and individual counseling to people with chronic suicidality or a euthanasia request. She is currently pursuing a PhD at KU Leuven on existential suffering in people with a longstanding death wish related to unbearable psychiatric suffering. Her doctoral research is closely integrated with her clinical work at Reakiro. Sofie is also a staff member in the postgraduate training program in person-centered psychotherapy at KU Leuven, and a guest lecturer at both KU Leuven and KU Leuven KULAK. In addition, she works as a psychotherapist and supervisor in private practice in Rotselaar.



Gianina Frediani

Author Bio

Gianina Frediani is a licensed psychologist and psychotherapist based in Belgium. She is trained in experiential-existential psychotherapy as well as couple and family therapy, and is a certified Emotionally Focused Couple Therapy (EFT) practitioner. Clinically, she works as a couple therapist at the university outpatient center PraxisP (KU Leuven). In addition to her clinical work, she is a qualitative researcher at KU Leuven, where she studies existential empathy in psychotherapy and publishes in international peer-reviewed journals on this topic.

Abstract

May I exist: Three Experiential-Existential Psychotherapy Case Studies

How do we cope as therapists when a client doubts whether they have the right to exist, whether they should be going on while the world is at war, whether they should keep on living while the human race is a burden to the planet, whether they should keep choosing for life when everything hurts and life seems to be meaningless?

Our own research revealed that *existential empathy* (Prouty, 2012; Vanhooren, 2019) is not a given, and that not every therapist feels equipped to attune to the client's existential suffering (Frediani et al., 2025; Pellens et al., 2023; Verdegem et al., 2025). In a qualitative study with trained person-centered therapist (N=26), the majority of therapist found themselves experientially closing-down from a video-taped client who suffered from experiencing meaninglessness (Pellens et al., 2023) while experienced presence and attention for existential anxiety by the therapist was key in helping clients who suffered from depression (N=26; Pellens, 2025). Knowing that up to 65% of our clients might be searching for meaning (N=145; Golovchanova et al., 2020), developing our existential empathy might not be a luxury.

Experiential-existential psychotherapy (EEP), which can be understood as a focusing-oriented existential (Madison, 2010; Vanhooren, 2019, 2023), or an existentially-informed person-centered therapy (Vanhooren & Cooper, 2024) has developed a framework to address the client's ontological suffering. Based on Rogers (1942, 1951, 1961, 1980), Gendlin (1970, 1973, 1974), and their inspirator Otto Rank (1936), experiential-existential psychotherapy seeks to help clients explore their existential concerns, help them to broaden their containment of the ambiguity of life, and facilitate experiential meaning-making. In three case studies, we explore how EEP can help clients making sense of their existence and what we can learn from them.

Submission type

Symposium (60 min)

Keywords

Experiential-existential psychotherapy, Case study, Life and death, Courage, Climate change

List Individual Talks of the Symposium (Title - First Author)

1. May I exist while the world is dying: A systematic case study on climate distress and experiential-existential psychotherapy - Siebrecht Vanhooren
2. Existential empathy in working with a person with a persistent death wish related to unbearable psychiatric suffering: A case study - Sofie Verdegem
3. Existential challenges and meaninglessness in couples: A case study of existential empathy from an experiential-existential and emotionally-focused approach - Gianina Frediani

Crash course: Person-centered therapy for clients in psychotic process.

Mathias Dekeyser MS

KU Leuven, Center for Experiential-Existential Psychotherapy, Leuven, Belgium. Focus on Emotion, Antwerp, Belgium. Pre-Therapy International Network, Leuven, Belgium. The International Focusing Institute, New York, USA



Mathias Dekeyser

Author Bio

Mathias Dekeyser is an independent clinical psychologist and person-centered, experiential-existential, focusing-oriented and body-oriented psychotherapist and supervisor with experience in outpatient, residential, and mobile care settings. Since 2007 he has trained service-users in Focusing in all of those settings, and trained various healthcare professions in psychotherapy, Pre-Therapy, Focusing, and body-oriented interventions, including collaborations with universities of Leuven and Antwerp, Belgium.

Abstract

Care for psychosis now moves at two speeds: one stalled in neuro-biological reductionism, and another rapidly reclaiming the person's voice at a pace that often outstrips our own person-centered traditions. To find our place as person-centered practitioners in this shifting field, we need basic knowledge of key person-centered insights and how to translate these into practice. With reference to Carl Rogers and Eugene Gendlin we will present a destructive interpersonal dynamic that lies at the heart of the psychotic process. Stigmatization is inevitable and perpetuates this dynamic.

Even when we value equality and unconditional acceptance, we are never completely free from social prejudice and the tendency for experiential avoidance in psychotic experience, unwillingly perpetuating the destructive dynamic. To break or slow down the psychotic spiral, we need to open our personal world for change and actively contribute to our culture(s) of mental health. As therapists/counselors we need to engage in collaborative reflection and targeted practice to help each other, our clients and our colleagues, to experience more agency and connection.

Structure: The workshop starts with the presentation of a person-centered, interpersonal account of psychotic process, new developments in the care for psychotic clients, and the need for a person-centered response. Participants are challenged to reflect collaboratively on personal prejudice and fears of psychosis, and how these are rooted in their local culture of mental health. Two tailored exercises spotlight the power of person-centered attitudes in the face of psychotic process.

Learning objectives: Participants learn about the interpersonal and cultural dynamics of psychotic process, its phases, and how to apply person-centered skills accordingly - including pre-therapy. They discover the relevance and responsibilities of the person-centered practitioner in a rapidly changing world of mental health care.

Submission type

Online Experiential Workshop (90 min)

Keywords

psychosis, stigma, core conditions, pre-therapy

Existential Empathy in Psychotherapy: Insights from Qualitative Research

Gianina Frediani

Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, Leuven, Belgium



Gianina Frediani

Author Bio

Gianina Frediani is a licensed psychologist and psychotherapist based in Belgium. She is trained in experiential-existential psychotherapy as well as couple and family therapy, and is a certified Emotionally Focused Couple Therapy (EFT) practitioner. Clinically, she works as a couple therapist at the university outpatient center PraxisP (KU Leuven). In addition to her clinical work, she is a qualitative researcher at KU Leuven, where she studies existential empathy in psychotherapy and publishes in international peer-reviewed journals on this topic.

Abstract

This presentation brings together findings from several qualitative studies that explore how therapists engage with clients' existential concerns and how existential empathy can be cultivated. Existential empathy refers to the therapist's capacity to remain present with a client's existential concerns, to resonate with these concerns, and to communicate this resonance empathically. Central questions addressed include: What makes it difficult for therapists to stay present with their clients' existential concerns? What internal and external resources support therapists in doing so? And how can training programs foster existential empathy—not only as a skill, but as a therapeutic stance rooted in human-to-human connection.

To address these questions, we draw on data from a process recall study, longitudinal qualitative interviews, and focus groups with both novice and experienced therapists. The relevance of this work is amplified in a changing world marked by socio-political uncertainty, ecological crises, and global instability—contexts that confront individuals with profound existential challenges. In such times, the ability of therapists to meet existential suffering with openness and presence becomes increasingly critical.

Findings highlight barriers such as confrontation with one's own existential vulnerability and lack of knowledge about existential processes, as well as resources including the capacity to ground and re-anchor oneself and having an existential framework. We discuss how experiential-existential psychotherapy (EEP) training can help therapists become more open to existential issues and deepen their presence.

The aim is to contribute to ongoing conversations in existential, humanistic, and person-centered psychotherapy about how therapists can meet existential suffering with openness, empathy and authenticity.

Submission type

Individual Lecture (60 min)

Keywords

Existential empathy, Self of the Therapist, Existential psychotherapy, Qualitative research, Psychotherapy research

Psychotherapists' views in Japan and Switzerland on the person-centered approach: A comparative study on cultural adaptation

Gudrun B Karbe M.Sc.; M.A.

Universität Basel, Basel, Switzerland



Gudrun B Karbe

Author Bio

Gudrun Karbe M.Sc., M.A., is a clinical psychologist as well as a specialist in Japanese studies with a focus on intercultural psychotherapy. As a German-American who has lived in Germany, Kenya, Togo, the US, France, and Japan, she has a multicultural and multilingual background and holds degrees in Japanese Studies, Ethnology, Comparative Religion, and Clinical Psychology from universities in Lyon (France), Munich, Cologne, and Bonn (Germany) as well as Basel (Switzerland). She currently provides psychotherapy at a private clinic for psychosomatics, psychotherapy, and psychiatry in Rheinfelden (Switzerland). In addition, she is a certified study tour leader specializing in Japan, with over 12 years' experience guiding educational trips throughout Japan.

Abstract

In a changing world shaped by growing intercultural exchange, psychotherapy traditions increasingly move across cultural contexts. This study examines how the person-centered approach (PCA), originally developed in the West, is practiced in Japan. This topic highlights how person-centered and experiential practices respond to cultural shifts and how psychotherapists adapt their work within diverse societal environments. The study investigates whether and how PCA has been culturally adapted in Japan, a society commonly associated with the East Asian cultural sphere. The central claim is that while PCA's theoretical foundations with respect to Rogers' "core conditions" remain mostly stable, their clinical application has shifted in response to cultural norms and expectations.

Twenty semi-structured interviews were conducted with experienced PCA psychotherapists from Japan (n=10) and Switzerland (n=10), in Japanese, English, and German. Participants (45% female; M_age = 57.7) had an average of nearly 25 years of clinical experience. Reflexive thematic analysis was used to compare psychotherapists' views. Coding was conducted in MaxQDA Plus.

Compared to Swiss psychotherapists, Japanese participants expressed markedly different perspectives on all eight topics: empathy, unconditional positive regard, congruence, non-directivity, client self-disclosure, therapeutic presence, working with the felt sense, and perceived cultural compatibility. While both groups endorsed Rogers' "core conditions" – with the exception of congruence - Japanese psychotherapists described distinct ways of implementing PCA principles. Findings indicate that PCA practice in Japan has been culturally adapted, even as its conceptual foundations remain mostly intact. Interestingly, an overwhelming majority of Japanese psychotherapists perceived PCA as especially compatible with Japanese cultural values.

The presentation invites dialogue about how PCA continues to transform as it travels across cultures, what these transformations mean for practitioners working in a changing world, and how the field can thoughtfully integrate cultural diversity while remaining rooted in PCA's core assumptions.

Keywords: Person-centered approach, Japan, cultural adaptation, psychotherapy, Western psychology

Submission type

Individual Talk (20 min)

Keywords

Person-centered approach, Japan, cultural adaptation, psychotherapy, Western psychology

Teaching the Person-Centered Approach: Exploring Beliefs and Practices in PCA Training Programs

Dr Stefan Stuetzle¹, Ulrike Fessler²

¹Alice Salomon University of Applied Sciences, Berlin, Germany. ²University of Education, Heidelberg, Germany



Dr Stefan Stuetzle

Author Bio

Current Position: Visiting Professor for Clinical Social Work, Alice Salomon University of Applied Sciences Berlin, School of Social Work Education: - Ph.D., Medical University Brandenburg, Psychiatry, 2024 - Clinical Supervisor, German Association for Supervision and Coaching (DGSv), 2022 - Forensic Psychologist, Association of German Psychologists (BPD), 2022 - Trainer for Person-centred Counseling, Association for Person-centred Psychotherapy and Counseling (GwG), 2021 - M.Sc., Distance University Hagen, Psychology, 2017 - B.Sc., Distance University Hagen, Psychology, 2015 - Licensed Person-centred Counselor, European Association for Counselling (EAC), 2014 - Registered Nurse, 2005 Teaching Experience: - Visiting Professor, Alice Salomon University of Applied Sciences Berlin, School of Social Work, since 2025 - Interim Professor, Protestant University of Applied Sciences Dresden, School of Social Work, 2022-2024 - Adjunct Professor, Alice Salomon University of Applied Sciences Berlin, School of Social Work, 2016-2024 Work Experience: - Counselor and Clinical Supervisor, private practice, since 2017 - Mental Health Nurse and Clinical Psychologist, various institutions, 2005-2017



Ulrike Fessler

Author Bio

Professional Experience: Since 2022: Counselor Training Supervisor – GwG, Alanus University Mannheim, Frankfurt University of Applied Sciences Since 2013: Senior lecturer – Heidelberg University of Education 2000–2013: Teacher – Various Special Education Schools Education: 2020: Master of Arts in Organizational Development – Technical University of Kaiserslautern 2000: Second State Examination (final state qualification for teaching) 1991–1998: Studies in Special Education - Heidelberg University of Education Additional Trainings & Qualifications: Since 2023: Mediator – University-certified, FernUniversität in Hagen 2022: Motivational Interviewing – GK Quest Academy in Heidelberg Since 2014: Person-centered Counselor (GwG)

Abstract

Motivation: Person-centered training programs are essential for passing on the core attitudes and competencies of the approach to future generations of practitioners. However, little is known about the teaching principles and practices that trainers actually employ in these programs. In a changing world where educational methods evolve and new generations of learners bring different expectations, understanding

how person-centered trainers conceptualize and implement their teaching becomes crucial for the ongoing development of PCA training.

Problem: This presentation addresses the question: How do person-centered trainers understand and practice teaching in their work? The DiPeP (Teaching from a Person-Centered Perspective) project explores the implicit and explicit teaching beliefs of certified trainers, examining what shapes their educational approaches and how they translate person-centered principles into training practice.

Methodology: We are conducting semi-structured interviews with approximately 15 trainers certified by the GwG (Gesellschaft für Personzentrierte Psychotherapie und Beratung) in Germany, providing a study of teaching practices within a specific national training context. The interviews explore trainers' pathways into training, their selection of content, their role understanding, the evolution of their practice over time, and further aspects of their teaching approach. Data will be analyzed using qualitative content analysis.

Results: By the time of the conference, data collection will be complete. The presentation will share the research design, key questions, and preliminary insights into how person-centered trainers conceptualize their teaching work.

Implications: This research makes visible the often-implicit teaching knowledge within the person-centered training community. By articulating these practices and beliefs within one national context, we create a foundation for conscious reflection and cross-cultural dialogue about person-centered teaching that honors the approach's core principles while remaining responsive to changing contexts.

Discussion: How can we build on existing teaching wisdom in the field? What challenges do you face in your own training practice?

Submission type

Individual Talk (20 min)

Keywords

PCA training, Professional development, Teaching beliefs, Trainer competencies, Qualitative research

Reakiro: how can person-centred therapists relate to persons with unbearable psychiatric suffering and persistent death wishes?

Eva Depoortere MA¹, Kim Snoeks MA², Thijs Vanhie MA^{2,3}, Sofie Verdegem MA^{2,3}

¹Reakiro Brugge, Brugge, Belgium. ²Reakiro Leuven, Leuven, Belgium. ³KU Leuven University, Leuven, Belgium



Eva Depoortere

Author Bio

Eva Depoortere is a Belgian clinical psychologist and systemic, relational, and emotion-focused couples psychotherapist. She coordinates the West-Flemish Reakiro antenna point, funded by the seven psychiatric hospitals of West Flanders and the non-profit organization Bermhertigheid Jesu. Reakiro is a drop-in center providing existential care, information, and group and individual counseling for individuals experiencing persistent suicidality or considering a euthanasia request. She also works as a psychotherapist in a private practice in Jabbeke.



Kim Snoeks

Author Bio

Kim Snoeks is a Belgian psychotherapist, trained in existential, systemic and emotion-focused therapy. She coordinates the Reakiro antenna point in Leuven, funded by UPC KU Leuven and the Brothers of Charity. Reakiro is a drop-in center providing existential care, information, and group and individual counseling for individuals experiencing persistent suicidality or considering a euthanasia request. She also works as a psychotherapist in a private practice in Brussels.



Thijs Vanhie

Author Bio

Thijs Vanhie is a Belgian clinical psychologist and a client-centered, emotion-focused, and experiential-existential psychotherapist and supervisor-in-training. He works as a clinical psychologist and PhD researcher in Reakiro, a drop-in, care and expertise center affiliated with UPC Z.org KU Leuven that offers existential care, information, and both group and individual counselling to people with persistent suicidality and/or a euthanasia request. His research at KU Leuven, Belgium, focuses on exploring and describing the population of persons with a persistent death wish and evaluating the Reakiro care model. He also works as a psychotherapist and supervisor-in-training in his private practice in Zemst.



Sofie Verdegem

Author Bio

Sofie Verdegem is a Belgian clinical psychologist and a client-centered, emotion-focused, focusing-oriented, and experiential-existential psychotherapist and supervisor. She works as both a researcher and clinical psychologist at Reakiro, a drop-in center affiliated with UPC KU Leuven that offers existential care, information, and both group and individual counseling to people with chronic suicidality or a euthanasia request. She is currently pursuing a PhD at KU Leuven on “Existential suffering in the face of death. Qualitative research on people with a persistent death wish related to unbearable psychiatric suffering”. Her doctoral research is closely integrated with her clinical work at Reakiro. Sofie is also a staff member in the postgraduate training program in person-centered psychotherapy at KU Leuven, and a guest lecturer at both KU Leuven and KU Leuven KULAK. In addition, she works as a psychotherapist and supervisor in private practice in Rotselaar.

Abstract

In a changing world marked by multiple existentially challenging and unsettling evolutions, person-centred therapists face an important question: how do I relate to individuals experiencing unbearable psychiatric suffering and persistent death wishes? This symposium brings together six years of quantitative and qualitative research from *Reakiro*, a Belgian walk-in-, care- and expertisecentre for people with persistent suicidality and/or psychiatric euthanasia requests. The symposium explores how PCE therapists can accompany these persons without pathologizing their experiences or collapsing under the complexity of their suffering. Many of these individuals with a severe and persistent mental illness (SPMI) have lived through long histories of unrelenting suffering and have repeatedly encountered care that was not attuned to their complex needs, leaving them with a lonely balancing on the tightrope between life and death.

Across three contributions, we examine the epistemological and ethical challenges posed by this emerging field. First, we introduce Reakiro's integrative care model, grounded in presence theory and informed by humanistic, existential, palliative, and recovery-oriented perspectives - a model developed as a response to these unmet care needs. Second, we present epidemiological and questionnaire data that illuminate how people with SPMI and a persistent death wish navigate meaning, hope, empowerment, existential anxiety, and psychosocial functioning. These findings expose structural blind spots within mental-health systems and highlight the need for more responsive, socially attuned care. Third, qualitative analyses reveal the relational, existential, and ethical processes at stake when encountering clients whose death wish coexists with a fragile wish to live. The studies show how authentic acknowledgment of both suffering and death wish can foster fragile reconnections and changes in relating to life and death.

Together, the symposium demonstrates how PCE approaches can meaningfully engage with one of today's most complex clinical and societal challenges, offering theoretical refinement and concrete guidance for contemporary therapeutic practice.

Submission type

Symposium (60 min)

Keywords

Existential care model, Unbearable psychiatric suffering, Persistent death wish, Persistent suicidality, Psychiatric euthanasia

List Individual Talks of the Symposium (Title - First Author)

1. Introduction to Reakiro care - Eva Depoortere and Kim Snoeks
2. Acknowledging people with severe and persistent mental illness and a persistent death wish - Thijs Vanhie
3. Can I stay with you? Relating to people with a persistent death wish related to unbearable psychiatric suffering - Sofie Verdegem

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Motivational Interviewing for informal caregiver counseling – a new area of application?

Johanna Schmidt, Dr Anna Pendergrass PD, Sophia Boesl, Natascha Lauer, Antonia Keck

Uniklinikum Erlangen, Erlangen, Germany



Johanna Schmidt

Author Bio

Psychologist, Research associate and doctoral candidate Research focus: informal caregivers, informal caregiver counseling, Motivational Interviewing



Dr Anna Pendergrass

Author Bio

Psychologist, Research associate Research focus: informal caregivers, informal caregiver counseling, Motivational Interviewing, benefits of being a caregiver



Sophia Boesl

Author Bio

Psychologist, Research associate and doctoral candidate Research focus: informal caregivers



Natascha Lauer

Author Bio

Psychologist, Research associate and doctoral candidate Research focus: informal caregivers



Antonia Keck

Author Bio

Psychologist, Research associate and doctoral candidate Research focus: informal caregivers

Abstract

Motivation: Motivational Interviewing (MI) is a well-established approach across a variety of areas. At the same time, it is well known that caring for a family member at home can negatively impact the physical and mental health of informal caregivers (CGs).

Problem: In Germany, all CGs can receive free informal caregiver counseling (ICC) in accordance with Section 7a of SGB XI. During this, CGs can learn about valuable support services. However, many CGs are ambivalent about using such services. It is therefore important to address this ambivalence during ICC sessions. MI could be helpful in this regard, but it has not yet been taught in the context of ICC. Therefore, our project aimed to integrate MI into ICC by developing a training course on the topic of 'Motivational Interviewing for ICC' and investigating the feasibility of this integration.

Methodology: The MI training was developed using a participatory action research approach. The training was evaluated using questionnaires in the framework of the Kirkpatrick model. In addition, the feasibility and acceptance of the MI training course was reviewed.

Results: The training course was designed in a hybrid format and consists of an initial E-learning followed by a face-to-face group training. The MI content was specifically applied to the context of ICC. The lecture will illustrate how it was put into practice and provide practical examples. Feedback from participants was positive.

Implications: MI has the potential to improve ICC and the situation of CGs and should be made available to all informal caregiver counselors. This demonstrates that it is also important to consider in which other areas MI and related specific training could be beneficial.

Discussion: How can we continually integrate MI into new areas of a changing world?

Submission type

Individual Talk (20 min)

Keywords

Motivational Interviewing, Informal Caregivers, Counseling, Training, Support services

Regardful Curiosity as the Act of Gazing upon the Irreplaceable Other

Prof Takashi Oshie Ph.D.

Seinan Gakuin University, Fukuoka-shi, Japan



Prof Takashi Oshie

Author Bio

Takashi Oshie is a professor in the Department of Psychology, Faculty of Human Sciences at Seinan Gakuin University. He also works as a school counselor and serves as the director of the Society for the Study of Community-based Clinical Psychology.

Abstract

"Regardful curiosity" denotes an attitude in which, even when clients speak about topics seemingly unrelated to their presenting complaint or difficult to comprehend, therapists strive to sustain—even subtly—the sense that unfamiliar matters are precisely worth knowing, and that engaging with them may broaden the therapist's own perspective.

Directing mere "curiosity" toward the client risks being intrusive or even coercive. By approaching with "regard," and with the stance of wanting to know for the sake of understanding itself, therapists genuinely cultivate unconditional positive regard and empathic understanding. As Schmid (2001) observed, empathy is "the art of being curious, being open to being surprised."

A related notion is the "curiosity" proposed by Cecchin (1987) in systemic therapy. However, whereas that approach emphasizes directing curiosity toward the multiplicity of patterns to avoid boredom, regardful curiosity reflects the therapist's intrinsic desire to understand. It stems from the therapist's own wish to learn from the client and to grow.

Crucially, this concept offers a distinct perspective from "relational depth" (Mearns & Cooper, 2017) and "level of experiencing" (Klein et al., 1970). While relational depth is a vital framework for understanding moments of profound contact, and level of experiencing is a useful concept for capturing the quality of experiencing, client change often occurs even in instances that may not strictly qualify as working at relational depth or demonstrate a high level of experiencing. This suggests the existence of a therapeutic value that cannot be fully articulated through vertical axes of depth or level. Regardful curiosity asserts that the specific quality of being regarded as an irreplaceable, unique human being holds therapeutic value, independent of the relational depth or experiencing level.

This presentation discusses the theoretical and practical implications of regardful curiosity, arguing for the significance of this specific quality of regard in the encounter.

Submission type

Poster

Keywords

regardful curiosity, unconditional positive regard, empathy, encounter, relational depth

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The person-centred approach – elitist niche or potential for peacemaking?

Barbara Wirkner¹, Arne Klein²

¹Barbara Wirkner - Beratung für Person & System, Frankfurt / Main, Germany. ²Hamm, Germany



Barbara Wirkner

Author Bio

Certified educator | Career advisor | Course instructor for person-centred counselling | 2002 – 2019
Lecturer for the person-centred approach at University of Applied Sciences Koblenz and Frankfurt University of Applied Sciences. Self-employed for over 20 years, managing director of the company: Barbara Wirkner – Consulting for Person & System. Focus areas: consulting, coaching, supervision (individual and group settings), executive coaching, organisational and team development, further training in person-centred communication and counselling, teaching consultation and supervision, further training on request.



Arne Klein

Author Bio

As a person-centred counsellor, I transform leadership chaos into calm. With over 15 years' experience in management in the digital sector, and certified by the German Association for Supervision and Coaching (DGSv) and the Association for Person-Centred Psychotherapy and Counselling (GwG), I help teams and executives to navigate challenging change processes with clarity and confidence. I offer coaching in German or English, either online or in person. Since 2025, I have also worked as a GwG board member.

Abstract

In a world of divergence, division, conflict and war, there is a growing need to give a voice to people with radically different views.

Against this background, questions arise:

How can person-centred relationship building become a reality in its six conditions?

How can psychological contact be established with people who have a radically different view of the world that contradicts the humanistic perspective?

How can psychological contact be realized with people who feel unheard and unseen, and who, driven by anger, tend to lean towards more radical movements?

Following a theoretical input, this workshop will focus on sharing experiences and finding ways to trust in the person-centred view of humanity even in difficult situations, and to make this trust tangible through person-centred action.

The focus here is on reflecting on one's own attitude.

Can I feel and maintain a person-centred attitude, a person-centred way of being in the world, even towards people who are rather hostile in the world and contradict my attitude?

- Which of my prejudices cause my attitude to waver?
- Which behaviours cause me to doubt the actualisation tendency of the other person?
- Who do I exclude in my convictions?
- Do I – as a person-centred educated person – count myself among an elitist group that judges and excludes people whose views I dislike?
- How far does my tolerance go in contact with those who think differently?

In addition to exchanging experiences, it is also important to expand my capacity for human attitude when I reach the limits of my tolerance or attitude.

- Which inner aspects help me in this and which stand in my way?

Submission type

Creative Workshop (90 min)

Keywords

divergance, conflict, war and person-centered attitude, peace-building potential of the pca, person-centered approach (pca), psychological contact, six conditions of person-centered relationship

From Inner Knowing to Collective Action: Person-Centered Constellations & Focusing in a Changing World

Michael Schüling M.A. or M.Sc. in Psychology¹, Juliane von Crailsheim Diploma²

¹Psychotherapeutische Praxis - Michael Schüling, Gardessen, Germany. ²Anima-Alliance, Langres, France



Michael Schüling

Author Bio

Dipl.-Psych. (1991), person-centered psychotherapist with 27 years of professional experience, and licensed psychological psychotherapist for 26 years.



Juliane von Crailsheim

Author Bio

Person-centered counsellor and facilitator for pc-constellations. Diploma in Creative Writing and Cultural Journalism, dance-theatre non-director, engaged in horse rescue and co-founder of ANIMA Alliance.

Abstract

In this workshop, we open a non-directive, deeply person-centered experiential space in which constellation processes become a shared experiment in sensing and understanding. We work with themes that arise from within the group, such as archetypal patterns or social questions in a changing world.

Enriched by Focusing, we invite participants to sense what is present in their inner and relational experience. The constellation process unfolds from the impulses of the participants, allowing each position to appear as it is. In this way, inner knowing becomes visible and shareable, and collective resonance can take shape. The process aims to open possibilities for change as they naturally emerge — individually, socially, and collectively.

Our intention is to offer person-centered constellations as a living, experiential, grounded and genuinely democratic practice.

Submission type

Creative Workshop (90 min)

Keywords

PC-constellation proces, democratic peace work, growth through groupwork, experiment for active change, collective actualisation

Workshop WITH Focusing (Workshop MIT Focusing)

Thomas S. Franke Dipl.-Psych.

Freelancer, Erfurt, Germany



Thomas S. Franke

Author Bio

Thomas Franke, born 1948; living in her second marriage with Sylvia (*1954) and son Max (*1996), our daughter Janine (*1980) already lives (with her 2 children) "away"; Diploma in Psychology at the University of Mainz (1975), training in person-centered psychotherapy ("conversational psychotherapy"), further training in depth psychology/psychoanalysis, systemic psychotherapy, behavioral therapy and focusing; certified as a clinical psychologist and supervisor (BDP) as well as a focusing trainer at the Focusing Institute New York (since 1986 as a member of a focusing network Gene Gendlins Focusing learning and teaching); since 1999 licensed as a psychological psychotherapist and child and adolescent psychotherapist (Chamber of Psychotherapists Hesse); psychotherapeutic full-time, first in his own (group) practice (1975 – 1978), then for 22 years (1978 – 2000) at the Kalmenhof Social Pedagogical Centre, today Vitos Teilhabe, in Idstein (work with "behaviourally problematic" and mentally ill, partly disabled children and adolescents as well as their families/caregivers), since 2000 in the Clinic for Forensic Psychiatry (work with addicted offenders) at the Vitos Clinics in Hadamar, "part-time" repeatedly worked in the psychotherapeutic practice of a colleague and as a supervisor for teams of inpatient and outpatient child and youth care as well as drug assistance. Since 2013 he has been a good-humoured and grateful pensioner and with about 16 hours a week again working as a freelancer, mainly as a supervisor (accredited by the Chamber of Psychotherapists of Hesse) and to a lesser extent as a psychotherapist, especially for clients with addictions as well as convicted subjects of the probation service (sexual and violent offenders); Despite everything (or because of it), they are still mostly in good shape, curious and hopeful. (Thomas Franke, geb. 1948; in zweiter Ehe zusammenlebend mit Sylvia (*1954) und Sohn Max (*1996), unsere Tochter Janine (*1980) lebt (mit ihren 2 Kindern) bereits „auswärts“; Diplom in Psychologie Uni Mainz (1975), Ausbildung in personenzentrierter Psychotherapie („Gesprächspsychotherapie“), Weiterbildungen in Tiefenpsychologie/Psychoanalyse, Systemischer Psychotherapie, Verhaltenstherapie und focusing; zertifiziert als Klinischer Psychologe und Supervisor (BDP) sowie als focusing-Trainer beim Focusing-Institute New York (seit 1986 als Mitarbeiter eines focusing-Netzwerkes Gene Gendlins Focusing lernend und lehrend); seit 1999 approbiert als Psychologischer Psychotherapeut und Kinder- und Jugendlichenpsychotherapeut (Psychotherapeutenkammer Hessen); psychotherapeutisch hauptberuflich tätig zunächst in eigener (Gemeinschafts-) Praxis (1975 – 1978), danach 22 Jahre lang (1978 – 2000) im Sozialpädagogischen Zentrum Kalmenhof, heute Vitos Teilhabe, in Idstein (Arbeit mit „verhaltensauffälligen“ und psychisch kranken, z.T. behinderten Kindern und Jugendlichen sowie deren Familien/Bezugspersonen), seit 2000 in der Klinik für Forensische Psychiatrie (Arbeit mit suchtkranken Straftätern) bei den Vitos-Kliniken in Hadamar, „nebenberuflich“ immer wieder in der Psychotherapeutischen Praxis einer Kollegin und als Supervisor für Teams der stationären und ambulanten Kinder- und Jugend- sowie der Drogenhilfe tätig. Seit 2013 gut gelaunter und dankbarer Rentner und mit ca. 16 Wochenstunden wieder freiberuflich tätig v.a. als Supervisor (akkreditiert bei der Psychotherapeutenkammer Hessen) und in geringem Umfang noch als Psychotherapeut v.a. für Klient*innen mit Suchterkrankungen sowie einschlägig verurteilten Probanden der Bewährungshilfe (Sexual- und Gewaltstraftäter); trotz allem (oder deswegen) noch überwiegend gut beieinander, neugierig und hoffnungsfroh.)

Abstract

Workshop WITH Focusing:

I would like to offer the opportunity to slow down and perhaps even deepen the course of the congress or "my being there at this congress" (e.g. personal resonances and aftershocks on the topics of climate crisis or social injustice or AI or even another, current, small topic of your own) through focusing in a group setting (i.e. **a guided group focusing...**). Previous experience with Focusing is not required. Afterwards we can tell each other about our process life and/or – if desired – I will tell you something about **PZA, focusing and taking time for me.**

... Would that be something?..

(Workshop MIT Focusing:

Ich möchte die Möglichkeit bieten, durch Focusing in einem Gruppensetting (also **ein angeleitetes Gruppenfocusing...**) den Kongress-Verlauf oder „mein Da-Sein auf diesem Kongress“ (z.B. persönliche Resonanzen und Nachbeben zu den Themen Climate Crisis oder Social Injustice oder AI oder auch ein sonstiges, aktuelles, kleines eigenes Thema hierzu) zu verlangsamen und vielleicht sogar zu vertiefen. Vorerfahrungen mit Focusing sind nicht erforderlich. Im Anschluss können wir uns von unserem Prozesserleben erzählen und/oder – wenn gewünscht – ich erzähle was über **PZA, Focusing und Zeit-nehmen-für-mich.**

...Wär das was?..)

Submission type

Creative Workshop (90 min)

Keywords

Focusing, Reflection, Experiencing and dealing with change processes (Erleben von und Umgang mit Veränderungsprozessen), Climate crisis (Klimakrise), Social Injustice (Soziale Ungerechtigkeit)

Innovation and Social Inclusion in Training the Person-Centred and Experiential Psychotherapist

Dr Maria Kefalopoulou PhD¹, Alex Vallidis MSc.^{2,3}, Eleftheria Petrakaki MSc¹

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Dr Maria Kefalopoulou

Author Bio

Dr. Maria Kefalopoulou, (PhD, ECP), has studied Social Psychology in France (Paris-X-Nanterre, Paris-VII-Denis Diderot) and she is Academic Lead in Counselling and Psychotherapy at ICPS- College for Humanistic Sciences, Athens, Greece. She is member of the European Association of Psychotherapy (EAP), member of the PCE World and Co-Editor of the PCEP Journal. She is a former coordinator of the Gender and Equality office of the Municipality of Athens



Alex Vallidis

Author Bio

Alex Vallidis is a psychologist and person-centred psychotherapist (BSc, MSc, ECP) based in Athens, Greece. He serves as Academic Lead at ICPS College for Humanistic Sciences, where he trains and supervises students in psychotherapy. His clinical and research interests focus on relational trauma, grief and refugee mental health. Since 2023, he has been a researcher with UNHCR & PRAKSIS, exploring person-centred approaches to trauma in displaced children. He also founded 'Research Clinic ANEKEN', a centre supporting student development and reflective practice. Alex is the author of Person-Centred and Experiential Counselling for relational trauma (PCE-rt) and holds leadership roles in PCE Europe, PCE World, and the European Association for Psychotherapy.



Eleftheria Petrakaki

Author Bio

Eleftheria Petrakaki is a Psychologist, Child Psychologist, and Person-Centered Psychotherapist specializing in depression, anxiety disorders, and emotional dysregulation. She has significant experience working with unaccompanied refugee minors, providing psychosocial support within the refugee field for several years. In recent years, she has been practicing privately, offering psychotherapy to adults both in person and online. Alongside her clinical work, Eleftheria is an Education and Career Development Consultant and a Trainer at the College of Humanistic Sciences – ICPS. She also holds key leadership roles in the field: she is the President of the Panhellenic Association of Person-Centred and Experiential Professionals and Secretary of the World Association for Person-Centered & Experiential Psychotherapy & Counselling (PCE World).

Abstract

This symposium brings together three interlinked areas of innovation in the training of person-centred and experiential (PCE) psychotherapists—social inclusion, experiential skill development, and research-informed supervision. Addressing the pressing societal need for accessible and socially just psychotherapeutic provision, the symposium presents the work of ICPS College Athens and its research clinic, ANEKEN, as a model in which training, service, and research form an integrated ecosystem.

The first presentation explores the ideological and psychosocial implications of poverty for psychotherapy practice. Drawing on extensive professional experience within the Social Services of the Municipality of Athens, the talk examines how poverty-related stressors and class-based barriers shape clients' access to care, while highlighting ANEKEN's model of offering 24 weeks of free psychotherapy to individuals with financial difficulties. This model also promotes mutual growth by encouraging clients to return support to society through volunteerism.

The second presentation focuses on Intensive Lab Training (ILT)—a structured experiential methodology implemented at ICPS for the past two years. ILT combines theory, demonstrations, group labs and reflective practice to enhance students' clinical sensitivity and conceptual understanding. Its effectiveness and structure are grounded in the ILT framework presented in the model of PCE-rt.

The third presentation introduces Research-Informed Supervision (RIS), a model developed within ICPS and applied in the ANEKEN research program utilizing mixed-method designs, growth-trajectory analysis, and grounded theory. RIS brings empirical data into the supervisory process, enhancing therapist awareness, self-organization, alliance-building, and ethical responsiveness.

Together, the three threads articulate a holistic and socially relevant vision for PCE psychotherapy training—one that integrates social justice, experiential depth, and rigorous research to serve both trainees and the wider community.

Submission type

Symposium (60 min)

Keywords

Social Inclusion , PCE training , Intensive Lab training, Research Informed Supervision , Poverty and Mental Health

List Individual Talks of the Symposium (Title - First Author)

1. Ideological Implications of Poverty and PCA, Mutual Growth: ANEKEN -
Dr. Maria Kefalopoulou
2. The Intensive Lab Training (ILT) Methodology -
Ms. Eleftheria Petrakaki
3. Trajectories in PCE: The Research-Informed Supervision (RIS) Model
- Mr. Alexandros Vallidis

Maladjustment as Process: Understanding Fragile Experience Under Conditions of Social Strain in Contemporary Greece

Eleftheria Petrakaki BSc, MSc, ECP

College for Humanistic Sciences - ICPS, Athens, Greece. Panhellenic Association of Person-Centred and Experiential Professionals, Athens, Greece



Eleftheria Petrakaki

Author Bio

Eleftheria Petrakaki is a Psychologist, Child Psychologist, and Person-Centered Psychotherapist specializing in depression, anxiety disorders, and emotional dysregulation. She has significant experience working with unaccompanied refugee minors, providing psychosocial support within the refugee field for several years. In recent years, she has been practicing privately, offering psychotherapy to adults both in person and online. Alongside her clinical work, Eleftheria is an Education and Career Development Consultant and a Trainer at the College of Humanistic Sciences – ICPS. She also holds key leadership roles in the field: she is the President of the Panhellenic Association of Person-Centred and Experiential Professionals and Secretary of the World Association for Person-Centered & Experiential Psychotherapy & Counselling (PCE World).

Abstract

This presentation reframes “maladjustment” not as pathology but as a realistic response to overwhelming internal and external conditions. Drawing on Margaret Warner’s Process Realism and her typology of fluid, fragile, and dissociated processes, it views psychological difficulty as an adaptive attempt to maintain coherence when a person feels threatened.

Within a person-centred and experiential (PCE) framework, distress is understood as a meaningful form of survival rather than a failure of functioning. Symptoms emerge as the organism’s best effort to stay intact in environments that exceed its resources. In contemporary Greece, such environments are increasingly shaped by structural pressures. Policies extending the legal workday to up to 12 hours in certain sectors, combined with ongoing price inflation, stagnant salaries, and rising living costs, have intensified chronic stress across the population. Many citizens face economic insecurity, while high unemployment—especially among youth—undermines agency and future orientation.

These pressures intersect with the collective trauma of the 2011 economic crisis and the lasting psychosocial effects of COVID-19, creating a widespread climate of fragile process: emotional overwhelm, withdrawal, disorganization, and exhaustion.

From this standpoint, “maladjustment” becomes an understandable expression of fragile process rather than an individual deficit. People are not disordered; they are overburdened by social conditions that outstrip their coping capacities. The PCE therapist’s role is to offer an emotionally regulating, authentic, and empathic relational presence—one that provides steadiness, acceptance, and genuine attunement. Within such an environment, clients’ raw and chaotic experiences can gradually find shape, language, and shared meaning.

The presentation argues that many Greeks today function within societally induced fragile zones, challenging traditional diagnostic frameworks. By integrating social trauma with PCE theory, we are invited to reconceptualize maladjustment as a normal, intelligible response to abnormal conditions and to reassert psychotherapy as a relational, humanizing space of reconstruction and growth.

Submission type

Individual Talk (20 min)

Keywords

Maladjustment , Structural Pressures, Fragile Process , Person-Centred and Experiential (PCE) Therapy , Social Trauma

Happiness and the Person-Centred Perspective: A Polyvagal and Neuropsychophysiological Understanding of Well-Being

Dr Maria Kefalopoulou PhD¹, Alex Vallidis MSc.^{1,2}

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Dr Maria Kefalopoulou

Author Bio

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Alex Vallidis

Author Bio

Alex Vallidis is a psychologist and person-centred psychotherapist (BSc, MSc, ECP) based in Athens, Greece. He serves as Academic Lead at ICPS College for Humanistic Sciences, where he trains and supervises students in psychotherapy. His clinical and research interests focus on relational trauma, grief and refugee mental health. Since 2023, he has been a researcher with UNHCR & PRAKSIS, exploring person-centred approaches to trauma in displaced children. He also founded 'Research Centre ANEKEN', a centre supporting student development and reflective practice. Alex is the author of Person-Centred and Experiential Counselling for relational trauma (PCE-rt) and holds leadership roles in PCE Europe, PCE World, and the European Association for Psychotherapy.

Abstract

The multidimensional concept of happiness appears in ancient Greek thought as *eudaimonia*, a state rooted in meaning and flourishing rather than fleeting pleasure. In contemporary times, the UN General Assembly (Resolution 66/281) has designated March 20th as the International Day of Happiness. For over twenty years, the *World Happiness Report*—based on the global Gallup poll—has provided comparative data on subjective well-being. These life evaluations offer a consistent measure of perceived quality of life, while daily emotional fluctuations remain more variable. Recent findings in the WHR 2025 indicate that Western countries report lower levels of happiness compared to the 2005–2010 period, reflecting broader societal and psychological challenges.

Within **person-centred and experiential psychotherapy (PCE/PCA)**, happiness is conceptualized as congruence—the alignment of lived experience with awareness—and as the organismic tendency toward growth when conditions of safety and acceptance are present. Psychological well-being is therefore relational and embodied. Current neuroscience supports this view: emotional regulation, social engagement,

and the capacity to experience positive affect are closely connected to the functioning of the **vagus nerve**, especially its ventral branch, which supports calmness, social connection, and co-regulation.

When vagal tone is high, individuals are physiologically more capable of empathy, openness, and resilience.

These embodied mechanisms support Rogers' assertion that empathic understanding and authentic presence create the conditions for growth.

Integrating global happiness research, the PCE model, and polyvagal science suggests that happiness is not merely a subjective rating but a *relational, neurophysiological, and experiential process*. It emerges when individuals feel safe, connected, and understood—both socially and therapeutically—and when their internal physiological states support openness to experience and meaningful engagement with life.

Submission type

Individual Lecture (60 min)

Keywords

Person-Centred Psychotherapy, Vagus Nerve, Congruence & Happiness , Safety , ANS

Prouty's PRE-THERAPY: "the technique is easy but the art is difficult".

Dion Van Werde M.A.

Pre-Therapy International Network, Wiesenbach, Germany



Dion Van Werde

Author Bio

Belgian clinical Psychologist, Person Centered / Experiential Psychotherapist, living in Germany. Supervisor of the Flemish Association for PC /Experiential Psychotherapy and Counselling. Member of the editorial board of the Journal of the World Organization for PC / Experiential Psychotherapy and counseling. Cofounder, Certified Trainer and Coordinator of the Pre-Therapy International Network. Publishes on Pre-Therapy (see: www.pre-therapy.com under "references"), supervises therapists and teams, and gives lectures and workshops in 4 languages. Worked for over 30 years in a Belgian psychiatric hospital with people suffering psychotic functioning, followed by 5 years in German occupational rehabilitation services, serving longtime unemployed people with multiple problems.

Abstract

By means of one or two participants role playing, Pre-Therapy will be demonstrated. In this way, not only "the technique" will be highlighted and discussed, but participants will be sensitized for the existential depth of the approach.

The challenge of this person centered and highly phenomenological approach, is to offer the out-of-contact client means for reconnecting. Prouty calls these ways of functioning "pre-expressive", meaning that symptomatic behavior nevertheless contains meaningful content although expressed in a non-conscious way. This implies a not-yet access to the relational and experiential contents that are encrypted. By conceptualizing in this way, Prouty sees himself and his work as an evolution in PC (Rogers) and Experiential (Gendlin) psychotherapy, enabling clients suffering contact loss to break out of their isolation and consciously reconnect with the world, with their inner affective life and with other people.

It was Prouty's mission to bring the people the help they needed without adding unnecessary suffering. This existentially informed way of doing psychotherapy brings us to the essentials of person psychotherapy, and makes PCT available for these persons never thought of being able to enter psychotherapy.

STRUCTURE

Short introduction on Pre-Therapy, followed by a demonstration that than will be analyzed and discussed.

LEARNINGS

Participants widen and deepen their understanding of Pre-Therapy and Person Centered Psychotherapy.

Participants challenge their own thinking and practices.

Possibilities of integrating Pre-Therapy and pretherapeutic reflections in diverse populations and practices will be discovered.

Submission type

Experiential Workshop (75 min)

Keywords

Pre-Therapy, Garry Prouty, Demonstration, Existential, Essentials of Person-Centered Psychotherapy

Actualizing from Person-Centered to Being-Centered: What if we co-create change with animals, nature, and collective processes?

Juliane von Crailsheim

Anima Alliance, Langres, France



Juliane von Crailsheim

Author Bio

Juliane von Crailsheim holds a diploma in Creative Writing and Cultural Journalism, is a person-centered counsellor, engaged in horse rescue, co-founder of ANIMA Alliance, and works as a dance-theatre director and short-film maker.

Abstract

How might the Person-Centered Approach evolve to engage with the challenges of our time? What becomes possible when it grows into a being-centered understanding that includes animals and nature in our shared actualizing processes? This talk invites participants to imagine a being-centered frame of reference in which animals and nature are understood as resonant and co-knowing partners in personal and collective processes.

Experiences from a horse sanctuary and a human–animal–nature community offer insights into encounters with animals as relational partners, as well as into proposals on how nonhuman perspectives can expand democratic and peacebuilding processes. Based on this, we ask how our person-centered frame of reference shifts when we include the perspectives of other beings in shaping our lives — and what forms of shared growth may emerge from this. How could a being-centered way of collaborating deepen and transform peace work?

This session is open to all. It invites person-centered practitioners and those exploring similar questions to come together in dialogue — to exchange experiences, to widen perspectives, and to connect.

Submission type

Individual Talk (20 min)

Keywords

democratic process, being-centered growth and change, actualizing groups intelligence, interspecies peacework, change by accepting everyone involved

Fragmented Wholeness in a Changing World: A Molecular View on Growing and Shrinking in Person-Centered Being

Christina Maria Busch Mag.rer.nat., MSc

ÖGWG Österreichische Gesellschaft für wissenschaftliche klientenzentrierte Psychotherapie und personorientierte Gesprächsführung, Linz, Austria. ÖBVP Österreichischer Bundesverband für Psychotherapie, Vienna, Austria. PCE Europe European Network for Person-Centred and Experiential Psychotherapy and Counselling, Vienna, Austria. PCE World Association for Person-Centred and Experiential Psychotherapy and Counselling, Vienna, Austria



Christina Maria Busch

Author Bio

Christina Maria Busch, is a person-centered psychotherapist based in Vienna. She holds a degree in Psychology from the University of Vienna, a Master's degree in Person-Centered Psychotherapy from the Danube University Krems, and additional qualifications as a work and organizational psychologist as well as an emergency psychologist. Christina teaches in the psychotherapeutic propaedeutic program for prospective psychotherapists and spent twelve years in extra-university research, where she directed the "Smart Agent Technologies" Research Studio within the Research Studios Austria. In her clinical practice, she works extensively with trans* clients throughout their transition processes and focuses on questions of biological, social, and gender identity—topics strongly resonating with the challenges of a rapidly changing world. Her current interests center on micro-relational, experiential processes and the notion of fragmented wholeness in person-centered encounters. Christina is a member of the ÖBVP, PCE Europe, PCE World, and the ÖGWG.

Abstract

In a rapidly changing world, our sense of personhood is continuously challenged by experiences that appear fragmented, contradictory, or in tension with who we believe ourselves to be. Although these shifts may seem external, they are inseparable from us: shaped by our histories, enacted in our relationships, and emerging as inner invitations to transformation. This lecture explores the paradox of fragmented wholeness through a molecular, micro-relational lens on person-centered being.

Building on Brian Rodgers' reflections on simultaneity and his question "Can we co-construct it?", I examine how experiences from our past, our present encounters, and our anticipated futures coexist simultaneously, influencing the ways we meet one another. When these fragments remain unacknowledged, they silently shape whom we feel drawn to, how we resonate, and why some relational connections dissolve suddenly—often through quiet moments of comparison, competition, or hurt.

The metaphor of growing and shrinking, inspired by Alice falling into the Rabbitwhole, provides an accessible way to understand these micro-relational shifts. As Alice grows or shrinks with a single bite or sip, so too do subtle relational cues—tones, memories, expectations, unresolved tensions—expand or constrict our sense of self. These "molecular substances" shape our capacity for presence and influence how authentically we can engage.

Within the international person-centered community, a strong sense of belonging coexists with recurring relational ruptures. These ruptures often carry the legacy of historical conflicts within our approach, expressed differently across countries and generations, and affecting our ability to co-construct genuine encounter.

Following Rogers' assertion that "we must know ourselves before we can change," this lecture invites a deeper awareness of both personal and collective fragmentation. By understanding what makes us grow or shrink in relationship, we may strengthen the actualizing tendency and open pathways for presence, co-construction, and growth in a profoundly changing world.

Submission type

Individual Lecture (60 min)

Keywords

Fragmented personhood, Micro-relational dynamics, Co-construction, Actualizing tendency, Relational ruptures

A Non-Directive, Person-Centred View On The Neoliberal Capitalist Manufacturing Of Psychopathology

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Marc A Dreßler

Author Bio

Marc Alexander Dreßler is a Teaching Associate in the School of Education at the University of Nottingham, where he contributes to the MA in Person-Centred Experiential Counselling & Psychotherapy Practice. As a member of the Centre for Research in Human Flourishing, his research interests include personal growth and human potential, the formative and actualising tendency, the effects of ideology (especially neoliberalism), systems of power, the flourishing of people in creative professions, agile leadership, and the experiences of desi clients. He previously served as Clinic Manager of the University of Aberdeen's counselling training and research clinic, overseeing the training of both person-centred and pluralist counsellors. Describing himself as a psychotherapist, he blends and gains inspiration out of both psychotherapy and art. As a psychotherapist, artist, and listening-leadership consultant he has worked across Europe, South America and India. Marc holds an MA in Person-Centred Experiential Counselling & Psychotherapy Practice, a PgDip in Integrative Counselling & Psychotherapy, and a BSc (Hons) in Behavioural Studies. He is a registered member of the BACP, holds a Diploma in Hypnotherapy (CMA accredited), is an alumnus of the Academy for Cultural Diplomacy (ICD Berlin), is a Heilpraktiker (Psychotherapie) in Germany, and currently serves on the ethical committee of PCE Europe. Previous publication: Sutanti, N., Dreßler, M. A., & Kurniawan, L. (2023). Contemporary educational perspective of Indonesian and German students. *Buletin Konseling Inovatif*, 3(2), 122–132. Contact E-Mail: marc.dressler@nottingham.ac.uk ORCID: 0009-0001-0871-7415

Abstract

This is a conceptual paper, which develops a person-centred theory arguing that much of contemporary psychopathology is produced and shaped by neoliberal capitalist structures: A form of structural violence that the dominant medical model obscures and reinforces. Drawing on critiques of psychiatric diagnosis, critical social theory, and person-centred theory, I argue that capitalism creates both situational barriers (exempli gratia: economic precarity, boom–bust cycles, climate threat, debt-driven consumerism and its links to addiction, and the attention economy of digital architectures) and internalised conditions of worth (neoliberal introjects that equate human value with market utility). These forces intensify stress, undermine agency, commodify relationships and identity, and produce patterns of distress that are pathologised as discrete individual “mental illnesses.” Instead of this view of mental illnesses, the paper indicates that many individual symptoms can be explained as reflections of larger processes in a neoliberal capitalist society. Using Bohart's client-centred reframing of “problems in living,” I show how situational stressors and imposed conditions of worth jointly explain many presentations seen in therapy better than reductionist medical labels or presumed biological causation. The paper then examines clinical and political implications for person-centred practitioners: Radical non-directivity as an ethical and anti-authoritarian stance that resists adaptation to the status quo, the absolute necessity of therapeutic practices which support the client's actualising tendency, and the necessity of collective, organised responses to challenge the systemic sources

of distress. I conclude that person-centred encountering offers both a corrective to medicalised diagnoses and a practical orientation for supporting clients toward agency and flourishing within — and beyond — a system that engineers conformity and alienation.

Submission type

Individual Talk (20 min)

Keywords

Psychopathology, Structural Violence, Neoliberal Capitalism, Conditions of Worth, Non-directivity

Embodied Contact in a Changing World: Practical Implications of Movement Coordination Research for Online Psychotherapy

Dr Joanna Komorowska-Mach PhD

University of Warsaw, Warsaw, Poland



Dr Joanna Komorowska-Mach

Author Bio

Joanna Komorowska-Mach, PhD, is a philosopher and psychotherapist, Assistant Professor at the University of Warsaw. Her work focuses on philosophy of mind, philosophy of psychotherapy, and methodology. She collaborates with the Intra Centre in Warsaw and the Human Interactivity and Language Lab (HILL).

Abstract

Motivation: Person-centred and experiential therapies conceptualise the therapeutic relationship as embodied and dynamically co-regulated. As more therapeutic work moves online, therapists are raising questions about presence, attunement, and screen-related fatigue. This poster is for participants who wish to situate these concerns within empirical research on bodily coordination.

Problem: The poster examines how changes in movement coordination in video-mediated encounters affect embodied presence, co-regulation, and alliance in online psychotherapy. It claims that research on nonverbal synchrony and movement coordination can inform concrete decisions about how online sessions are structured and conducted.

Methodology: I bring together empirical studies on nonverbal synchrony in psychotherapy, research on movement coordination in video-mediated versus face-to-face interaction, and findings on online therapy outcomes and “Zoom fatigue.” Within this framework, I draw on results from a motion-tracking study of dyadic conversations in video and face-to-face conditions conducted in the Human Interactivity and Language Lab at the University of Warsaw.

Results: Across studies, higher nonverbal synchrony is associated with a stronger alliance and better outcomes. Video-mediated settings tend to amplify visible gestures while reducing the stability of interpersonal coordination, and self-view appears to modulate, but not restore, face-to-face levels of synchrony. Prolonged video use may also contribute to exhaustion through nonverbal overload and continuous self-observation.

Implications: I propose practical, evidence-informed guidelines for online psychotherapy, including decisions about camera framing and bodily visibility, the intentional use or concealment of self-view, the pacing of speech and gesture to support co-regulation, and the structuring of breaks to reduce fatigue. I also suggest ways of metacommunicating about bodily experience and moments of “desynchrony” within sessions.

Discussion: I invite participants to relate these findings to their own experience of working online and to person-centred understandings of presence and empathy, and to consider questions for future practice-oriented research on embodiment in digital therapeutic spaces.

Submission type

Poster

Keywords

online psychotherapy, movement, coordination, Zoom fatigue, embodiment

Assessing Experiential Change: A new EXP Framework for Imagery-Based Narratives

Prof Miwa Nakanishi Ph.D. in Psychology¹, Prof Tsuyoshi Aoki Ph.D. in Psychology², Shuting Jiang³, Prof Ao Guo Ph.D.³, Prof Ryuichiro Higashinaka Ph.D.³

¹Nanzan University of Department of Psychology and Human Relations, Faculty of Humanities in Japan, Nagoya, Japan. ²Ryukoku University of Faculty of Psychology, Kyoto, Japan. ³Department of Intelligent Systems, Graduate School of Informatics, Nagoya University, Nagoya, Japan



Prof Miwa Nakanishi

Author Bio

Miwa Nakaishi, Ph.D. is a professor of clinical psychology and psychotherapy at Nanzan University of Department of Psychology and Human Relations, Faculty of Humanities in Japan. She conducts practical research on humanistic group approaches. She is a Gestalt Therapy psychotherapist as certified by the Gestalt Institute of Japan. She has been also conducting Gestalt Therapy workshops.



Prof Tsuyoshi Aoki

Author Bio

Tsuyoshi Aoki, Ph.D. is an assistant professor of clinical psychology and psychotherapy at Ryukoku University of Faculty of Psychology in Kyoto, Japan. He conducts some studies about mental health, PCT especially Focusing-oriented Psychotherapy and experiential learning about PCA and Focusing. He is a Focusing-oriented psychotherapist as certified by the Focusing Institute and practices at university counselling centers as a part-time counsellor. He has been also conducting Focusing workshops.



Shuting Jiang

Author Bio

Shuting Jiang is a master's student at the Department of Intelligent Systems, Graduate School of Informatics, Nagoya University, Japan. Her research focuses on counseling dialogue systems, particularly the automatic assessment of the Experiencing Scale (EXP Scale) in counseling conversations using large language models.



Prof Ao Guo

Author Bio

Ao Guo, Ph.D. is an assistant professor at the Department of Intelligent Systems, Graduate School of Informatics, Nagoya University, Japan. His research interests lie in personalized dialogue systems, mobile robot guidance, and user state estimation based on physiological signals. His recent work focuses on dialogue systems that express specified personalities and mobile guidance with high hospitality.



Prof Ryuichiro Higashinaka

Author Bio

Ryuichiro Higashinaka, Ph.D. is a professor at the Department of Intelligent Systems, Graduate School of Informatics, Nagoya University, Japan. He specializes in AI-based dialogue systems and dialogue analysis, and is an expert in natural language processing, artificial intelligence, and spoken dialogue systems. In recent years, he has been particularly researching methodologies for realizing human-like natural dialogue and their application to counseling.

Abstract

Motivation: In a rapidly changing world increasingly shaped by digital and AI-mediated forms of communication, it's important to reconsider how experiential processes are understood and assessed. Gendlin (1961) identified experiencing as a variable in the process of therapeutic change, and his colleagues developed an observer-rated scale called the Experiential Scale (Klein et al., 1969). The EXP was originally developed to assess clients' levels of experiencing in psychotherapy and has traditionally been applied to verbal expressions of the self. Although imagery-based interventions are commonly used in therapeutic settings, limited research has explored how the EXP scale can be applied to narratives mediated through imagery. This study examined the applicability of the EXP scale to imagery-based narratives produced in two experiential exercises involving dialogue with a listener: Crossing with Animals (Ikemi, et.al., 2019), in which participants express their sense of living as an animal, and Internal Weather, in which they express their own felt sense as weather metaphors.

Methodology: Imagery-based narratives from eight participants, with the presenter serving as the listener, were analyzed.

Results: The results indicated that current EXP criteria fail to capture several characteristics unique to imagery-mediated expression, including shifts in symbolic meaning, embodied or sensory descriptions, and emotional awareness expressed through metaphor. To address these limitations, new rating criteria were developed and applied. Using these new criteria, Peak EXP levels were most frequently rated at 5, while Mode EXP levels were generally between 3 and 4.

Implications: These findings suggest that the traditional EXP framework requires refinement or expansion in order to more accurately evaluate experiential processes conveyed through imagery. Incorporating imagery-specific dimensions into the EXP scale may allow for a more comprehensive assessment of clients' experiential depth. This study highlights the importance of developing evaluation methods that integrate both verbal and imagery-based modes of self-exploration in psychotherapy.

Submission type

Individual Lecture (60 min)

Keywords

Focusing, EXP scale, Imagery-Based Narratives

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Helping Employees Without Reinforcing Unhealthy Work Cultures: Using Focusing to Empower Workers

Prof Akiko Doi Ph.D.

Kobe Gakuin University, Kobe, Japan



Prof Akiko Doi

Author Bio

Akiko Doi, Ph.D., is a Professor of Psychology at Kobe Gakuin University. She is a clinical psychologist and a Certifying Coordinator for The International Focusing Institute. In addition to teaching counseling to undergraduate and graduate students, she provides counseling to employees at various companies and offers mental health workshops based on Focusing.

Abstract

Structure & Outline

When psychologists work with companies, we face a delicate balance: supporting employees' mental health without unintentionally reinforcing unhealthy or unfair work conditions. From a social-justice perspective, psychological work in organizations should protect and respect workers' dignity—especially where long hours, strict hierarchies, and stigma around seeking help remain common.

In this workshop, the presenter, a psychologist who conducts workshops for employees on behalf of companies, will explore how psychologists can remain professionally neutral while resisting subtle pressures to “take the employer's side.” Drawing on examples from Japan—and inviting participants to reflect on similar dilemmas in their own contexts—the presenter will show how messages such as “be more resilient” or “manage your stress better” may unintentionally place responsibility on workers, while structural factors like workload, culture, and systems remain unaddressed.

The session has two parts. First, the presenter will briefly introduce the mental-health situation of working people in Japan and ethical challenges psychologists face in organizational settings. The second part will be experiential. Participants will try brief Focusing-based exercises used in the presenter's workshops on mental health, communication, and team building. These practices, along with ideas from self-compassion and positive psychology, help participants slow down, notice their inner responses, and reflect on workplace relationships while fostering grounding and empowerment. Participants will also consider how these approaches support worker empowerment without suggesting that workers alone must solve workplace problems.

Purpose: strengthen psychologists' confidence in supporting employees in ways that are caring, ethical, and socially responsible.

Learning Objectives

Participants will be able to:

- Apply a social-justice perspective in psychological work within organizational settings.
- Use simple Focusing-based tools to support worker empowerment without blaming workers.

Submission type

Experiential Workshop (75 min)

Keywords

social justice, Focusing, mental health, human potential, organizational setting

Person-Centered & Experiential Counselling for Relational Trauma (PCE-rt): Intesive Lab Practice

Alex Vallidis MSc

ICPS College for Humanistic Science, Athens, Greece. ANEKEN Research Clinic, Athens, Greece



Alex Vallidis

Author Bio

Alex Vallidis is a psychologist and person-centred psychotherapist (BSc, MSc, ECP) based in Athens, Greece. He serves as Academic Lead at ICPS College for Humanistic Sciences, where he trains and supervises students in psychotherapy. His clinical and research interests focus on relational trauma, grief and refugee mental health. Since 2023, he has been a researcher with UNHCR & PRAKSIS, exploring person-centred approaches to trauma in displaced children. He also founded 'ANEKEN- Research Clinic, a centre supporting student development and reflective practice. Alex is the author of Person-Centred and Experiential Counselling for relational trauma (PCE-rt) and holds leadership roles in PCE Europe, PCE World, and the European Association for Psychotherapy.

Abstract

This workshop introduces participants to the core therapeutic process of the **Person-Centered & Experiential Counselling for Relational Trauma (PCE-rt) model**, published in 2025 and disseminated by **UNHCR** as an applied relational-trauma framework for working with children and adolescents affected by complex trauma and displacement. Grounded in the principles of Person-Centered and Experiential psychotherapy, the workshop focuses on the *empathic stance* of the therapist and the method of **empathic mapping**—the central process proposed in the PCE-rt model for deep relational connection, safety, and therapist safeguarding during trauma work.

We begin with a theoretical orientation to relational trauma, trauma typologies, and the phenomenological foundations of PCE-rt. Participants are then introduced to write down and reflect on **(Accuracy), (Economy), (Tentativeness), (Immediacy), (Connection–Proximity), (Meaning), (Warmth)**.

The second part includes a live **demonstration by the author of the model**, during which participants will observe, record process markers, and engage in open discussion to identify how empathic mapping facilitates the expansion of empathy, relational depth, and embodied co-regulation within the therapeutic dyad.

In the final segment, participants will work in **triads** (therapist–client–observer) for a 30-minute practical lab. Each member will practice constructing an empathic map of the client's internal landscape while the observer tracks process indicators. The workshop concludes with a full-group dialogue exploring what was felt, understood, and discovered through the mapping process.

Workshop Structure

1. **Live Demonstration** – Empathic mapping in practice; reflective discussion.
2. **Experiential Lab in Triads** – Practice of empathic maps; group debrief.

Learning Objectives

- Understand the core principles of the PCE-rt model.
- Strengthen empathic stance and therapist presence.
- Learn and apply empathic mapping as a relational trauma process.
- Develop embodied awareness of co-regulation and depth-empathy.
- Integrate observation, reflection, and experiential practice.

Submission type

Creative Workshop (90 min)

Keywords

PCert , Trauma , Empathic Mapping , Intensive Lab Practice , Process

Seven Didactic Principles for Person-Centered Experiential Trainings: An Interactive Workshop

Michael Kelber M.A., MSc^{1,2}, Prof Renate Motschnig Dipl.-Ing. Dr.³, Ludger Verst QTS (StR)⁴

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Michael Kelber

Author Bio

Michael Kelber, M.A., MSc, is a registered psychotherapist in private practice in Vienna. In addition to his training in Person-Centered Experiential Psychotherapy in Germany (GWG) and Austria (FORUM), he completed further training in Humanistic Psychotherapy (AGHPT) and Emotion-Focused Therapy (DeGEFT). Since receiving his MSc in Psychotherapy Research at the Medical University of Vienna, he has been active in clinical practice, teaching, and research in German-speaking countries – among them as Research Officer of FORUM. His research interest focuses on the tension between a person-centered attitude and process-directive therapeutic practice, including theoretical and empirical reflection on this issue.



Prof Renate Motschnig

Author Bio

Renate Motschnig holds a double assignment as a professor at the Faculty of Computer Science and the Centre for Teacher Education at the University of Vienna, Austria. Renate is author/co-author of more than 180 articles and three books on the Person-Centered Approach, the most recent being “Transforming Communication in Leadership and Teamwork”. Renate has a deep interest in the multiple ways in which thorough understanding and significant learning happen. She is determined to foster a style in higher education and management that is grounded in person-centered attitudes, our co-actualizing potential, and thoughtful support by technological innovations including generative AI.



Ludger Verst

Author Bio

Ludger Verst, Catholic theologian and publicist, has been the director of INTERFAITH — a practice for communication, counselling, and spiritual care — since 1999. He serves as an Adjunct Lecturer in Practical Theology at universities and universities of applied sciences in Germany. Since 2018, he has also been responsible for the professional development of teachers and works as a school and crisis chaplain within the Diocese of Mainz. In addition, he maintains a person-centered counselling practice and provides depth-

psychologically oriented spiritual care in Wiesbaden. Verst is a member of several professional associations and the founding initiator and current chair of the C. G. Jung Society Frankfurt am Main.

Abstract

Planning and reflecting facilitation processes are central to trainings in person-centered experiential approaches. Yet little has been written about how attitudes such as empathy, congruence, and unconditional positive regard can intentionally guide didactic design. The GwG Project Group on Didactics therefore explored how a person-centered experiential understanding of facilitation can shape learning in professional training contexts. While person-centered experiential therapy has a rich theoretical foundation, its translation into didactic and supervisory settings remains underdeveloped.

In regular meetings, ten experienced trainers and facilitators examined their practice experiences and theoretical assumptions and – through iterative reflection and consensus building – formulated seven interrelated principles of person-centered experiential didactics.

The workshop briefly introduces the background of the project and the seven principles: subject orientation, process orientation, action and experiential learning, exemplary learning, multiperspectivity, science-based learning, and transparency. Participants then choose one principle and work in small groups to develop concrete examples of how it can be implemented in their own teaching or supervision (e.g., on flipcharts or an online whiteboard). These examples are shared and discussed in the plenary, followed by a joint reflection on possible additional principles and on existing guidelines for person-centered experiential training in different countries.

Learning objectives:

- (1) To become familiar with a coherent framework of didactic principles grounded in person-centered experiential attitudes.
- (2) To translate at least one principle into concrete teaching or supervision practices.
- (3) To critically reflect on one's own didactic assumptions and compare them with international approaches to person-centered experiential training.

Submission type

Experiential Workshop (75 min)

Keywords

Person-centered experiential didactics, Facilitation and trainer attitudes, Didactic principles, Experiential learning, Supervision and teaching practice

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Experiential-Existential Psychotherapy and the Great UnknownProf Siebrecht Vanhooren PdD

KU Leuven, Leuven, Belgium



Prof Siebrecht Vanhooren

Author Bio

Siebrecht Vanhooren (PhD) is professor of clinical psychology at the University of Leuven (KU Leuven) in Belgium. He teaches counseling skills, psychological interventions, and humanistic, person-centered, experiential, focusing and existential psychotherapies at undergraduate, graduate and postgraduate level. He is the director of the person-centered therapy training programs and the existential well-being counseling program at KU Leuven. He is a senior staff member of the Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences, the Research Group Clinical Psychology, the Meaning & Existence research center, and the Center for Experiential-Existential Psychotherapy at KU Leuven. He is a committee member of The Eugene T. Gendlin Center for Research in Experiential Philosophy and Psychology at The Focusing Institute (New York). His research includes existential concerns, meaning in life, posttraumatic growth, experiential-existential psychotherapy, focusing, dreamwork, and existential empathy. He also works as a person-centered experiential-existential psychotherapist, supervisor, and dream-work facilitator at PraxisP (KU Leuven). Last but not least, he loves spending time with his family and friends, hiking in nature, gardening, stargazing, and volunteering in his local community.

Abstract

Experiential-existential psychotherapy is a “newer” person-centered and experiential approach, which some also call a focusing-oriented existential approach or an existentially-informed person-centered approach (Madison, 2010; Leijssen, 2007; Vanhooren, 2018; Vanhooren & Cooper, 2025). It can be understood as a “crossing” of existential and person-centered approaches, or a carrying-forward of the theories of Rogers (1991, 1980), Gendlin (1973, 1974), May (1983), Schneider (2009, 2013; 2023), and many others, in response to our current global situation. Or could it be that it is rather a deepening of our roots, going back to the experiential-existential early theories of Rank (1936) and Taft (1932) who profoundly inspired and shaped the main tenets of our person-centered approach?

With his emphasis on how existential dynamics or the macrocosm resonate with the microcosm of the client’s and therapist’s experiences and opposite-wise (Rank, 1936), Rank might have left us a basic framework that could inspire us also today in our consultation rooms.

Our contemporary experiential-existential approach helps us to experience and attend our microcosm (micro- and meso-dimension) and sense as well into our macrocosm (macro-dimension) as a way to find our place and our stance in the Great Unknown of our situation (Vanhooren, 2023, 2026). As Schneider (2023) explains, our fear of the Great Unknown, whether it appears as a fear for loss, war, or climate change, might be life-enhancing too.

With case-studies and small experiential exercises, we will explore how attending our micro-, meso-, and macro-dimension might help us to find our way into the unknown. We will also explore how this might help us to find a grounding that can support our existential empathy (Prouty, 2002; Vanhooren, 2019) towards ourselves, our clients, and humanity as such.

Submission type

Individual Lecture (60 min)

Keywords

Anxiety, Climate change, Courage, Spirituality, Existential

Decolonising Practitioners; Practicing Decolonising – developing an embedded approach to decolonisation in training courses.

Terry Daly¹, Barbara Malinen²

¹PCT Scotland, Glasgow, United Kingdom. ²PCT Scotland, Edinburgh, United Kingdom



Terry Daly

Author Bio

Terry works as a Person Centred therapist, supervisor, and trainer in Glasgow, and Edinburgh. Terry originally trained in Social work and Gestalt therapy and continued his training with the Person centred approach in counselling, supervision and a MSC in counselling research. He has a background in working with people over 40 years in Health, social work, the private and voluntary sector, and within University settings. Terry was a lecturer University of Strathclyde within a counselling unit from 1994 until 2014. His main role was teaching and facilitating on diplomas and certificates in counselling. He has played a major role in developing a Person Centred training programme for Social Care workers (Queen Margaret University in Edinburgh.) Over the past fifteen years Terry has worked in many countries both in Europe and further afield such as South Africa, Japan, Argentina, and Russia with a focus on the development of the Person Centred approach. As a member of the Business Development centre in Scotland Terry has worked alongside its Director Danny McGuigan providing coaching, team building and mediation for the past twenty years. He currently runs a private practice in counselling and supervision with a focus on helping individuals and organisations to work and live more effectively.



Barbara Malinen

Author Bio

I am a person-centred counsellor, supervisor, trainer and occasional mediator based in Edinburgh, Scotland. I moved to Scotland in 1997 to train at the Counselling Unit, University of Strathclyde (then based at Jordanhill). Prior to training as a counsellor, I had been a painter/sculptor, a waitress, a fundraiser and PA in a small charity, and several other things but none of them were my vocation. I was lucky to discover counselling as my passion. Since qualifying in 1998 I have worked in the voluntary sector (in many different agencies – including women's services, and drug and alcohol services); in primary care, and in student counselling as well as building and maintaining a private practice. Somewhere along the way I have also been a trainer on the professional counselling Diploma at University of Edinburgh and become a supervisor (trained at Temenos 2007 -09). I was a member of the Co-ordinating Group of PCT Scotland in the early 2000's and rejoined the group at the beginning of this year. My responsibilities involve working with others on creating a CPD programme and liaising on behalf of PCT Scotland with PCE Europe. In the past few years, I have developed a particular interest in power and how we use it and misuse it; how this relates to the training of new counsellors; and to how we are with ourselves and others especially, but not exclusively, clients. I am involved in a group of independent counsellors exploring how to develop a different approach to PCA training in Scotland - one which attempts to hold these complex issues of power and difference at its

heart. I am above all a practitioner, and my passionate interest in all of this is to be with and connect with people – practitioners, colleagues, clients, supervisees.

Abstract

Abstract:

We've been paying attention to how power and issues of difference are - or aren't – embedded in basic training and in continuous professional development (CPD) for counsellors. Our thoughts have been further prompted by reflecting on the conference theme 'A Changing World' in that training in PCA seems to be changing but not necessarily in a good way. Our attention is caught by the number of reports we're hearing from trainers, trainees and practitioners about the fragmented and partial way in which some of these issues are dealt with in training contexts resulting in unconscious misuse of power and pain.

We want to offer space for exploration of how to embed decolonising ourselves and our practices into training and CPD. We will look from the point of view of trainers, trainees, and practitioners' experiences, including a focus on cultural humility, congruent functioning and how these ideas fit into the shifting landscape of our 'changing world'.

PCT Scotland has 40 years of experience of offering the person-centred approach and we will include reference to how PCT Scotland has supported practitioners during that time in a colonised world. This links to the reality that many people in the person-centred approach have been attempting to decolonise their practice for a long time already and we want to remember and pay respect to those people.

Outline: A short presentation with discussion and questions; one or two exercises (depending on time and enthusiasm) around cultural humility and congruent functioning

Learning objectives:

to think about ways of developing attention to our blind spots around social justice issues, difference, equality and power;

to notice our deficits in this area, bringing kindness and rigour to this endeavour;

to attend and pay respect to the ways in which we have already been doing some of this work.

Submission type

Experiential Workshop (75 min)

Keywords

decolonising , change, practice, training , power

The Actualising Tendency Under Cultural Fragmentation

Zaid Al-Nayazi MSc Counselling & Psychotherapy

Private Practice (The Wandering Space), Edinburgh, United Kingdom



Zaid Al-Nayazi

Author Bio

Zaid is a graduate of the University of Strathclyde's MSc in Counselling and Psychotherapy. He works as a therapist with a particular interest in identity, belonging and the lived experience of cultural multiplicity. His work is rooted in a person-centred approach and shaped by his own multi-rooted upbringing.

Abstract

Motivation

We live in a world where many people move between cultures, languages and identities. This changing world shapes how we understand ourselves and how we grow. As a third culture person and a person-centred therapist, I became curious about how Rogers' actualising tendency works when life is not rooted in one cultural ground.

Problem

Person-centred theory often assumes a stable cultural context that offers one set of values and conditions of worth. My own experience, and the experiences of many third culture and globally mobile individuals, challenge this assumption. I explore how the actualising tendency operates when a person grows up with several, sometimes conflicting, cultural invitations about who they should be.

Methodology

I draw on autoethnographic material from my own third culture upbringing, alongside reflections from person-centred training. I link these lived experiences with cross-cultural research that examines how self-actualisation and identity formation vary across cultural settings.

Results

Rather than a fragmented or confused identity, I found that living across cultures can create a kind of stretching that allows the person to grow in several directions at once. I describe this as the "multi-rooted self", a way of being that forms in more than one cultural soil. Training gave me a relational space where these different cultural experiences could be contacted together instead of being kept apart.

Implications

This perspective invites person-centred theory to consider how the actualising tendency may appear when clients do not have a single cultural home. It may widen our understanding of congruence, belonging and wholeness, particularly for clients who live between cultures.

Discussion

I hope to open a conversation about how PCE practice can recognise and support clients whose identities are shaped by cultural multiplicity, and how our changing world may call for a more flexible understanding of actualisation.

Submission type

Online Symposium (60 min)

Keywords

Actualising Tendency , Third Culture Identity , Cultural Fragmentation, Person-Centred Theory , Multi-Rooted Self

List Individual Talks of the Symposium (Title - First Author)

The Actualising Tendency Under Cultural Fragmentation - Zaid Al-Nayazi

Bored in the room

Barbora Hrdlickova

Private Practice, Praha, Czech Republic



Barbora Hrdlickova

Author Bio

I am a clinical psychologist, psychotherapist, and supervisor with more than 20 years of experience working with adult clients. My practice combines work in healthcare settings and private practice, where I support individuals, couples, families, and groups. Alongside my clinical work, I am also a training therapist and supervisor, lecturer at the Centre for Mental Health Care Development and at the Institute for Healthcare Education in the Czech Republic. Based in Prague, I continue to balance therapeutic practice with teaching and supervision, guided by a person-centred approach and a commitment to fostering growth, resilience, and self-understanding.

Abstract

Probably everyone has been bored at some point in their lives – during a long lecture, filling out a tedious form, or sitting in traffic with nothing to do. In our fast-paced world, many people find it increasingly difficult to stay engaged with longer or slower tasks, making boredom an even more common experience. Boredom is an unpleasant temporary state in which an individual feels a profound lack of interest in their usual activities and finds it difficult to concentrate. It is an uncomfortable emotion, and some people are more prone to feelings of boredom than others.

But what does boredom look like when the therapist is bored? How is boredom connected to congruence and empathy, and our understanding of the therapeutic relationship? The therapist's feelings of boredom are rarely ever discussed, and a bored therapist does not quite fit the image of good practice. This makes it all the more important to be aware of these feelings.

In this workshop, I would like to explore how we experience boredom - in body, thoughts and feelings. We'll look at what triggers boredom and how we recognise and notice it. Together, we'll reflect on what happens in such moments in therapy and how to understand them. And, finally, we'll consider how to overcome feelings of boredom and renew contact with ourselves and others.

Submission type

Experiential Workshop (75 min)

Keywords

psychotherapy, boredom, contact

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Employing novel ways to establish the specificity of psychotherapy components: Open/hidden Administration of psychotherapeutic alliance

Emil Kane Nissen MSc, Silvana Gross MSc, Theresa Zehnder MSc, Clara Wehlage BSc, Prof Jens Gaab Dr. phil.
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Prof Jens Gaab

Author Bio

Professor for Clinical Psychology and Psychotherapy

Abstract

Motivation: Evaluating the open versus hidden research design for use in psychotherapy research, as well as establishing specificity in therapeutic alliance as an ameliorating component of psychotherapy.

Problem: Placebo-controlled trials—the gold standard for establishing specificity—face inherent challenges in psychotherapy research: creating credible placebo conditions is difficult, therapist blinding is impossible, and traditional designs cannot identify which specific components drive therapeutic change. This study addresses whether therapeutic alliance produces effects beyond patient expectancy using an innovative methodological approach that circumvents these limitations.

Methodology: We employed an open versus hidden administration design with experimental guilt induction in healthy subjects (N=68). Participants were randomized to receive a 30-minute person-centered therapy session either with their knowledge (open condition; n=23), without their knowledge (hidden condition; n=22), or no treatment (control; n=23). The primary outcome was guilt response assessed via area under the curve during post-intervention guilt boost.

Results: Control participants showed significantly higher guilt responses than combined treatment groups (estimate=13.84, 95% CI=9.02–18.66, d=1.07). Critically, guilt responses did not differ significantly between open and hidden conditions (estimate=1.04, 95% CI=-7.57–9.64, d=0.07), indicating effects independent of conscious treatment expectations. Similar patterns emerged for shame and pride, but not for general affect.

Implications: These findings provide experimental evidence that therapeutic alliance produces genuine effects on self-conscious emotions independent of patient expectancy, supporting its reconceptualization as an active therapeutic mechanism rather than a merely facilitative factor. The open versus hidden design offers a methodologically sound alternative to traditional placebo-controlled trials for psychotherapy research, with direct implications for understanding core relational skills as primary therapeutic competencies.

Discussion: How can the open versus hidden paradigm be adapted for investigating other psychotherapeutic interventions and common factors? What are the clinical implications of alliance effects operating independently of explicit treatment expectations?

Submission type

Poster

Keywords

therapeutic alliance, open versus hidden design, guilt, person-centered therapy, expectancy effects

Perceiving Suffering: Interpersonal Signals, Clinical Meaning, and Implications for Therapeutic Change

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University of Basel, Basel, Switzerland



Emil Kane Nissen

Author Bio

PhD Student

Abstract

Motivation: The DSM defines many mental disorders by the presence of clinically significant distress, positioning suffering as a central element of psychiatric conditions. Despite its clinical relevance, suffering has received limited empirical attention.

Problem: There is insufficient research on how people perceive suffering in others and how this perception shapes interpersonal and clinical outcomes. We propose that suffering functions as an interpersonal signal—evolved to elicit care and support—making it particularly relevant for understanding therapeutic relationships.

Methodology: Two studies were conducted. The first was an online experiment examining whether nonverbal cues (facial expression, body posture, tone of voice) or verbal content play a larger role in observers' perception of suffering. The second was a qualitative interview study with heterogeneous samples of healthcare workers and patients across different fields and conditions, focusing on (1) how suffering is conceptualized, (2) the consequences of one's own suffering, (3) cues used to infer suffering in others, and (4) the consequences of perceiving suffering in others.

Results: Preliminary findings from the online experiment suggest that nonverbal cues, particularly facial expression and tone of voice, are more influential than verbal content in perceiving suffering intensity. The qualitative interviews reveal substantial individual variation in what constitutes suffering and how it is expressed, yet a consistent interpersonal pattern emerges: across diverse contexts, perceiving suffering in others reliably activates prosocial responses and motivations to provide support.

Implications: Despite heterogeneity in suffering's manifestations, its consistent function in eliciting caregiving responses supports an evolutionary framework. Carl Rogers' core conditions may be effective because they respond to suffering's interpersonal signal.

Discussion: Person-centered therapy's effectiveness may lie in the therapist's empathic attunement to each client's unique experience of suffering, meeting the universal interpersonal need for support through congruent unconditional positive regard.

Submission type

Individual Talk (20 min)

Keywords

Suffering, Interpersonal signals, person-centered therapy, therapeutic relationship, evolutionary psychiatry

Reclaiming the Emotional Self: Integrating Children Focusing with EFT for Youth in Hyperconnected World

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Krzysztof D Błażejowski

Author Bio

Krzysztof Błażejowski – Psychologist, certified psychotherapist with the Polish Humanistic-Experiential Association. He gained his clinical experience during several years of work in a psychiatric hospital, where he worked in general psychiatric and psychotherapeutic wards. He runs his own private psychotherapy practice, where he works with parents, adolescents (from 9 years of age), couples, and adults. He develops his skills within the Emotion Focused Therapy (EFT) approach (L. Greenberg) and has obtained the following certificates issued by the International Society for Emotion Focused Therapy: * Emotion Focused Therapy for Individuals (certificate as an individual psychotherapist) * Emotion Focused Therapy for Couples (certificate as a couples therapist) * Emotion Focused Therapy for Youth (certificate as a youth psychotherapist, supervisor, and trainer) * Emotion Focused Skills Training for Parents (certificate as a therapist). Additionally, he is developing in the field of Attachment Narrative Therapy in cooperation with Prof. Rudi Dallos, and deepens his work with Children Focusing in collaboration with René Veugelers.

Abstract

Children grow up in a hyperconnected environment in which compulsive social-media use, online comparison and cyberbullying are associated with increased anxiety, depression and attentional dysregulation, partly via reward-system sensitization (Masri-zada, 2025). These pressures often intensify problematic ways of relating to self, and weaken access to an embodied “emotional compass”. Emotion Focused Therapy for Youth offers a process-experiential framework for transforming maladaptive emotions in youth and in parent–child relationships (Foroughe, 2023). Children Focusing work including Veugelers’ “listening in three directions” and the creation of a bigger, wondering space, emphasizes bodily felt sense, as entry points to the child’s living-forward energy.

This experiential workshop explores how integrating Children Focusing with EFT-Y can help young people reclaim inner contact and agency when living in always-online contexts. Drawing on a clinical case and video material from EFT-Y with an adolescent struggling with problematic self-relating, we will show how focusing-based attention to bodily felt sense can deepen key EFT-Y tasks and support reconnection with core emotional needs. Participants will then engage in a guided exercise, exploring their own process from a “nothing has to happen” stance, followed by reflection on implications for psychotherapy in a changing, technologically saturated world.

Structure / outline (75 minutes)

- 10' Welcome and framing: youth mental health in a digital, changing world
- 15' Input: EFT-Y and Focusing with children
- 15' Clinical and video vignette with discussion
- 25' Guided experiential exercise in pairs
- 10' Plenary debrief and links to practice

Learning objectives

1. Describe links between hyperconnected digital environments and problematic self-relating in youth.
2. Identify EFT-Y processes for transforming self-criticism, self-worry and self-interruption in youth.
3. Experience Children Focusing "listening in three directions" and a wondering space as ways of restoring embodied self-contact.
4. Translate these methods into concrete interventions that help youth navigate a rapidly changing, technologically mediated world.

Submission type

Experiential Workshop (75 min)

Keywords

EFT for Youth, Children Focusing, Emotion Compass, Hyperconnected environment, Emotional Self

Applying Empathic Responses in diverse social situations

Dr Sarah Elisabeth Fruehauf PhD

University of Basel, Basel, Switzerland. Bâleance, Basel, Switzerland



Dr Sarah Elisabeth Fruehauf

Author Bio

Sarah Elisabeth Fruehauf, PhD, is a certified Emotion-Focused Therapy (EFT) psychotherapist and supervisor based in Basel, Switzerland.

Abstract

In our rapidly changing world, we face social, environmental, and humanitarian challenges that impact us. At the same time, many of us live in “bubbles” of like-minded individuals, which can amplify polarization and reduce tolerance for differing perspectives. In these circumstances, maintaining empathy is essential: it allows us to connect, support others, and prevent emotional numbing or helplessness.

This experiential workshop focuses on practical application of empathic responses to strengthen understanding and collaboration. Building on emotional competence from Emotion-Focused Therapy (EFT), participants learn to apply empathic responses effectively, adjusting type and intensity to a wide range of interpersonal situations, especially those involving strong emotions, disagreement, or societal tensions.

Through interactive exercises and guided reflection, participants will work with examples from their own experiences. The workshop fosters relational flexibility, emotional engagement, and mutual support. Participants will explore how empathy can bridge differences, counteract polarization, enhance team collaboration, and help maintain compassion and effectiveness when confronted with distressing realities.

Learning Objectives:

1. Apply empathic responses effectively in professional and personal contexts.
2. Adapt type and intensity of empathic responses to complex or emotionally charged situations.
3. Promote mutual support, resilience, and sustained engagement.
4. Integrate empathic practice into daily life to enhance connection, wellbeing, and relational competence, even in challenging contexts.

Submission type

Experiential Workshop (75 min)

Keywords

Empathy, Emotion Focused Therapy, Interpersonal Skills, Emotional Competence, Conflict Resolution

Authoritarianism and the Person-Centered Approach: A Firsthand Account of the L.A. Protests

Maple Moriji M.A. Clinical Psychology

Antioch University, Los Angeles, USA



Maple Moriji

Author Bio

Maple Moriji was born on December 29, 1970 in Tokyo, Japan, an only child of a Japanese father and Danish mother. Instead of enrolling at a Japanese school, he attended a private international school called the American School in Japan (ASIJ). At ASIJ, he befriended other third culture children of different nationalities from across the globe. In 1989, he graduated from ASIJ and moved to Washington, DC where he enrolled at George Washington University. He received a Bachelor of Science in Computer Science in 1994 after which he began his career in information technology. He eventually relocated to Los Angeles in 1998 and subsequently became a naturalized U.S. citizen in 2004. After having worked in the corporate world for over 13 years, he was prompted by his lifelong interest in human psychology to become a Marriage and Family Therapist and enrolled at Antioch University in 2009. Over the years, he explored the subject extensively, attended a conference for Victims Of Incest Can Emerge Survivors (VOICES) in Action, and studied depth psychology at C.G. Jung Club of Orange County. Starting in October 2010, he began seeing clients regularly for psychotherapy at inpatient and outpatient facilities including The Center in Long Beach, Tarzana Treatment Centers, Solid Landings Behavioral Health, Hope by the Sea, Personal Involvement Center, Oceanfront Recovery and BLVD Treatment Centers. In private practice, he has been treating clients using a number of different approaches including EMDR since November 2012. In December 2011, he received a Master of Arts in Clinical Psychology. His calling is to specialize in treating clients who have struggled with issues related to cultural diversity and who have suffered from trauma while growing up (such as childhood sexual abuse). As of March 2017, he has been a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist (MFC 98450). To stay abreast of trends in psychology, he has frequented conferences both locally and internationally, including the Milton H. Erickson Foundation Couples Conference in Manhattan Beach and Evolution of Psychotherapy conferences in Anaheim, the World Association for Person-Centered and Experiential Psychotherapy and Counseling (PCE World) biennial conferences in Copenhagen and Athens, and the International Association for Analytical Psychology (IAAP) homecoming conference in Zurich.

Abstract

Eighty years after the defeat of fascism in the Second World War, right-wing populism has seen a resurgence in countries around the world. Since Donald Trump resumed the presidency in the United States, the dismantling of democracy has been taking place rapidly with hardly any pushback from the opposition. All branches of government are controlled by Republicans who, with few exceptions, do not dare go against the whims of the President. Carl Rogers (1977), against the backdrop of the Nixon administration's abuses of power, wrote about "the perfect soil for developing a dictatorship" in the United States (p. 259). As many of his adherents around the world have noted, the person-centered approach places great importance on every human life. With this

in mind, many person-centered practitioners have argued against remaining neutral and ignoring issues at large in society, instead advocating for more political engagement inside and outside of counseling rooms. I am one of those who believe we must take action and not stand idly by while our rights are being taken away. When oppression becomes so prevalent in society and democratic recourses are unavailable, therapists—especially person-centered ones—have a responsibility to protest with other like-minded people. Large-scale protests are particularly effective at pressuring governments and have led to the demise of authoritarian regimes. The Greater Los Angeles Area, the second largest metropolitan area in the United States after New York, was the first to be targeted by the Trump administration. Immigration raids and the deployment of troops on the streets have sparked protests across the city. My paper will highlight my personal experiences living in Los Angeles as I join others in protesting the Trump administration.

Submission type

Individual Talk (20 min)

Keywords

authoritarianism, immigration, Los Angeles, person-centered approach, protest

Empathy in Practice: A Creative Workshop on Intuition and Shared Problem-Solving

Prof Bernhard Standl

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Prof Bernhard Standl

Author Bio

Bernhard Standl studied to become a secondary school teacher in Computer Science and History and completed a PhD in Computer Science at the University of Vienna on conceptualizing person-centered K-12 computer science lessons. He then worked as a school teacher at a Viennese school while simultaneously serving as a research associate on educational projects at the University of Vienna. After a research stay in the United States as a Fulbright Visiting Scholar he returned to Vienna to take up a position at the Vienna University of Technology. He is currently a Full Professor of Computer Science Education at the University of Education Karlsruhe in Germany, where he also heads the Department for Computer Science Education and serves as Dean of Studies of the Faculty of Natural and Social Sciences. His research focuses on modeling K-12 teaching concepts in the areas of the Person-centered approach, computational thinking and digital education.

Abstract

This creative workshop brings together person-centered attitudes and experiential, co-creative learning to explore how empathy can be practiced directly within problem-solving processes. In moments of ambiguity, frustration, or sudden confusion, participants experience how empathic and intuitive responses support engagement, resilience, and meaningful collaboration.

Using small educational computers as simple digital constructionist objects, participants work in pairs to build and program playful artefacts. Roles alternate between builder/problem solver and empathic facilitator. Facilitators practice intuitive listening, accurate reflection, emotional sensitivity, and supportive feedback that responds to frustration, confusion, flow or insight in real time. In this way, the workshop becomes a living laboratory where interpersonal resonance and computational thinking dispositions (e.g., persistence, managing ambiguity, iterative refinement) meet.

Participants experience how learning through making fosters creativity, a sense of ownership, and the confidence to actively shape their own learning, while Rogers' empathic stance supports learners as they navigate uncertainty and cognitive challenges. The workshop demonstrates that empathy is not an add-on to problem-solving but a core pedagogical resource enabling risk-taking, resilience and deeper understanding.

Structure

1. Introduction: Empathy, intuition and constructionism (10 min)
2. Co-making in pairs with alternating roles (45 min)
3. Reflection: What supports in moments of difficulty? (20 min)
4. Group synthesis: Designing empathic strategies for problem-solving (15 min)

Learning Objectives

- Experience empathy as a dynamic, moment-to-moment resource during problem-solving.
- Practice intuitive, accurate empathic responses.
- Explore constructionist making as a creative pathway to relational learning.

Literature

Barr, D., Harrison, J., & Conery, L. (2011). Computational thinking: A digital age skill for everyone.

Papert, S., & Harel, I. (1991). Constructionism: research reports and essays.

Carl Rogers, On Becoming a Person (1961)

Submission type

Creative Workshop (90 min)

Keywords

Empathy, Constructionism, Problem-Solving, Intuition, Micro:bit

Posttraumatic growth as a paradigm case of person-centred therapy as an pedagogical praxis.

Prof David Murphy PhD

University of Nottingham, Nottingham, United Kingdom



Prof David Murphy

Author Bio

David Murphy, PhD., CPsychol., AFBPsS., is Professor of Psychology and Education at the University of Nottingham and leads the Centre for Research in Human Flourishing. He is on the British Psychological Society's Register of Psychologists Specializing in Psychotherapy, a Registered Member of the General Psychotherapy Council. He has published or edited five books and has over 100 peer review journal papers and for 10 years was editor of the PCE-World international journal Person-Centered & Experiential Psychotherapies.

Abstract

This paper disrupts the positioning of person-centred psychotherapy as a healthcare profession, arguing that this identity is historically contingent rather than essential. The paper traces how person-centred psychotherapy has been medicalised, absorbed into the healthcare field, and legitimated through a regime of truth that frames distress as pathology and therapists as providers of treatment. To deepen this analysis, Bourdieu's concept doxa is employed to demonstrate how the healthcare orientation of person-centred psychotherapy has become naturalised as common sense. While person-centred theory simultaneously developed therapeutic and educational applications, the institutionalisation of the person-centred approach has overwhelmingly taken place within the healthcare field. By aligning with medicine, person-centred psychotherapy accrues symbolic and economic capital, reproducing its authority through institutional regulation, professional training, and client expectations. The presentation will explore the possibility of a discursive, institutional and conceptual re-imagining of person-centred practice as pedagogy. Reframing the therapist as facilitator, the client as learner, and the goal as growth-and-development rather than cure, thus (re)situating the same practices within the educational field. The concept of posttraumatic growth will be presented as a paradigm case showing how, when the outcomes of psychotherapy are framed outside of the medical model paradigm, growth-and-development, discovery and self-reconfiguration become centred. The conclusion argues that by recognising healthcare positioning as a doxic construction of discourse and field, person-centred psychotherapy can be critically and conceptually re-situated as a pedagogical discipline.

Submission type

Individual Talk (20 min)

Keywords

Person-centred, psychotherapy, pedagogy, posttraumatic , growth

Thinking-at-the-Edge about the ‘Changing World’ - resonances, action steps, research ideas

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Till Schultze-Gebhardt

Author Bio

Till Schultze-Gebhardt is a licensed psychological psychotherapist with his own practice in Cologne, Germany. He is a person-centered psychotherapist (GwG), person-centered and experiential body psychotherapist (gfk/GwG), and behavioral therapist, trainer for person-centered psychotherapy and counseling, coach/trainer for Experiential Concept Coaching (ECC). He is also chair of the GwG and the PCE2026 World Conference.

Abstract

Idea

Participants in this workshop will get the opportunity to explore, share and further develop their own ideas and impulses relating to the conference theme - drawing inspiration from the individual processes of the other participants.

These may include, for example, an interpersonal or environmental phenomenon, a therapeutic issue, a research idea, or a personal question.

The results of this process can, for example, contribute to a deeper understanding, both professionally and personally. They can also inspire further research projects or collaborative initiatives.

In light of the profound changes taking place around the world, the workshop will address the following questions:

- What am I reacting to, and how do I respond, both in my professional contexts and on a personal level?
- What calls for further development and research?
- What impressions or aspects are demanding my special interest right now, perhaps in response to the conference?

Method

New ways of thinking and ideas for action often arise from incomplete impressions and from the creative tension between seemingly incompatible ideas.

With Thinking at the Edge (TAE), E.T. Gendlin has provided “experiential thinking movements” that can be used to develop coherent concepts based on individual experiencing.

Based on TAE, H.J. Feuerstein and H. Deloch developed “Experiential Concept Coaching” (ECC), a method for facilitating concept development in individuals and groups.

The experiential background of these methods can help to bridge the gap between thinking and feeling and bring different perspectives together in the same space in a spirit of mutual inspiration.

Workshop

1. Identify a professional or personal question related to the conference topics using your felt sense
2. Develop and explore ideas in an experiential way through listening partnerships
3. Mutual inspiration through “sharing” and ‘crossing’
4. Closing round with a focus on next individual steps in the professional field or personal context

Submission type

Creative Workshop (90 min)

Keywords

changing world, thinking-at-the-edge, different perspectives, conceptual and research impulses, small steps for action

An empirical examination of central assumptions of person-centred and experiential personality theory using path analysis

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Clinical and health psychologist, training therapist and supervisor in person-centred and experiential psychotherapy. More than ten years of professional experience in psychiatric and clinical settings. Works as a lecturer in several academic and postgraduate programmes, including courses in humanistic psychotherapy and quantitative psychotherapy research. Also active as a supervisor, coach and mediator across clinical and organisational contexts. Research associate at the ÖGWG (Austrian Association for Scientific Person-Centred Psychotherapy and Person-Centred Counselling). Currently a PhD candidate at the University of Salzburg, Faculty of Natural and Life Sciences, focusing on the theoretical and empirical foundations and further development of person-centred experiential psychotherapy.

Abstract

The aim of this cross-sectional study was to empirically examine central assumptions of person-centred and experiential personality theory. The core question was whether the theoretical concepts, particularly authenticity (congruence) in the person-centred approach and focusing as a central experiential dimension, can be empirically supported. In addition, whether these should be interpreted as redundant, opposing or complementary elements of a holistic personality theory. This aim was pursued using a structural equation model (path analysis).

Operationalisation was carried out using two measurement instruments: for person-centred aspects we used the Authenticity Scale (Wood et al., 2008), and for the experiential part the Focusing Skills Inventory (Gehlen & Zimmer, 2024) to assess individual focusing competencies.

In the model, the analysis drew on current authenticity research (Bayır-Toper, Sellman & Joseph, 2022) and assumed a two-dimensional structure: external authenticity (Authentic Living) and internal authenticity or in-authenticity (Self-Alienation).

According to person-centred theory, it is assumed that conditions of worth compromise both inner and outer authenticity, and that the internalisation of conditions of worth is represented by the subscale Accepting External Influence. The experiential component was modelled following Gehlen & Zimmer (2024): Trusting was assumed as a predictor of external authenticity, and Felt Sensing as a predictor of internal authenticity. It was further assumed that external authenticity is influenced by internal authenticity and that both forms of authenticity predict psychological and subjective well-being. Internal authenticity was assumed as a predictor of psychopathological distress.

The study was able to empirically support a general model of person-centred and experiential personality theory. It also showed that classical person-centred and experiential aspects are neither redundant nor opposing, but complementary elements.

Submission type

Poster

Keywords

Person-centred and experiential personality theory, Quantitative research, Path analysis, Theory testing, Authenticity

Effectiveness of person-centred and experiential psychotherapy in a training setting – changes beyond symptom reduction

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Abstract

The aim of this ongoing study is to examine whether person-centred and experiential psychotherapy, conducted by trainee psychotherapists in a naturalistic setting, brings about changes that go beyond mere clinical symptom improvement. The theoretical background is based on the person-centred concept of the fully functioning person, which assumes a comprehensive and multidimensional process of change. The study was conducted with trainee psychotherapists in Austria who, as part of their training, work clinically in private outpatient practice and simultaneously complete their Master's degree. All participants were invited to identify aspects of change they observe in psychotherapeutic work on the basis of their own self-experience and their clinical practice. This selection deliberately did not follow a predefined scientific strategy, but the practical experience of the trainees themselves. A total of 25 students registered for participation. At the time of this exposé, 161 clients had completed a measurement after the 1st session, 109 after the 10th session and 48 at the end of therapy.

The study assessed therapeutic change across four overarching domains. Two questionnaires measured psychopathology and symptom severity, four focused on well-being, eight assessed person-centred and experiential change variables, and six examined general psychological functioning. In addition, five questionnaires were used to evaluate therapeutic process variables. Together, these measures enabled a comprehensive multidimensional assessment of psychological and therapeutic change throughout the course of psychotherapy.

The results showed a clear reduction in symptoms and a decrease in the severity of personality disorders. In addition, changes in the direction of personality development and well-being could be demonstrated. The study indicates that person-centred and experiential therapy, even after only a few sessions, not only reduces clinical symptoms, but also initiates profound and multi-layered processes of change, as assumed in the concept of the fully functioning person.

Submission type

Poster

Keywords

Person-centred and experiential psychotherapy, Naturalistic psychotherapy research, Psychotherapy training setting, Personality development, Symptom reduction

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Gendered Journeys in a Changing World

Katharina Schwarz, Lian H. Walter

APG IPS, Vienna, Austria



Katharina Schwarz

Author Bio

(she/her) Katharina Schwarz, born in Vienna in 1980, gained a wide range of experience in her first profession as a theatre director and decided to train as a psychotherapist alongside her work. She completed it at the Postgraduate Center of the University of Vienna and at the IPS Vienna, has been working with clients since 2020 and specialises in working with trans* people, among others. She is also a partner, mother, colleague, friend and much more. Her relationships define her.



Lian H. Walter

Author Bio

they/them | Psychotherapist in training under supervision. Occupied a lot with conflicts on the societal and individual level, fragmentation and wholeness, connection and disconnection, as well as the interdependence between those and other binaries.

Abstract

Throughout the last decades, perceptions of gender have vastly changed. This can confront us on a deeply personal level. With our workshop we want to invite participants to start or continue a self-examination that we also believe should be an important part of person-centered training.

How gender is discussed in counseling and psychotherapy often creates an implicit binary between those, with whom it is important to think about gender, because they differ from the norm, and those, whose gender seemingly needs or deserves no further exploration. While we do acknowledge the possible differences between normative and non-normative lives, we also think there might be more in common than is often insinuated.

We suggest to think of gender as an ever-evolving process, that has been and is constantly shaping how we perceive ourselves and the world. This could help us in recognizing our own rigidity, our gendered wounds and maybe mourn missed opportunities, hopefully allowing for more flexible selves and a more congruent way of being in the future. It might also help us in being done with pathologizing or othering, because there is no more “us” and “them”.

We’d like to start the workshop by giving a short theoretical input (10-15 min), looking at gender from a person-centered perspective, for example how we see the binary world order as a rigid self-concept of society and the differentiation of more and more gender identities as an expression of the actualizing tendency. We will then talk about our own gendered journeys, both entangled and very different, hoping to co-create an Encounter that makes it possible for all of us to further explore and exchange about our experiences of and with gender, maybe even connecting with those who we have seen as others until now.

Submission type

Experiential Workshop (75 min)

Keywords

gender, normativity, self-concept, process, other

Person-centered theory meets Self-Determination Theory: The role of psychological need frustration for authenticity

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Abstract

The starting point of this study was the theoretical assumption of person-centered theory that conditions of worth (experiences of conditional external acceptance) can impair the development of authenticity (congruence). From the perspective of Self-Determination Theory, this phenomenon can be understood as the frustration or satisfaction of the basic psychological need for relatedness.

The aim of the present study was the empirical-quantitative examination of whether the satisfaction or frustration of all psychological needs of Self-Determination Theory (autonomy, competence and relatedness) contribute to the development of congruence or incongruence and therefore constitute a potential theoretical complement.

This question was investigated in a multimethod research design with a total of four studies. First, a cross-sectional study was conducted in which momentary need satisfaction or frustration and authenticity were assessed and their relationship analysed. Second, a retrospective study was carried out that examined the recollection of earlier need frustration in childhood, adolescence and adulthood. Third, a time-series design was implemented in which daily need frustration and authenticity were assessed over several weeks. Fourth, an experimental design using case vignettes was planned to investigate situational need frustration and its influence on authenticity. At the time of writing, this part of the study is still ongoing. In all four studies, the focus was on the relationship between the three basic psychological needs of Self-Determination Theory and the development of authenticity and incongruence.

The results consistently showed that both the frustration and the satisfaction of the three psychological basic needs had significant effects on increases and decreases in authenticity. Autonomy, competence and relatedness proved to be relevant predictors for authenticity. The results show that an integration of both theories appears useful and that need frustration may be a central mechanism of incongruence.

Submission type

Poster

Keywords

Person-centred theory, Self-Determination Theory, Psychological need frustration, Quantitative multimethod research, Theory integration

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There is always someone inside...

Regina Marge Juergens

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Regina Marge Juergens

Author Bio

Diplom Soziologin, Kursleiterin Personzentrierte Beratung, Focusing-Trainierin, ECC-Trainerin und Qigong Lehrerin

Abstract

The workshop offers the opportunity to resonate the informations from the main lectures. With gentle Qigong-movements we explore the the space and arrive within ourselves. Afterwards we sit or stand and explore our inner resonances with focusing-introduction, inspired by what we just have heard. We give time and space to let it resonate and become an expression, then we share in small listening-partnerships. At the end we offer sharing among the entire group.

Submission type

Experiential Workshop (75 min)

Keywords

Focusing, Resonance, Space and time, Movement, sharing

Immersive virtual nature to promote mental health and nature connectedness in youths: a scoping review

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Mostafa El Madani

Author Bio

I am a Belgian physiotherapist and doctoral researcher at the Université Libre de Bruxelles (ULB), where my work focuses on immersive virtual nature as a tool to support mental health and nature connectedness in adolescents and young adults. My interest in mental health and behavioral change has guided much of my professional and academic journey. My first research experience, conducted during my master's thesis, examined how a patient and family diary in intensive care could reduce symptoms of anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress after critical illness. I am also trained in motivational interviewing, which continues to influence both my therapeutic perspective and my research approach. I aim to bridge clinical practice, psychological science, and digital innovation to develop accessible, evidence-based interventions that reconnect people with nature for better mental health and overall quality of life.



Branislav Kaleta

Author Bio

Branislav Kaleta is a researcher studying urban green spaces using neuroscience and positive psychology. He holds a Master's degree in Psychology with a focus on Neuroscience and Neuroimaging, and applies neuroscience in exploring the benefits of urban green spaces on our psychological, physical, and emotional health. His favourite research area is the emotion of awe, which is closely tied to people's experiences of nature and provides countless benefits for people's health and wellbeing. Hiking through the mountains of his home country, Slovakia, is his favourite way of experiencing awe.



Prof Jelle Van Cauwenberg

Author Bio

PhD in Motor Sciences from ULB and physiotherapist, Professor at the Faculty of Motor Sciences at ULB and coordinator of the Master's programme in Health, Fitness and Nutrition.



Prof Jennifer Foucart

Author Bio

Jennifer Foucart graduated in 2002 and got her doctorate in Psychology from Université libre de Bruxelles (ULB) in 2009. Since then, she has embarked on a professional journey that combines clinical practice, research and teaching. Her first interests were mainly focused on the subjects of child abuse, adolescents and parent-child relationships. Gradually, she started focusing on the question of the body as an expression of psychological suffering, but also as a vector of intervention. Jennifer also holds a Certificate of Aptitude for Higher Education Teaching (CAPES: Certificat d'Aptitude Pédagogique dans l'Enseignement Supérieur) from ULB since 2013, which does support her in her desire to develop innovative pedagogical projects. At the same time, she was appointed Director of the Research Unit at the Haute École libre de Bruxelles – Ilya Prigogine and then joined the University with. In 2017, she became head of the Research Unit in Psychophysiology of Human Motor Skills and will then be appointed full-time professor at the Faculty of Human Movement Sciences (FSM – ULB), where she currently occupies all of her working time. Her research interests focus on 3 main subjects: psychomotricity, the psychology of sport and physical activity and the caregiver-patient relationship (more particularly, the communication between carer and patient and interprofessional collaborations). In addition to her primary career at ULB, she remains involved in the issue of child abuse, volunteering as administrator of the non-profit association « Parcours d'Accueil ».



Prof Jolanta Burke

Author Bio

I'm a wellbeing researcher, focusing on Positive Psychology. I lead a research team "Positive Activity Lab" at RCSI University of Medicine and Health Sciences in Ireland, Centre for Positive Health Sciences, where we're on a mission to explore how to tweak daily life to give our wellbeing a boost.



Prof Malgorzata Klass

Author Bio

PhD in Motor Sciences from ULB and physiotherapist, Professor at the Faculty of Motor Sciences at ULB and coordinator of the Master's programme in Health, Fitness and Nutrition.

Abstract

Motivation: Most mental-health difficulties emerge before age 24, yet many young people have limited access to natural environments. Immersive Virtual Nature (IVN) may offer a scalable way to reproduce nature-based experiences and support prevention.

Problem: Although interest in IVN is growing, the available studies are heterogeneous and use highly variable protocols. It remains unclear how IVN has been applied with adolescents and young adults, and which

characteristics of virtual environments appear most relevant for mental health and nature connectedness. This review aims to clarify these points by mapping existing interventional research.

Methodology: Following the JBI framework and PRISMA-ScR guidelines, we searched six databases for interventional studies including participants with a mean age below 24 years. Data were charted on study characteristics, intervention design, VR technology, virtual environment characteristics, outcomes, and main findings.

Results: Fifty-seven studies met the inclusion criteria. Most involved university students, with adolescents underrepresented. The majority used single-session IVN exposures and only a minority implemented multi-session interventions. Outcomes commonly assessed mood, stress, anxiety, perceived restorativeness, and nature connectedness. Across studies, IVN was generally associated with short-term improvements in emotional well-being, relaxation, and perceived restoration. Forest, water, and coastal scenes were frequently linked to stress reduction, and several studies suggested that the fit between environmental design and individual preferences modulated responses.

Implications: These findings support IVN as a promising approach for short-term emotional benefits in young populations. However, variability in methods and outcome measures limits firm conclusions. Further research is needed to understand how specific design elements shape psychological responses and how IVN could be used in multi-session programmes.

Discussion: I would like to discuss methodological priorities for future IVN research with youth, including the development of multi-session interventions, better inclusion of adolescents beyond student samples, and strategies for personalising virtual environments in research and clinical practice.

Submission type

Online Individual Talk (20 min)

Confidence - an Effective Factor in Therapy with Children? How to keep confident in our Changing World

Ulrike Hollick

Psychological Practice, Weimar (Lahn), Germany



Ulrike Hollick

Author Bio

Psychological psychotherapist in private practice for children, adolescents and adults Special education teacher Trainer in personcentered counseling and psychotherapy with children, adolescents and their caregivers (GwG) Trainer in personcentered family therapy and counseling (GwG) Supervisor (DGSv) Training supervisor (GwG) Lecturer at Philipps University of Marburg

Abstract

Especially in times marked by challenges and polycrisis, feeling confident is an important quality for both our clients and ourselves.

This is connected to acknowledging what challenges us and, at the same time, to trust in the actualizing tendency.

When clients no longer feel this confidence, it is all the more important for us to maintain and convey a professionally grounded confidence on their behalf.

This applies both to counseling and therapy with adults, some of whom are also parents and in this role (and sometimes also a professional one), are often faced with the challenge of feeling insecure themselves while they are simultaneously confronted with the anxieties of the next generation, as well as to working with children and adolescents, who express in various ways how burdened and unsettled they feel by personal, social, political and global crises. In the search for ways to address this in a person-centered manner, the results of a survey of person-centered child and adolescent counselors and therapists will be presented. They give hints to answer questions such as:

What gives us reason for confidence and optimism? How can we avoid being unsettled and continue to credibly convey confidence? Where are the limits? What does this depend on, and what do we need to strengthen our own confidence? How can we use our professional scope in person-centered psychotherapy and counseling with children and adolescents and their caregivers to foster confidence? What do we have to pay attention on in play and therapeutic interventions? How can we succeed in contributing our person-centered and hopeful way of being to the world?

Led by these findings, we will explore these questions ourselves, find practical examples and search for answers.

Submission type

Individual Talk (20 min)

Keywords

confidence, children, youth, caregivers, practical impact

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From Dilemma to Delivery: An Outpatient Clinic Model Redefining Access to Psychotherapy

Patricia Kleinwaechter, Leon Kohn B.Sc., B.A., Mariella Koller B.A., Dagmar Thaa

Institute for Person-Centered Studies, Vienna, Austria



Patricia Kleinwaechter

Author Bio

Patricia Kleinwaechter, born in 1962 and based in Vienna, is a tourism specialist and certified insurance professional. She is currently completing training as a trauma therapist and works as a registered psychotherapist (Person-Centered Psychotherapy) in her private practice, in addiction therapy, and in the leadership of the APG propaedeutic program.



Leon Kohn

Author Bio

Leon Kohn, B.Sc. B.A. born in 1998, studied business informatics and is currently pursuing a master's degree in "Person-Centered Psychotherapy" at the University of Vienna. He works as a psychotherapist in training under supervision (IPS outpatient clinic and private practice) and in psychosocial care.



Mariella Koller

Author Bio

Mariella Koller, BA. born in 1994 and raised in Vienna, studied educational science and has since worked in the social sector. Specialist psychotherapy training since 2021 and, from January 2024, working independently as a psychotherapist in training under supervision at the APG IPS Outpatient Clinic.



Dagmar Thaa

Author Bio

Dagmar Thaa is a psychotherapist in training under supervision, working at the IPS outpatient clinic and in private practice. She is currently completing her master's degree in Person-Centered Psychotherapy at the University of Vienna. She is particularly passionate about empowering young students with limited financial

resources and individuals in precarious life situations, finding these therapeutic processes deeply rewarding — both for the persons themselves and for society at large.

Abstract

In a world shaped by overlapping crises — economic insecurity, mental health challenges, and systemic healthcare gaps — ensuring access to affordable and effective psychotherapy is a growing concern. While trainees under supervision are often under financial and structural pressure, a growing proportion of the population remains excluded from adequate care. This creates an ambivalent space in which affordable therapy is made possible by and based on the commitment of those who themselves are in precarious economic situations. This dynamic raises the question of whether psychotherapy remains an elitist service or whether institutional models — such as the outpatient clinic presented here — could contribute to understanding psychotherapeutic support as a socially necessary resource. Such clinics play a vital role in social cohesion, helping to bridge inequalities, strengthening the fabric of society as a whole, and having ripple effects far beyond the therapeutic relationship.

This workshop presents the person-centered outpatient clinic of the Institute for Person-Centered Studies (IPS) in Vienna, Austria, which aims to provide innovative socially just psychotherapy. Founded in 2017 as a bottom-up initiative, the outpatient clinic offers low-threshold therapy services, staffed by trainees under supervision, responding to a pressing need for accessible care.

Furthermore, we explore key questions such as: Who seeks therapy at our person-centered outpatient clinic? How could this model contribute to long-term care sustainability? What challenges — and opportunities — emerge when trying to institutionalize person-centered therapeutic presence, encounter and social justice?

This workshop is aimed at anyone wishing to explore the dilemma between the lack of access to care for (socially disadvantaged) clients on the one hand, and the economic considerations faced by psychotherapists on the other. We invite dialogue with people who want to design the future. By learning from each other, we hope to strengthen collaborative thinking about how to address and overcome shortages in affordable psychotherapy.

Submission type

Experiential Workshop (75 min)

Keywords

affordable psychotherapy, outpatient clinic, supply shortages, ambivalent space, low-threshold psychotherapy

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Fragmented realities: Developing dis/continuous dis/jointed perspectives on self-plurality in a changing world

Yana Gololob

UUAP, Dnipro, Ukraine



Yana Gololob

Author Bio

Yana Gololob is a person-centred psychotherapist in private practice, a trainer and supervisor of the Ukrainian Umbrella Association of Psychotherapists, and a lecturer of the Ukrainian Psychotherapy University. She is a co-author and co-director of the person-centred children and youth therapy training project. She is a current Board member of PCE World. Her main concern is with the development of the person-centred approach both in Ukraine and worldwide.

Abstract

This workshop will invite participants to consider the concept of ‘fragmented realities’ in the context of a changing world, and what this might mean for the theory and practice. Drawing on the discourse provided by Cooper et al. (2004) around self-pluralistic perspectives within the person-centred and experiential approaches, we experiment with ideas inspired by Karen Barad (2007, 2010) of dis/continuous and dis/jointed selfing.

Following a brief theoretical introduction, this workshop will invite participants to engage in a guided self-reflection on their own sense of fragmented realities. This will include exploring the dis/continuity and dis/jointedness of our historical landscapes (both personal and environmental) as well as the fragmented nature of our contemporary world. Following this, we will discuss participants’ reflections on this process and the potential for cultivating more response-ability to/with our changing world.

Due to the experiential nature of this workshop, engaging with potentially difficult experiences, we do not recommend attending if you are currently experiencing a challenging personal situation.

Barad, K. (2007). *Meeting the universe halfway: Quantum physics and the entanglement of matter and meaning*. Duke University Press.

Barad, K. (2010). Quantum entanglements and hauntological relations of inheritance: Dis/continuities, spacetime enfoldings, and justice-to-come. *Derrida Today*, 3(2), 240–268.

<https://www.jstor.org/stable/48616359>

Cooper, M., Mearns, D., Stiles, W. B., Warner, M., & Elliott, R. (2004). Developing self-pluralistic perspectives within the person-centered and experiential approaches: A round-table dialogue. *Person-Centered & Experiential Psychotherapies*, 3(3), 176–191.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/14779757.2004.9688345>

Submission type

Experiential Workshop (75 min)

Keywords

self-plurality, fragmented realities, experiential exploration

Doing social justice! What person-centered counseling can learn from social work

Laura Grünert M.A. Psychosocial counseling and social rights^{1,2,3}, Prof Ulle Jäger¹

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Laura Grünert

Author Bio

Laura Grünert is a social worker (M.A. Psychosocial counseling and social rights) with further education in person-centered counseling. She works as a research associate at Frankfurt University of Applied Sciences, Germany, teaching and supervising students of social work in a university based counseling project that facilitates access to social and welfare benefits. Her PhD research focuses on the specifics of social work counseling.



Prof Ulle Jäger

Author Bio

Prof. Dr. Ulle Jäger, PhD advisor, Professor for Person-Centered Counseling at Frankfurt University of Applied Sciences, Germany.

Abstract

How can counseling professionals act in support of social justice and therefore become agents of change? There is a wealth of social-work experience and theory that can be tapped to answer this question. Social work, with its long-standing commitment to structural analysis, empowerment, and advocacy, offers a rich repertoire of concepts and practices that can deepen the social-justice orientation of person-centered counseling. This experiential workshop draws on the theoretical framework and empirical findings of my doctoral research on social-work-based counseling for clients in precarious life situations in Germany. To integrate social work principles with the person-centered approach, participants are invited to connect this framework with their own experiences through Gendlin's concept of 'crossing'.

I begin with a short overview of the social-work-based counseling concept Soziale Beratung (Molle et al. 2025) and illustrate how it translates into concrete counseling strategies. Empirical data from 21 qualitative interviews with practitioners reveal the professional self-conceptions that sustain a justice-oriented practice and the repertoire of tactics they employ to bridge the gap between formal rights and lived realities.

The core of the workshop will be experiential: engaging in listening partnerships (pairs or triads). Using a structured reflection protocol, participants will share personal reactions to the presented concepts, identify resonances and tensions with their own person-centered work, and practice the skill of holding space for another's emerging thoughts.

At the end, we will share our experiences in a group synthesis.

By foregrounding the intersection of person-centered values and social-work justice practice, the workshop aims to expand participants' professional identity and inspire concrete change-making within and beyond the person-centered community — an invitation to explore how to be ethically committed practitioners who walk alongside clients in an ongoing, co-creative process of justice-oriented practice.

Submission type

Experiential Workshop (75 min)

Keywords

social justice, social work counseling, professional self-conception, empowerment & advocacy, listening partnerships

Why Do We Have the "*Linking Experience of Object and Self (LEOS)*"?

Sakura Marumoto Ph.D. Student

Kyushu University, Fukuoka, Japan



Sakura Marumoto

Author Bio

Sakura Marumoto is a Ph.D. student in the Graduate School of Human-Environment Studies at Kyushu University, in the Department of Clinical Psychology and Community Studies, specializing in Supervisory Training and Research Course in Clinical Psychology. Her current research interests include mental health, well-being and alleviate loneliness.

Abstract

Motivation, Problem, and Methodology

Gendlin (1957) noted that physiological, emotional, and mental processes interact with the environment, and these interactions have been examined in focusing and experiential psychotherapy. Among these interactions are experiences in which something external (A, including pop culture) is felt to match something internal (B), and such experiences contribute to mental well-being. Marumoto (2023) termed this the Linking Experience of Object and Self (LEOS) and developed a scale with three factors: Object–Self Affinity, Trust and Sensitivity toward One’s Inner Sense, and Immersion in Experience; although the third factor has been associated with mental health, qualitative examination has not yet been conducted. Sasakura (2023) showed that references to pop culture facilitate self-expression and understanding. In other words, encounters with external objects in everyday contexts are also thought to promote them. This study conceptualized LEOS as a means of maintaining mental well-being in a changing world and qualitatively analyzed interviews with three students to examine why LEOS occurs and what it means.

Results

When interpersonal support reached its limits and turmoil persisted, a self-exploratory attitude gave rise to LEOS. LEOS varied across experiences and promoted emotional stability, self-acceptance, and self-understanding, reconstructing the self. It also deepened understanding of others through objects reflecting the self. These experiences supported daily emotional regulation and self-understanding, and triggered further LEOS.

Implications

A distinctive feature of LEOS is that it allows safe self-exploration without communicating about yourself. The sense of security gained by verbalizing thoughts is similar to how the felt sense becomes easier to handle once given a handle. LEOS supports daily life and a sense of connection. Future plans include a large-scale survey and scale revision.

Discussion

Questions remain regarding cultural universality, related concepts, and the broader significance of LEOS.

* This work was supported by JST SPRING.

Submission type

Poster

Keywords

Linking Experience of Object and Self (LEOS), university students, mental health, well-being, alleviate loneliness

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Bringing the Person-Centered Approach (Back) into Organizational Consulting in a Changing World

Dr Robert Waldl MBA¹, Sylvia Karantani Msc, MBA²

¹Vienna, Austria. ²Athens, Greece



Dr Robert Waldl

Author Bio

Management Consultant, Supervisor and Coach, Person-centered Psychotherapist



Sylvia Karantani

Author Bio

Business Coach, Counselor, Consultant

Abstract

Drawing on many years of working with Jürgen Kriz's Person-Centred Systems Theory in supervision, coaching and organizational consulting, we have built up a rich landscape of applications in diverse organizational contexts. We work with leaders, teams and management groups in hospitals, public institutions, international corporations, family businesses and start-ups.

Despite these encouraging experiences, we still see the person-centred approach as only marginally present in work with organizations. Other schools, like various systemic and psychodynamic approaches have taken the lead on the path from psychotherapy to organizational consulting.

At the same time, the consulting field itself has undergone important clarification over the past 20 years. There is now a clear distinction between privately commissioned coaching or psychological case supervision on the one hand, and work carried out for organizations—such as team supervision, leadership coaching, etc—on the other. This professional differentiation has, in our view, not yet been sufficiently reflected in person-centred theory-building and publications.

Carl R. Rogers himself consulted with many different organizations, including large companies, and reflected on these processes in several publications. His book *On Personal Power* (1977) can be read as an early anticipation of today's discourse on agile and participatory organizations.

In our presentation, we will first provide a brief overview of the current state of organizational consulting. We will then outline our applications of Person-Centred Systems Theory in this field and illustrate them with concrete practice examples. Our aim is to invite the PCE community to (re)discover organizational consulting in a changing world as a vital area for person-centred thinking and practice.

Submission type

Individual Talk (20 min)

Keywords

Person-Centred Systems Theory, Person-Centred Supervision, Person-Centred Coaching, Person-Centred Consulting, Organizational Consulting

Person-centered therapists and researchers confronting personal and ideological challenges

Hubert de Condé Ms in psychological sciences, George (Prem Adri) Fragakis Ms, Prof Emmanuelle Zech PhD, Prof Emmanuelle Zech PhD

University of Louvain, Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium



Hubert de Condé

Author Bio

Hubert de Condé is a clinical psychologist and psychotherapist, teaching assistant, and PhD student at the Psychological Sciences Research Institute (IPSY) at UCLouvain. He holds a Master of psychological science in Clinical Psychology and a Postgraduate Certificate in Integrated Psychotherapy, and he is currently training as a Person-Centered psychotherapist. He is also consulting as an independent therapist in Brussels and Louvain-la-Neuve. His doctoral project, supervised by J. Willemsen and E. Zech, focuses on the integration of the personal and professional aspects of therapists and how these develop over time while practicing this complex profession.



George (Prem Adri) Fragakis

Author Bio

George Fragakis (Prem Adri) is a clinical psychologist, person-centered psychotherapist, and researcher currently undertaking a full-time doctoral program and serving as a teaching assistant at the Université catholique de Louvain (UCLouvain). Since 2017, George has contributed to counseling and psychotherapy education and research at institutions such as UCLouvain in Belgium, the College for Humanistic Sciences (ICPS), and the European Institute of Counseling and Psychotherapy (EICP) in Greece. His research bridges academic inquiry and clinical practice by integrating psychotherapy with inclusivity, intersectionality, socio-political awareness, spirituality, and an in-depth exploration of power dynamics and value conflicts within therapeutic relationships. George has been elected to the Boards of Directors of the World Association for Person-Centered and Experiential Psychotherapy and Counseling (2025–2026), the Association Francophone de Psychothérapie Centrée sur la Personne et Expérientielle (2022–2025), and the Panhellenic Association of Person-Centered and Experiential Professionals (2019–2024).



Prof Emmanuelle Zech

Author Bio

Emmanuelle Zech is full professor of Clinical Psychology and Psychotherapy at UCLouvain. In 2004, she was appointed to a position on the psychology of adversity. She has developed a line of courses and training in

person-centered and experiential counseling and therapy (PCEP) at the undergraduate, graduate and post-graduate levels. She has chaired the Research Center for the Study of Health and Psychological Development (2008-2014). She coordinates the Person-centered research and training lab (PCLab) and has developed a helping skills e-learning platform on Open Moodle and a video-equipped relational competences laboratory in the Faculty and Research Institute building. She was dean of the Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences (2022-2024). Her research interests deal with the psychology of bereavement and grief, the psychotherapeutic processes involved in the therapeutic relationship, especially how therapists can deal with difficult therapy or personal experiences, the effects of psychiatric and (psycho)pathological diagnosis, the efficacy of different training methods on helping skills learning outcomes, and the determinants and consequences of informal caregiving. She retains PCT practice at the research and training consultation center of her research institute.



Prof Emmanuelle Zech

Author Bio

Emmanuelle Zech is full professor of Clinical Psychology and Psychotherapy at UCLouvain. In 2004, she was appointed to a position on the psychology of adversity. She has developed a line of courses and training in person-centered and experiential counseling and therapy (PCEP) at the undergraduate, graduate and post-graduate levels. She has chaired the Research Center for the Study of Health and Psychological Development (2008-2014). She coordinates the Person-centered research and training lab (PCLab) and has developed a helping skills e-learning platform on Open Moodle and a video-equipped relational competences laboratory in the Faculty and Research Institute building. She was dean of the Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences (2022-2024). Her research interests deal with the psychology of bereavement and grief, the psychotherapeutic processes involved in the therapeutic relationship, especially how therapists can deal with difficult therapy or personal experiences, the effects of psychiatric and (psycho)pathological diagnosis, the efficacy of different training methods on helping skills learning outcomes, and the determinants and consequences of informal caregiving. She retains PCT practice at the research and training consultation center of her research institute.

Abstract

In this symposium, we would like to present lines of research that are currently being conducted at the Person-Centred Research and Training Lab (PCLab) at UCLouvain (Belgium). In our team, we try to find ways to better integrate who we are as a person, researcher, trainer, and PCT therapist. This question is expressed in several research projects.

How to become a (more) congruent therapist, researcher and practitioner? How do we proceed to better consider these different identities? How do we deal with the fact that we live in a highly privileged Western context and with our intention to acknowledge the diversity of viewpoints, some being mainstream but contradictory to ours, some being marginalized and at times, very personal matters.

Three research projects will be presented. They address these challenges using different methodologies, at the intersections of quantitative and qualitative methods, case studies and systematic literature reviews.

The first research project addresses how therapists will --or not-- integrate their personal life and who they are as a person into their professional practice and development. In line with PCT, this research tries to understand how therapists might become more "fully functioning" persons over their career and life

development. The second project tries to understand how a PCT therapist reacts during two therapies when clients bring life experiences that resemble those he has lived but also, conversely, values that conflict with his own; Does he remain empathetic, congruent and respectful? The third project addresses how we can demonstrate, with the same positivist weapons commonly accepted in research, that most researchers and theorists in the field of bereavement are mistaken and should take into consideration models and research designs that are more respectful of the diversity of lived experiences, at the risk of pathologizing and marginalizing the bereaved.

Submission type

Symposium (60 min)

Keywords

PCT research, ideologies, theory, design, methodology

List Individual Talks of the Symposium (Title - First Author)

1. The process of therapist congruence: An exploration of personal and professional development through a life-story method - Hubert de Condé
2. Between allies and adversaries: Navigating value conflicts and shared wounds in the therapeutic relationship - George (Prem Adri) Fragakis
3. On the decolonization of bereavement theory, research, and practice - Emmanuelle Zech

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Board members of PCE World – Invitation to podium and dialogue

PCE World, Vienna, Austria



Meike Braun

Author Bio

PCE World

Abstract

This slot is traditionally part of a PCE World conference. PCE World invites interested and involved colleagues for a talk about the association, it's work and to learn about the persons behind.

Submission type

Individual Talk (20 min)

Keywords

PCE World

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Focusing on the Internal Frame of Reference in PCA Training: Through Cultural Metaphors

Moe Kumagai Master of Psychology

Kyushu University, Fukuoka, Japan



Moe Kumagai

Author Bio

Moe is a doctoral student in psychology. She is passionate about training beginner counselors based on the theory of the core conditions. She is also enthusiastic about focusing and group approaches, and strives to improve her skills in these areas.

Abstract

Motivation:

In Rogers' fifth necessary and sufficient condition, the therapist is required to experience the client's internal frame of reference. The therapist must listen with unconditional positive regard "as if" entering the client's inner world and strive for empathic understanding. The presenter argues that, while attending to the client's internal frame of reference, it is also essential for therapists to attend to their own internal frame of reference or experiencing process. From this perspective, the presenter has developed a listening-training approach for Japanese cultural contexts, using the metaphor of ajiwau ("to savor/to taste") as a key concept.

Objective:

This presentation examines, how the expression ajiwau facilitates focusing on one's own and others' internal frames of reference using empirical data.

Methods:

First, conceptual interpretations of ajiwau are clarified, along with its relationship to the core conditions. Next, drawing on verbatim transcripts recorded during trainees' experience of program which is based on the prototype, we explore how the concept of ajiwau influences trainees' learning of the core conditions.

Results and Implications:

Verbatim transcript data indicated that when listeners took time to savor the speaker's narrative, they perceived both the story and the speaker through it. Moreover, guided by the expression ajiwau, speakers themselves examined their own internal frame of reference and attempted to move toward congruence.

Discussion:

Interpreting this ajiwau-based listening experience through the lens of a few researchers' discussion of omomuki-taiken ("aesthetic-sensory savoring experiences"), we propose that listening as omomuki-taiken is not merely moment-to-moment reactive listening. Rather, it encompasses a connection to temporality and highlights the inherently active nature of listening itself. Such an approach may serve as a culturally resonant foundation for PCA beginner-level listening training within Japanese contexts. The study highlights potential cultural differences in "active listening."

Submission type

Individual Talk (20 min)

Keywords

internal frame of reference, listening-training, cultural contexts, Person-centered approach, ajiwau ("to savor/to taste")

Supervision in Emotion-focused Therapy (EFT)

Dr Lars Auszra PHD¹, Dr imke R. Herrmann PHD¹, Prof emeritus Robert Elliott PhD^{2,3}

¹Institut für Emotionsfokussierte Therapie (IEFT), Munich, Germany. ²University of Strathclyde, Glasgow, United Kingdom. ³University of Toledo, Toledo, USA



Dr Lars Auszra

Author Bio

Dr. Lars Auszra co-founded the German Institute for Emotion-focused Therapy (IEFT) in Munich. He is also founding chairman of the German Society for Emotion-focused Therapy (DeGEFT) and current board member of the International society for Emotion-focused Therapy (IsEFT). He has played a major role in establishing EFT in the German-speaking countries. To date, he has written several articles and book chapters in German and English about Emotion-focused Therapy and emotional processing. In addition, he is co-author of a book in German (Emotional Focused Therapy: A Practice Manual) and two educational videos on EFT. Lars runs his own practice in Munich and offers individual therapy, couple therapy and supervision in EFT. He teaches EFT in several European countries.



Dr imke R. Herrmann

Author Bio

Dr. Imke Herrmann co-founded the German Institute for Emotion-focused Therapy (IEFT) in Munich. She is also founding board member of the German Society for Emotion-focused Therapy (DeGEFT). She has played a major role in establishing EFT in the German-speaking countries. To date, she has written several articles and book chapters in German and English about Emotion-focused Therapy and emotional processing. In addition, she is co-author of a book in German (Emotional Focused Therapy: A Practice Manual) and two educational videos on EFT. Imke runs her own practice in Munich and offers individual therapy, couple therapy and supervision in EFT. She teaches EFT in several European countries.



Prof emeritus Robert Elliott

Author Bio

Robert Elliott, Ph.D. (they/them, European/American, nonbinary, neurotypical) is Emeritus Professor of Counselling at the University of Strathclyde, Glasgow, Scotland, and a Fellow in the Divisions of Psychotherapy and Humanistic Psychology of the American Psychological Association. A psychotherapy researcher and one of the developers of EFT, their research and practice centers on emotion-focused and other humanistic experiential psychotherapies.

Abstract

In this workshop, we provide an overview of the eight core principles/competencies for supervision in Emotion-Focused Therapy (EFT). These were developed as part of an EU project called The EmpoweringEFT@EU project, led by Carla Cunha, by Robert Elliott, Lars Auszra, and Imke Herrmann. Specifically, these are: "Affirm and Collaborate," "Say What You See," "Look at What the Client Does Next," "Say What You Would Do," "Tune In and Speak Out," "Tune Into Supervisee Experience," "Tell How It Works," and "Facilitate Case Formulation Work." We will explain these principles and demonstrate them with a live supervision of a videotaped EFT therapy session. Afterwards, there will be an opportunity for discussion with the participants. The aim is to describe and illustrate the basic principles of supervision in EFT. Among other things, the discussion will provide an opportunity to examine whether the principles are also helpful for other Person-Centered and Experiential Therapies.

Submission type

Experiential Workshop (75 min)

Keywords

Supervision, EFT, Competencies, Training, Emotion

The Continuum of Contact: Pre-Therapy and Advanced Person-Centered Practice

Rab Erskine^{1,2}, Chip Ponsford^{3,4}, Mathias Dekeyser MS^{5,6,7,8}, Dion Van Werde MA⁹

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Rab Erskine

Author Bio

Rab Erskine is a qualified Person-Centred Counsellor and Psychotherapist. Rab's experience of working therapeutically started in 1985, while employed at a pioneering therapeutic-community list G school. Rab completed a P.G. Certificate in Counselling at Heriot Watt University in 1992, followed by a Diploma in Person-centred Counselling at Strathclyde University in 1993. In 1994, alongside running a counselling service in a local health centre, he set up a small company offering nature-based short-term residential experiences to individuals and groups working with a contact-orientated model. From 2004 to 2016, he was commissioned by NHS Adult Mental Health service to run the nature-based therapy project for adults with schizophrenia and psychosis. Rab has also worked as a supervisor and Trainer. Presently employed as the Service Manager for a small charity specialising in offering therapy to adult survivors of childhood sexual abuse, alongside mentoring a second charity that support adults with complex trauma. He is one of the Coordinators and a Certified Trainer with the Pre-Therapy International Network. Has been a Practitioner Member of Cosca since 1999. Rab lives and works in the Tweed Valley in the Scottish Borders.



Chip Ponsford

Author Bio

Chip Ponsford is the founder, a Lead therapist and Lead Facilitator at Heart Wood Charity. Chip is a person-centred therapist, Supervisor and Trainer in Training with the Pre-Therapy International Network. From his first placement client in 2010, Chip has worked with; clients with Difficult Process (Warner, 2000) who need to work outside, clients with whom psychological contact cannot be assumed, clients recently discharged from psychiatric hospital in London, men who served long prison sentences and with male torture survivors. He worked in private practice in London and since 2015, in Northumberland. Chip has worked closely with Rab Erskine in developing a 'contact orientated' way of facilitating men's therapy groups in woodland alongside facilitating training in working outdoors, Pre-Therapy & Contact Work training.



Mathias Dekeyser

Author Bio

Mathias Dekeyser is an independent clinical psychologist and person-centered, experiential-existential, focusing-oriented and body-oriented psychotherapist and supervisor with experience in outpatient, residential, and mobile care settings. Since 2007 he has trained service-users in Focusing in all of those settings. He trained various healthcare professions in psychotherapy, Pre-Therapy, Focusing, and body-oriented interventions, collaborating with universities of Leuven and Antwerp, Belgium. Since 2025 he is a certifying coordinator for the Pre-Therapy International Network.



Dion Van Werde

Author Bio

Belgian clinical Psychologist, Person Centered / Experiential Psychotherapist, living in Germany. Supervisor of the Flemish Association for PC /Experiential Psychotherapy and Counselling. Member of the editorial board of the Journal of the World Organization for PC/ Experiential Psychotherapy and counseling. Cofounder, Certified Trainer and Coordinator of the Pre-Therapy International Network. Publishes on Pre-Therapy (see: www.pre-therapy.com under "references"), supervises therapists and teams, and gives lectures and workshops in 4 languages. Worked for over 30 years in a Belgian psychiatric hospital with people suffering psychotic functioning, followed by 5 years in German occupational rehabilitation services, serving longtime unemployed people with multiple problems.

Abstract

This symposium explores the crucial foundational element of psychological contact in therapeutic practice, particularly for individuals experiencing complex trauma, dissociation, psychosis, or severe psychological distress that precludes engagement in traditional verbal therapy. Drawing upon the theoretical underpinnings of Carl Rogers' early process conception and the practical framework of Pre-Therapy, this session presents both empirical findings on contact perception and necessary organizational models for its delivery.

The first presentation details the organizational and clinical infrastructure required to safely offer Pre-Therapy to individuals diagnosed with Dissociative Identity Disorder (DID) within a third-sector charity setting. Using client examples, this paper outlines the essential structure, training, and person-centered alignment necessary to establish a "safe enough" therapeutic environment that facilitates psychological contact and subsequent deeper therapeutic work.

The second contribution offers practical insights into contact-orientated person-centered facilitation for clients fitting into Stages 1 and 2 of Rogers' tentative process conception. This discussion focuses on trauma survivors who cannot otherwise benefit from therapy, highlighting how the deliberate creation of a "receiving climate" in specialized foundational groups can enable the crucial early experience of being received, making access to further support possible.

Finally, the third presentation introduces empirical research on the interpersonal perception of communicative contact. This study presents a newly constructed instrument to assess how students and

parents perceive "meaningful expression of our perceived world and self to others" in peers or their children respectively. Findings distinguish two elements of perceived communicative contact — meaningfulness and reactivity — and link higher levels of perceived contact to the observer's own empathy and mindfulness.

Collectively, these presentations offer a holistic view of psychological contact: from its empirical measurement to its fundamental therapeutic necessity and the institutional support required to deliver it to the most vulnerable clients.

Submission type

Symposium (60 min)

Keywords

Pre-Therapy, Psychological contact, Complex trauma, Process stages, Empathy

List Individual Talks of the Symposium (Title - First Author)

1. Offering Pre-Therapy to individuals diagnosed with DID (dissociative identity disorder) from a third sector (charity) organisational perspective in the UK - Rab Erskine
2. Widening the gateway into therapy - Chip Ponsford
3. The interpersonal perception of communicative contact - Mathias Dekeyser

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Why artificial intelligence cannot replace reading: A workshop on experiential learning

Prof Ulle Jäger PhD

Frankfurt University of Applied Sciences, Frankfurt am Main, Germany



Prof Ulle Jäger

Author Bio

Ulle Jäger is a sociologist with further education and training in person-centered counseling, Focusing and body psychotherapy. She works as a Professor for Person-Centered Counseling at Frankfurt University of Applied Sciences, Germany.

Abstract

In this workshop, you will encounter a way of experiential reading based on a hitherto unpublished manuscript by Eugene T. Gendlin. In 1958, Gendlin presented a paper called “The Minimum Conditions of Experiential Learning as Offered by a Correspondence Course in Counseling”. This was part of the so-called Counseling Center Discussion Paper series, chaired by Carl Rogers.

Gendlin reflects upon his experience in teaching a correspondence course to students of person-centered counseling. The exchange between him and his students took place in form of sending letters to and fro by mail, that is, without face-to-face contact and without group interaction. From this experience, Gendlin extracts minimum conditions for “experiential learning, ... genuine learning which involves not only concepts but *a reorganization of experience*” (Gendlin 1958). He outlines how this can be achieved by systematically guiding the students’ attention to their yet unclear reactions to texts, including their feelings, thoughts and associations with their own work experience, and by responding to their responses.

We will read short passages from this old but nevertheless highly relevant text, putting into practice what is outlined by Gendlin. In Listening Partnerships, you will be guided to explore “the richness which is implicit” in your “own thoughts and reactions” (Gendlin 1958). After some sharing, you can unfold your own ideas and first steps to bring experiential reading into your own practices of studying/teaching. These might work as a counterpart to mere AI-based text summarization by making reading pertinent, meaningful – and more fun!

Gendlin, E. T. 1958. The Minimum Conditions of Experiential Learning as offered by a Correspondence Course in Counseling. *Counseling Center Discussion Papers* Volume 4/21. Chicago: University of Chicago Library.

Geiser, C. 2025. Als Focusing noch nicht Focusing hieß. Ein früher Text Gene Gendlins über experienzielles Lernen. *Person* Vol. 29, Nr. 2, 151-160.

Submission type

Experiential Workshop (75 min)

Keywords

Training , Teaching, Studying, Experiential Reading, Experiential Learning

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What Kind of Helpers Does the Future Need?

Dr Christopher C Wagner PhD

Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, USA



Dr Christopher C Wagner

Author Bio

Christopher Wagner, PhD, is a clinical psychologist whose scholarship focuses on motivational interviewing (MI) and interpersonal processes in behavioral health care, with particular emphasis on expanding MI's theoretical scope and its application in group psychotherapy. He is the primary author of *Motivational Interviewing in Groups* (Guilford Press), currently in revision for a new edition. His current work explores motivation, culture, and intergenerational impact in the context of emerging global challenges.

Abstract

The person-centered tradition introduced revolutionary ideas: recognizing people as the owners of their lives and trusting in their wisdom over the constricting expectations of society. The movement became domesticated along its way to the mainstream. But a different future calls for different foundations, and this talk proposes that reclaiming those still-radical ideas and ideals may be what a changing world needs.

Grounded in three decades of work in motivational interviewing and the broader person-centered tradition in group and cross-cultural practice, this talk will offer a framework for reflecting on our current dilemma and brainstorming pathways forward. The framework looks in four directions: backward (to those radical roots), forward (facing accelerating change with adaptive capacity rather than fixed solutions), outward (integrating the emergent wisdom of groups, communities, and cultures, especially those most impacted yet most often ignored), and inward (recentering in values and traits that guide living as stewards of the present and ancestors of the future).

At the heart is a shift toward people-centered practice, toward the space between us, where change and growth can emerge when we engage with authenticity and attunement.

Without dwelling in despair, we will openly consider a changing future with potential ecological, social, and economic collapse and ask, how can we collectively prepare for recovery? We'll imagine potential exponential change, a future in which no one can settle in any one life for long, and ask, how can we live with ambivalence and keep our balance? We'll consider the risks and possibilities related to the merging of technology and humanity and imagine how we can build systems that contain the best of all of us. We will consider what we may be taking from our descendants and what we may still have to give. And ask, what kind of helpers does the future need?

Submission type

Individual Lecture (60 min)

Keywords

Global change, Cultural perspectives, Intergenerational responsibility, Motivational interviewing, People-centered practices

Neuroemergence: A call to action for the client-centered community

Dr Christine Abassary PhD

Yorkville University, New Brunswick, Canada



Dr Christine Abassary

Author Bio

Christine Abassary, PhD is currently teaching graduate psychology and counselling courses for Yorkville University, Canada, and maintains a private therapy practice in Asheville, NC. She was inspired early in her career to work in mental health supervising a group home for adolescent youth near Berkeley, CA. Her rural community work originated from serving in the US Peace Corps in Malawi, east Africa. She returned to the States to pursue her counseling and health degrees working in multisystemic family systems counseling. After completing her doctorate she directed a mental health program and lived in New Mexico for nearly 20 years; she most recently relocated to Asheville, NC in 2022. She has trained in Eye Movement Desensitization Reprocessing (EMDR) and bilateral drawing. She considers herself a client-centered therapist working with a person's innate ability to change by fostering their natural tendency and capacity towards growth. She has led several groups during her career and most recently a therapeutic art women's group focused on healing, transitions, and change. She enjoys being in nature, hiking, traveling, art, and spending time with friends and family.

Abstract

The concept of neurodivergence, a non-medical term coined by Judy Singer, an autistic individual, in 1997, has emerged alongside research on multiple intelligences. It is used to describe conditions such as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), attention deficit disorder (ADD), autism, and dyspraxia. Furthermore, increased understanding suggests that the characteristics of a Highly Sensitive Person (HSP) will also be encompassed by neurodivergence (Aron, 2010). This discussion specifically focuses on ADHD and ADD, and their associated symptoms like anxiety and depression.

To offer a strengths-based perspective for counseling clients seeking to heal in a challenging world, I propose the term "Neuroemergence" to the client-centered community (Abassary, 2023).

As an educator and trauma-informed therapist utilizing an experiential approach, I recognize the associated trauma that results from navigating a neurotypical environment. Given that psychologists estimate 40-50% of adults will be classified with a mental disorder in their lifetime (Moffitt, et al., 2010), I urge us to consider a fully capable Neuroemergent mindset before classifying an individual with a diagnosable disorder like ADHD.

I believe it is imperative to address the needs of Neuroemergents in our ever-changing world to advance our collective humanity. Therefore, I call on the client-centered community to adopt a paradigm shift.

References

Abassary, C. (2023). Theory of Neuroemergent mindset: New paradigms of understanding. *Medwin Publishers*, 7(1), 1-3. <https://doi.org/10.23880/mhrij-16000206>. Copyright© Abassary C.

Aron, E.N. (2010). *Psychotherapy and the Highly Sensitive Person: Improving Outcomes for That Minority of People Who Are the Majority of Clients* (1st ed.). Routledge.
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203879085>

Moffitt, T.E., Caspi, A., Taylor, A., Kokaua, J., Milne, B.J., et al. (2010). How common are common mental disorders? Evidence that lifetime prevalence rates are doubled by prospective versus retrospective ascertainment. *Psychology Med* 40(6): 899-909.

Submission type

Individual Talk (20 min)

Keywords

Neuroemergence , Neurodivergent/ diversity, Attention deficit disorder (ADD/ADHD)/ autism, Highly sensitive person (HSP) (HSP), Person/ client- centered

Exploring therapists' experiences of empathy blocks in psychotherapy

Simran Chatha MPhil^{1,2}, Dr Susan Stephen¹, Dr Anna Robinson¹, Prof emeritus Robert Elliott¹

¹University of Strathclyde, Glasgow, United Kingdom. ²Emotion-Focused Therapy Institute India (EFTii), Bengaluru, India



Simran Chatha

Author Bio

I am a clinical psychologist with a deep interest in facilitating emotional change and congruence within individuals and couple relationships. I am an accredited Level C EFT therapist and an EFT Supervisor-in-training. I began creating an Indian EFT community in 2023 via the EFT India Network, and finally started the Emotion-Focused Therapy Institute India (EFTii) in 2024 with support from my mentors Dr. Juliette Becking and Dr. Robert Elliott. I am currently a PhD student at University of Strathclyde. My PhD research is on studying empathy blocks as key interfering processes in psychotherapy. My areas of interest include psychotherapy processes in Emotion-Focused Therapy and other person-centered experiential approaches, empathic attunement and therapist responsiveness, supervision processes, conversation analysis and comprehensive process analysis in research.



Dr Susan Stephen

Author Bio

Susan Stephen is a senior lecturer in counselling at the University of Strathclyde (Glasgow, Scotland) and director of the Strathclyde Counselling and Psychotherapy Research Clinic where she leads research in the process and outcome of person-centered-experiential therapy. Her main research interest is the concept of congruent functioning as a contemporary redefining of the developmental process at the heart of Rogers' person-centered theory and its intercultural implications. She is a co-editor of the journal, Person-Centered and Experiential Psychotherapies and of the third edition of The Handbook of Person-Centred Psychotherapy and Counselling. She is also a former Chair of the board of the World Association for Person-Centered and Experiential Psychotherapies and Counseling (PCE World).



Dr Anna Robinson

Author Bio

Anna Robinson, Ph.D. (she/her) is Senior Lecturer in Autism & Neurodiversity and Director of the Neuro-EFT Research Clinic at University of Strathclyde, Glasgow, Scotland, and is a psychologist specialising in psychotherapy. A psychotherapy researcher and one of the main developers of Neuro-EFGT, her research and practice centers on emotion-focused-experiential psychotherapy.



Prof emeritus Robert Elliott

Author Bio

Robert Elliott, Ph.D. (they/them, European/American, nonbinary, neurotypical) is Emeritus Professor of Counselling at the University of Strathclyde, Glasgow, Scotland, and a Fellow in the Divisions of Psychotherapy and Humanistic Psychology of the American Psychological Association. A psychotherapy researcher and one of the developers of EFT, their research and practice centers on emotion-focused and other humanistic experiential psychotherapies.

Abstract

Empathy is a core therapeutic process across modalities, yet little is known about the moments when therapists struggle to remain fully empathic. These “empathy blocks” are often subtle but significant disruptions that can influence therapeutic presence, emotional attunement, and the overall therapeutic relationship. Recognising that therapists enter sessions as human beings with their own emotional vulnerabilities, this study aims to explore therapists’ lived experiences of such blocks, specifically what they identify as an empathy block, how these moments are experienced internally, the ways they attempt to work through them, and how they understand the block’s impact on the therapeutic process.

Using a two-phase discovery-oriented qualitative design drawing from empirical phenomenology, Phase 1 will involve an open-ended written reflection in which trained EFT and PCT therapists describe a specific instance of an empathy block. A purposive sample of participants will then be invited to Phase 2, where semi-structured interviews will explore the identified event in detail. Data will be analysed using descriptive-interpretive methods to capture the essence and variability of therapists’ experiences. This presentation will outline the study rationale, design and emerging insights from early data collection.

The study aims to contribute conceptually and practically to psychotherapy training and supervision by illuminating the often overlooked experiences of therapists. Findings will support a more person-centered and relationally grounded understanding of therapist challenges, with potential implications for training, supervision, and personal development for therapists.

Submission type

Individual Talk (20 min)

Keywords

empathy blocks, person-centred therapy, therapist experiences, emotion-focused therapy, qualitative research

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Eco-EFT. Explorations into Emotion-Focused Therapy (EFT) informed by Ecopsychology and Climate Psychology

Niels Bagge MA

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Niels Bagge

Author Bio

Niels Bagge (b. 1964) cand. psych. from University of Copenhagen (1994), clinical psychologist (1997), specialist and supervisor of psychotherapy (2003/2014). Certified EFT therapist, supervisor and trainer from International Society for Emotion Focused Therapy (ISEFT). Certified Focusing Trainer (The International Focusing Institute), certified mindfulness meditation teacher (MMTCP), certified Holotropic Breathwork Facilitator (GTT), certified State Differentiated Psychotherapist and certified Imago Couples Therapist. Training in hypnosis, Motivational Interviewing, Rhythm to Recovery, and other therapeutic procedures. Head of Institute for Emotion Focused Therapy Denmark & private practice in Roskilde, Denmark. PCE Literature Project steering group member. Founder and chair of Danish Society for Person-Centered and Experiential Psychotherapy & chair for the 15th World Conference for Person-Centered and Experiential Psychotherapy & Counseling (2022). Co-founder and organizer for Dansk Carl Rogers Forum. Papers, book chapters, and conference presentations on EFT & PCE therapy, placebo and indigenous healing practice. Lives with his wife in Hvidovre, Denmark and has 2 children. Enjoys playing the guitar, exploring the mind and yoga.

Abstract

Ecopsychology (EP) and Climate Psychology (CP) has been growing in the last decades with heighten focus on the psychological effects of climate crises and the psychological side of humans as part of ecosystems and the natural world. Expression of this can be found within the Person-Centered Experiential tribes like the Person-Centered Approach (PCA) and Focusing. Both of these are foundational and integrated into Emotion-Focused Therapy (EFT), but as yet EFT has not embraced an ecopsychological perspective and only sparsely addressed CP issues in theory or practice. I will explore both how 1) the current EFT theory and practice can address CP issues, e.g. climate emotions like climate anxiety, shame, hopelessness, sadness, etc. and activist burnout, and 2) how EFT theory and practice could be informed by and evolve an EP perspective in particular from PCE contributions of Neville & Tudor's *Eco-Centred Therapy* (2024) and Gendlin's *A Process Model* (2018). It is a discovery oriented inquiry into philosophical, theoretical and practice related issues combined with experiences from practice and supervision. The result of the inquiry shows how EFT in its current form can embrace climate psychological issues in practice, e.g. using chair work and self-compassion with climate anxiety, empty chair with climate abuse, emotional deepening from secondary climate hopelessness to primary climate sadness and grief etc. EFT theory and case-formulation can also address climate issues. The results regarding EFT and EP points towards some potential theoretical differences between individualistic information processing models and an organismic model of man as a living organism embedded in ecological systems. Common ground seems to be found in open systems theory. Could the dialectic constructivist theory include the natural environment of the self? All this can have implication for theory, practice and research of EFT which I hope to discuss with the delegates.

Submission type

Individual Lecture (60 min)

Keywords

Emotion Focused Therapy, ecopsychology, climate psychology, climate anxiety, organism

Use of AI in Cross Lingual Translation and Reliable Content Building of the PCE-Literature Database

Niels Bagge MA^{1,2,3}, Dr David Oberreiter⁴, Dr Brian Rodgers PhD⁵, Patrick Akrivos MA^{6,7,8,9}, Dr Sophia Balamoutsou¹⁰, Takahiro Namiki¹¹

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Niels Bagge

Author Bio

Niels Bagge (b. 1964) cand. psych (University of Copenhagen - 1994), clinical psychologist (1997), specialist and supervisor of psychotherapy (2003/2014). Certified EFT therapist, supervisor and trainer (ISEFT), certified Focusing Trainer (TIFI), certified mindfulness meditation teacher (MMTCP), and more. Head of Institute for Emotion Focused Therapy Denmark & private practice in Roskilde, Denmark. PCE Literature Project steering group member as delegate for PCE Europe. Founder and chair of Danish Society for Person-Centered and Experiential Psychotherapy & chair of PCE2022 World Conference (Dopenhagen, 2022). Co-founder of Dansk Carl Rogers Forum. Papers on PCE bibliographical surveys.



Dr David Oberreiter

Author Bio

Psychiatrist, Director of the Institute of Psychotherapy and Head of the Clinic for Neuropsychiatric Gerontology of the Kepler University Hospital. Author of the book "Psychopathologie" (in German), where psychiatric diagnostics are interpreted from a person-centered perspective.



Dr Brian Rodgers

Author Bio

Brian Rodgers is a senior lecturer on the counsellor education programmes at the University of Auckland. Brian has been involved with counsellor education since 2001 at several institutions in New Zealand, Australia and the UK. His research interests include person-centred and experiential counselling, pluralistic practice, technology and counselling, and decolonising approaches.



Patrick Akrivos

Author Bio

Patrick Akrivos is an Austrian-Greek psychologist and person-centered psychotherapist, licensed in both Austria and Greece, with a strong cross-cultural orientation. He is also trained in person-centered child and youth psychotherapy and has completed additional specializations, including Emotion-Focused Couples Therapy. Patrick has extensive experience educating parents, teachers, and professionals in Greece and internationally. He has published widely, presented at numerous conferences, and continues to expand his psychotherapy expertise with a deep commitment to cultural sensitivity. For more information visit: praxis-akrivos.at



Dr Sophia Balamoutsou

Author Bio

Pluralistic counsellor, coach and psychologist MBACP (Accred), EMCC (practitioner) AFBPSS, CPsychol. Working in private practice and lecturer at ICPS-College for Humanistic Sciences, Athens, Greece). Working group for the development of PCE-literature project. Research interests: history and philosophy in helping professions, training and curricula development, work-life balance, social injustice and impact to mental health.



Takahiro Namiki

Author Bio

An assistant professor working as a college counselor in Japan. His current research interests are in the person-centered therapy, person-centered integration, training and encounter philosophy.

Abstract

The PCE-Literature Project is the free collective online PCE bibliography and PCE research hub (<https://pce-literature.org/en>) created in 2011 on the basis of systematic bibliographical searches by Germain Lietaer, Peter Schmid and others. Currently there are over 14.000 articles, books, chapters in 24 languages. It is used by students, educators, researchers and practitioners. Today PCE Literature Project is run by an independent working group of volunteers and is supported by GwG, FORUM, ÖGWG, PCE Europe and PCE World.

We will present PCE Literature its history, present operations and future goals. We will highlight 3 areas: 1) The work on implementing AI for establishing cross lingual translation when searching for PCE literature, 2) the development of a research section of the online platform, 3) the effort to strengthening the reliability of the content of the database using AI. We hope to engage participants at the lecture in a discussion about how to use it and engage in this collaborative volunteer PCE-community project.

Implication of the work: 1) By using AI to translate between the different languages in the database, means that soon you can search for papers using a search term (e.g. "actualising tendency") in your own language (e.g. Spanish) and find papers in other languages (e.g. Japanese, German etc.). 2) The brand new research section of the database will allow researchers to search for other researchers, studies and measures. Researchers will be able to connect, collaborate and share resources (e.g. protocols and data sets). 3) The reliability of the database is important and needs solid inputs from systematic bibliographical searches. It is a collective effort by the PCE community to build the strength of the database. We are looking into how AI can support this effort.

Submission type

Individual Talk (20 min)

Keywords

PCE Literature Database, PCE Scientific Database, AI translation, Collective PCE Bibliography, Call for bibliographical surveys

Translating Experiential-Existential Psychotherapy from Academia to Main Street

Hein Zegers M.A. & M.Sc.¹, Evi Van Mierlo M.Sc.²

¹KU Leuven University, Leuven, Belgium. ²Focus on Emotion vzw, Antwerp, Belgium



Hein Zegers

Author Bio

Hein Zegers (KU Leuven University) holds an M.A. in Languages (specialization in Science Communication) and an M.Sc. in Psychology (specialization in Clinical and Well-Being Psychology). He completed his psychotherapy training in Person-Centered Psychotherapy at KU Leuven University. Hein has traveled to more than 100 countries while researching and teaching on the topic of existential well-being. He was involved with the first MOOC on the Science of Well-Being (Berkeley University) and contributes to the widely followed KU Leuven University MOOC Existential Well-Being: A Person-Centered Experiential Approach - <https://www.edx.org/learn/health-wellness/ku-leuven-existential-well-being-counseling-a-person-centered-experiential-approach>. He also coordinates and teaches a more intensive and interactive live version of this course at KU Leuven University. In addition, he runs a private psychology practice serving the international community in and around the city of Leuven.



Evi Van Mierlo

Author Bio

Evi Van Mierlo (Focus on Emotion vzw) is a Belgian clinical psychologist, person-centered psychotherapist, experiential-existential psychotherapist (EEP) and author. She is founding member of the Center for Experiential-Existential Psychotherapy (Center for EEP, KU Leuven University) and coordinator, staff member and teacher of the EEP Specialisation Training for psychotherapists and counselors (Psychotherapy Training Institute, Focus on Emotion). She also runs a private practice for EEP and supervision, where she mainly provides therapy to colleagues. She recently wrote a book about being the parent of an only child (Lannoo Publishers, April 2026, <https://www.lannoo.be/nl/evi-van-mierlo>).

Abstract

In our rapidly changing world, people are increasingly confronted with existential concerns, including loss of meaning, climate change, and the impact of artificial intelligence. Experiential-Existential Psychotherapy and Counseling (EEP), a recently developed person-centered approach (Madison, 2010; Vanhooren, 2018), is becoming ever more valuable in addressing these issues. Yet a key question remains: how do we bring EEP from the realm of academia to the general public?

Both person-centered psychologists presenting this contribution, Hein Zegers and Evi Van Mierlo, are actively involved in teaching several different courses in EEP. These courses include e.g. the KU Leuven University MOOC *Existential Well-Being: A Person-Centered Experiential Approach*, in which, by the end of

2025, more than 62,000 students worldwide will have enrolled, but they also teach and coordinate several more in-depth, year-long trainings on this topic.

These various courses function as a breeding ground and testing laboratory for new ideas about how to effectively teach the core tenets of EEP - how to bring EEP from Academia to "Main Street." Student reflection analysis indicates what works, and what does not work, when teaching EEP to a broad and diverse population that includes not only psychologists and psychiatrists, but also counselors, pastoral workers, educators, and others engaged in supporting human growth.

This presentation will showcase several key strategies that have already emerged from this evolving EEP teaching laboratory. Interacting on these insights may be helpful for audience members seeking to contribute to the dissemination of this person-centered approach -an approach our changing world seems increasingly in need of- so that this treasure trove of experiential-existential wisdom may exist for as many people as possible.

Submission type

Individual Talk (20 min)

Keywords

Existential, Experiential, Education, Outreach, Science Communication

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How authenticity grows in person-centred therapy: insights from the Human Flourishing Project

Dr Richard Doyle PhD, Jen Holland, Dr Shun Chen PhD, Prof David Murphy PhD

University of Nottingham, Nottingham, United Kingdom



Dr Richard Doyle

Author Bio

Richard Doyle is an Assistant Professor at the University of Nottingham, UK, where he is a tutor on the MA in person-centred counselling and psychotherapy and on the person-centred experiential counselling for depression course. He is a practicing counsellor and a registered member of the British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy. He holds a PhD in chemical physics.



Jen Holland

Author Bio

Jen Holland is an early career researcher and academic with a special interest in human flourishing and The Person-Centred Approach. A practicing Psychotherapist and PhD Scholar, her research focus is on understanding trauma through the Person-Centred lens. Jen is an Assistant Professor of Human Flourishing at The University of Nottingham teaching on the MA Person Centred Experiential Counselling and Psychotherapy Program, committed to a person-centred pedagogy focussing on psychological growth and human development. She is co-founder of The Human Flourishing Project, providing psychotherapy to the community of Nottingham city.



Dr Shun Chen

Author Bio

Shun Chen is an Assistant Professor in Person-Centred Experiential Counselling & Psychotherapy and Trauma-Informed Practice at the University of Nottingham, a position he has held since 2025. Prior to this, he worked at the University of Aberdeen. He is a Chartered Psychologist with the British Psychological Society (BPS), a COSCA (Counselling & Psychotherapy in Scotland) Accredited Trainer, and an accredited trainer in Gender, Sex, and Relationship Diversities. He is also an accredited psychotherapist with the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) and serves on the editorial board for Psychology & Sexuality.



Prof David Murphy

Author Bio

David Murphy is Professor of Psychology and Education at the University of Nottingham and leads the Centre for Research in Human Flourishing. He is on the British Psychological Society's Register of Psychologists Specializing in Psychotherapy, a Registered Member of the General Psychotherapy Council. He has published or edited five books and has over 100 peer review journal papers and for 10 years was editor of the PCE-World international journal Person-Centered & Experiential Psychotherapies.

Abstract

Motivation

Authenticity, or congruence, has long been understood as a marking therapeutic change and growth associated with person-centred relationships. And to be effective and purposeful as agents of change in a changing world requires authenticity.

Problem

Although theory proposes that specific relational conditions foster client growth, the underlying temporal dynamics are unclear. Empirical evidence regarding how authenticity develops during therapy – and how it relates to the therapeutic relationship conditions – has been limited. This presentation examines associations between relational qualities, authenticity, and a range of client outcomes across therapy, using real-world data from the Human Flourishing Project, a training clinic in Nottingham, UK.

Methodology

Data were drawn from 148 clients attending 5–40 sessions of person-centred counselling. Measures include the Barrett Lennard Relationship Inventory (to assess client-perceived empathic understanding, therapist congruence, level and unconditionality of regard), the Authenticity Scale, and other questionnaires.

Multilevel lagged models were used to assess within-person and between-person effects. A latent growth curve model was then estimated to examine whether the relational climate predicted growth in authenticity over time.

Results

Lagged multilevel models showed no evidence that session-to-session fluctuations in relationship quality predicted short-term increases in authenticity. However, the latent growth curve model revealed that clients who experienced a more positive relational climate across therapy demonstrated significantly steeper increases in authenticity, irrespective of initial authenticity levels. Growth in authenticity was substantial and varied between clients.

Implications

Findings support the refining of person-centred theory by distinguishing stable relational conditions over time from session-specific relational experiences. Relationship quality appears to support client growth as a general therapeutic climate, rather than as an immediate causal mechanism. This has implications for therapeutic practice and for theories of change processes.

Discussion

This presentation will foster fruitful discussion on mechanisms of change, methodological challenges in modelling therapy processes, and implications for person-centred theory.

Submission type

Individual Talk (20 min)

Keywords

change process, authenticity, relational conditions, training, clinical

122

Academic Seminars as Significant Learning Communities: Practice and Research Perspectives

Prof Renate Motschnig Dr.

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Prof Renate Motschnig

Author Bio

Renate Motschnig holds a double assignment as a professor at the Faculty of Computer Science and the Centre for Teacher Education at the University of Vienna, Austria. Renate is author/co-author of more than 180 articles and three books on the Person-Centered Approach, the most recent being “Transforming Communication in Leadership and Teamwork”. Renate has a deep interest in the multiple ways in which thorough understanding and significant learning happen. She is determined to foster a style in higher education and management that is grounded in person-centered attitudes, our co-actualizing potential, and thoughtful support by technological innovations including generative AI.

Abstract

Abstract: This workshop shares a practical and research-informed approach to facilitating Masters/PhD research seminars as Significant Learning Communities (SILCs), grounded in Rogers’ notion of *significant learning* and his *theory of creativity*. The research asked: How do students experience and characterize a SILC seminar? What do they take away? What challenges and wishes do emerge? We will discuss the findings from a thematic analysis of students’ reaction sheets collected after each of six bi-weekly seminar units. Results highlight the value of a constructive climate, openness, transparency, active listening, creativity-enabling activities, and—prominently—community processes such as sharing, collaboration, and peer feedback. Furthermore, it appears that facilitators’ intentional support of collaboration and community formation enhances significant learning and academic outcomes (e.g., thesis progress). Still, time-management and the hybrid setting pose challenges to be overcome. The workshop combines mini-lecture, dialogic exploration, and small-group work, including consideration of educational technologies and AI tools (e.g., ChatGPT) in seminars conducted as SILCs.

Learning Objectives

- Expand facilitation repertoire for student-centered research-oriented seminars.
- Understand common challenges, impacts, and design choices in SILC seminars.
- Reflect on Rogers’ core conditions, creativity theory, and processes of co-actualization.
- Translate findings into concrete practices for participants’ own contexts.

Structure and Outline

- Participant introductions: contexts, aims, and prior experience in research-focused seminars.
- Interactive mini lecture:
 - Significant learning (Rogers) and SILC concept
 - Research overview: seminar design, data collection, thematic analysis, key findings.
- Small-group work: interpret findings; generate adaptations for participants' seminars; discuss roles of technology and generative AI.
- Plenary synthesis: share designs, anticipated benefits/challenges, and facilitator practices; identify next steps.
- Final flashlight.

Submission type

Experiential Workshop (75 min)

Keywords

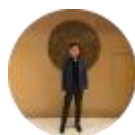
Person-centered education , significant learning, Significant Learning Community (SILC), co-actualization, hybrid research seminar

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Person-Centered Approach as a Catalyst for Change

Dr Tin Ko Latt M.B.,B.S

Counselling Corner, Yangon, Myanmar



Dr Tin Ko Latt

Author Bio

I am a dedicated mental health practitioner with a background in medicine and a deep passion for mental health advocacy. After graduating from the University of Medicine (1) in 2019, I have been actively working in the mental health field since 2021. Currently, I serve as a full-time counselor and trainer at Counselling Corner. With over 300 clinical hours in individual counseling and more than 1,000 hours of facilitation and training in various mental health-related workshops, seminars, and community programs, I bring extensive experience to my practice. My counseling approach is person-centered and non-directive, fostering a supportive, empathetic, and non-judgmental space for clients. I also integrate various therapeutic techniques to tailor my approach to each individual's needs.

Abstract

Myanmar has faced a triple burden of the pandemic, economic instability and ongoing political conflict, resulting in severe psychological impacts and negative consequences for civilian well-being. Historical oppression and discrimination of ethnic minorities continue to contribute to systemic social injustice. In addition, large-scale scamming operations have further harmed communities nationwide. These circumstances have led to increasing mental health needs, while available support resources remain far below the demand.

This writing explores how the Person-Centered Approach (PCA) can promote change and enhance resilience within such challenging environments. The core principles of empathy, unconditional positive regard and congruence can act as catalysts for internal transformation despite external limitations. By recognising individuals as experts in their own lives, PCA allows people to express their emotions openly within safe and non-judgemental spaces. This is particularly appropriate in Myanmar's context, where resources are scarce and relational power becomes vital.

Drawing on over four years of counselling and mental health practice in Myanmar, this abstract adopts a self-reflective lens. Together with colleagues, I have provided nationwide counselling services, facilitated workshops and delivered awareness sessions grounded in person-centered concepts. This approach supports flexibility and genuine connection, allowing individuals to safely express and process emotions through confidential environments.

Based on my experiences, empathy and acceptance have helped individuals reconnect with themselves, reflect on their life management strategies and cope with distress caused by social and political conditions. In group settings, participants also experience normalization and learn self-care and coping strategies by sharing within supportive communities.

This abstract argues that the Person-Centered Approach is not only therapeutic but also socially adaptive, offering a framework to nurture resilience and human agency in politically volatile contexts. It highlights the power of person-centered values in supporting individuals experiencing injustice.

Submission type

Online Symposium (60 min)

Keywords

Person-centered, Empathy, Social Injustice, Myanmar, Counselling

List Individual Talks of the Symposium (Title - First Author)

Person-Centered Approach as a Catalyst for Change- Tin Ko Latt

Exploring fear and self-healing in a changing world

Dr Ross Crisp Ph.D

Independent researcher, Croydon, Australia

Dr Ross Crisp

Author Bio

Ross Crisp has extensive experience as a rehabilitation consultant and psychologist in Australia. He has published numerous articles on disability and rehabilitation, in particular on the psychosocial and vocational rehabilitation of persons with spinal cord injuries and traumatic brain injuries. More recently, he has written on the practice of person-centered and experiential psychotherapies in educational and vocational rehabilitation settings, and in relation to trauma and loss. He has also focused on the value of integrating person-centered and experiential psychotherapies with existential philosophies. He is currently a member of the World Association of Person-Centered and Experiential Psychotherapies.

Abstract

In this presentation, I discuss my own experience of fear analyzed through a range of person-centred and experiential psychotherapies, existential (philosophical and psychological) and Jungian perspectives. I describe my fear, as an indicator of emotional vulnerability, as something that arose in response to several recent life-threatening health problems. In addition, on a global level, I am aware of multiple crises such as climate change, war, racism, discrimination, hunger and a lack of global solidarity in actively responding to these problems.

I explore the interplay between fear and other emotions in relation to Carl Rogers' concept of incongruence and the 'conditions of worth' as well as within the theory and practice of focusing-oriented and emotion-focused therapies that address the core pain of fear that has been reported to occur in relation to cancer, grief, trauma, mood (anxiety / depression) and socially constructed marginalization experiences. The discussion extends to existential (e.g., Heidegger, Vanhooren, Schneider), classical person-centered, Jungian and emotion-focused therapy analyses of fear that manifests in daily life and therapeutic settings as inner conflict between self and society (e.g., unconscious instinct versus sexual morality, moral duty). These approaches, each in their own way, highlight the significance of the therapeutic relationship in helping clients to experience fear (and other painful emotions).

Ultimately, in this presentation, I advocate a refinement of Rogers' six conditions of therapeutic change and which incorporates his viewpoints on socio-political change. By co-opting insights from other theoretical perspectives, I envision a path toward self-healing and self-organizing wisdom. It is a process that begins with the recognition that 'where the fear, there is your task' (Jung).

Submission type

Online Individual Lecture (60 min)

Keywords

Person-centered and experiential psychotherapies, Existential, Social change, Fear, Self-healing

126

The changing world of experiences in suicidal crises. How the person-centered approach can prevent suicides

Dr David Oberreiter

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Dr David Oberreiter

Author Bio

David Oberreiter is a psychiatrist and head of the Institute for Psychotherapy at the Kepler University Hospital in Linz, Austria. He teaches at various universities in training programs for medical doctors and psychotherapists. He founded and leads the person-centered psychotherapy training program for psychiatric specialists in Austria. Together with a team of like-minded colleagues, he implemented a non-directive person-centered psychotherapy ward for older people in the psychiatric clinic. In his effort to introduce person-centered thinking into psychiatry, he is the author of the book “Psychopathologie” [Psychopathology] in which psychopathological examination is not conducted in a judgmental manner but as a person-centered process on equal terms.

Abstract

This lecture deals with the difficult subject of suicide from both a theoretical and a practical perspective. It begins by describing the symptoms of increasing suicidal escalation, the changing world of experiences, showing that the observable phenomena can be well explained within the framework of person-centered theory. In contrast to other theories based on classical psychiatry, the person-centered view is not defect-oriented. On the contrary! The intention that initially leads to the pre-suicidal constriction can be seen as an effect of a process of defense, which attempts to stabilize the concept of self. Overall, the suicidal impulse can be interpreted basically as a positive impulse, a phenomenon of the actualizing tendency that undoubtedly tries to protect the individual. The practical part of the lecture presents two different situations: First, the therapy session in a classic setting, in which suicide, like any other topic, can be discussed without being judgmental and without pushing the person in a certain direction. The second is the acute suicidal crisis, in which one is called to prevent an imminent suicide (e.g., on the roof of a high-rise building). To understand the possibilities of the approach in an acute situation, considerations of the formative tendency help to view the suicidal act in a larger context and change the world of our perspectives.

Submission type

Experiential Workshop (75 min)

Keywords

suicide, actualization tendency, pre-suicidal syndrome, suicide prevention, formative tendency

Trusting the Organism in a Changing World: Applying Wu-wei to Person-Centered Therapy

Dr Cui Jing PhD

Nazareth University, Rochester, USA



Dr Cui Jing

Author Bio

Dr. Jing, Cui (荆萃) earned her Ph.D. in Art Therapy Research and Practice from Florida State University—one of only four institutions in the United States offering a doctoral degree in art therapy. Her scholarship integrates the Daoist principle of Wu-wei into person-centered therapy, offering a culturally grounded and innovative theoretical perspective for both clinical and academic practice. She is an Assistant Professor in the Creative Arts Therapy Department at Nazareth University in New York. Her clinical experience spans psychiatric hospital settings and nonprofit work serving low-income families. These experiences with diverse populations continue to shape her holistic, client-centered therapeutic approach. In 2025, Dr. Jing presented at the Art and Education for Social Justice Symposium in Athens, the Annual Conference of the Association for the Development of the Person-Centered Approach in Chicago, and the American Art Therapy Association Annual Conference in Portland. Her contributions have earned national recognition, including selection as an alternate for the American Association of University Women International Doctoral Fellowship (2024–25), a nomination for Florida State University's Undergraduate Research Mentor Award (2023–24), and multiple scholarships from the American Art Therapy Association.

Abstract

Motivation. In an era with increasing artificial intelligence, social media saturation, and standardized digital communication, people of all ages face rising anxiety, self-doubt, and disconnection from their inner resources. These shifts also reflect broader social injustices: unequal access to digital literacy, disproportionate exposure to online risks, and the suppression of authentic needs. Vulnerable populations are particularly disadvantaged. In this context, Person-Centered Therapy (PCT) is needed more than ever to help individuals reconnect with their organismic wisdom, trust their experience, and reclaim agency.

Problem. Despite its relevance, PCT practitioners continue to struggle with ambiguity surrounding the concept of nondirectiveness, asking questions such as, “Am I being too directive?” or “Is what I’m doing still client-centered?” In a world increasingly reliant on technology and online interaction, such uncertainties threaten practitioner confidence and limit client access to PCT’s empowering potential. For art therapists, the challenge is intensified by limited literature on nondirectiveness in art therapy practice.

Methodology. This presentation draws on the presenter’s clinical art therapy experience and a theoretical exploration integrating Daoist philosophy—particularly the principle of *wu-wei*—with person-centered nondirectiveness. *Wu-wei* is examined as an attitudinal approach that aligns closely with Rogers’ vision of allowing natural, organismic processes to unfold.

Results. Integrating *wu-wei* reframes nondirectiveness as an attuned, trust-based therapeutic approach rather than passive nonintervention. Clinical vignettes demonstrate how this perspective deepens therapist

presence, reduces anxiety about “doing it right,” and strengthens clients’ sense of agency and self-trust, affirming equitable access to personal growth.

Implications. Revisiting nondirectiveness through *wu-wei* enhances PCT’s capacity to support autonomy, resilience, and dignity in a rapidly changing, AI-driven, and socially mediated world. The session invites interdisciplinary dialogue to advance person-centered and experiential practices for contemporary challenges.

Submission type

Online Individual Talk (20 min)

129

A changing world in psychiatry. Experience report from a person-centered, non-directive psychotherapy ward.

Dr Albert Lauss¹, Dr Katharina Raninger¹, Manuel Haderer Mag. Msc¹, Johanna Mayr Msc²

¹Institut for Psychotherapie, Linz, Austria. ²Clinical Psychology,, Linz, Austria



Dr Albert Lauss

Author Bio

Dr. Albert Lauss, MD, person-centered psychotherapist and psychiatrist, works at the Institute for Psychotherapy at the Neuromed Campus in Linz. He leads the development of the person-centered psychotherapy ward for older adults.



Dr Katharina Raninger

Author Bio

Dr. Katharina Raninger, MD, is a person-centered psychotherapist and psychiatrist who works at the Institute for Psychotherapy at the Neuromed Campus in Linz. She leads the development of the person-centered psychotherapy ward for older adults.



Manuel Haderer

Author Bio

Mag. Manuel Haderer Msc is a person-centered psychotherapist at the Institute for Psychotherapy, Neuromed Campus, Linz. He leads the development of the person-centered psychotherapy ward for older adults.



Johanna Mayr

Author Bio

Johanna Mayr Msc is a Psychotherapist (Systemic Family Therapy), Clinical Psychologist, and Health Psychologist at Clinical Psychology, Neuromed Campus, Linz. She leads the development of the person-centered psychotherapy ward for older adults.

Abstract

A changing world opens up new possibilities. Changes in psychiatry in Linz, Upper Austria, have made it possible to open a person-centered psychotherapy ward. It is a psychotherapy ward specializing in older people. The aim is to implement the person-centered, non-directive approach at all levels, both organizationally and therapeutically. This implicates changes in interactions between employees from different professional groups, which represents a break with the hierarchical system of a psychiatric clinic. We outline the structure of the ward and beyond that, we offer insight into how genuine and authentic encounters can arise. This refers not only to encounters within formal therapeutic settings, but to the fundamental attitude we bring to everyday interactions and to how we strive to meet one another as human beings. After four years of operation, we would like to share our experiences. This person-centered psychotherapy ward in a psychiatric hospital can serve as a model for a more humanistic approach in psychiatry. Even the world of psychiatry is changing.

Submission type

Experiential Workshop (75 min)

Keywords

A changing psychiatrie, psychotherapeutic ward, breaking hierarchical systems, non-directive, everyday interactions

“Being With” Before “Doing For”: Person-Centred Approach in Creative Expressive Mental Health Workshops in Myanmar

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Khin Moh Moh Kyaw

Author Bio

Khin Moh Moh Kyaw is a counsellor and educator with extensive experience in mental health and psychosocial support. She graduated from Yangon University with a Bachelor of Psychology and a Diploma in Nursing, later completing advanced counselling training at Counselling Corner Myanmar and specialized programs under the guidance of Johns Hopkins University. For nearly a decade, Ma Moh worked in Singapore at a Nursing and Dementia home, where she deepened her understanding of complex mental health conditions including depression, anxiety, schizophrenia, obsessive-compulsive disorder, and dementia. She also gained valuable exposure to diagnostic and treatment approaches at the Institute of Mental Health in Singapore. Her career has spanned both international and local contexts. In Myanmar, she has served as a mental health counsellor for PLHIV, applied the Common Elements Treatment Approach (CETA) to trauma and substance abuse, supervised psychosocial support for MDRTB patients, and contributed as lead counsellor at Honest Hour and volunteer counsellor at Callmetoday. Specialized in anxiety, depression, trauma, substance abuse, and relationship counselling, Ma Moh is trained in multiple approaches including Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, CETA, and child psychology. She is particularly passionate about the non-directive counselling approach, which she has found effective for Myanmar clients facing emotional challenges. Her long-standing commitment is to empower individuals through counselling and to foster positive change in their lives.



Hein Htet Lwin Oo

Author Bio

Hein Htet Lwin Oo, HS-BCP, is a counsellor and educator from Yangon, Myanmar, dedicated to advancing trauma-informed mental health practice. After transitioning from medical studies during the Civil Disobedience Movement in 2021, Hein has worked under ACA-licensed supervision to integrate psychology, neuroscience, and literary analysis into accessible resources for teaching, advocacy, and care. Credentialed as a Human Services–Board Certified Practitioner (HS-BCP) by the Center for Credentialing & Education, Hein brings a systems-oriented approach to counseling, emphasizing empathy, cultural sensitivity, and collaborative learning. He has contributed to international dialogues on humanitarian mental health, offering reflections and resources that highlight both local realities and global solidarity. Known for his humility and relational leadership, Hein designs inclusive learning environments, fosters peer collaboration, and amplifies diverse voices in professional gatherings. His long-term vision is to strengthen Myanmar’s counseling

profession and build sustainable, equitable mental health infrastructure that responds to community needs while connecting to international standards.



Dr Myint Myint Win

Author Bio

Myint Myint Win is a student counsellor with medical background, holding a postgraduate degree in health social science with over two decades experience in medical practice, a decade in different management roles in non-profit health organizations in both development and humanitarian sectors on gender, sexuality, and reproductive health and rights, nutrition, maternal and child health, and integration of gender in health programming, and about 5 years in mental health and psychosocial support as facilitator/counsellor. With expertise in feminist methodology, contributing to women and girl's development and health sector through technical consultancy in new business development, proposal and report writing, program and knowledge management, monitoring and evaluation of programs. Experienced trainer, mentor and facilitator for workshops, training, consultations and community engagement, expanding expertise to mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS), counselling and climate change. Dedicated to mental health and psychosocial support to have over 400 hours on psychosocial support and counselling, launch of counselling centers, and training materials development for local women led and local ethnic organizations working in conflict-affected areas. Learner in person-centered therapy with interests to contribute globally through local efforts.



Dr Tin Ko Latt

Author Bio

Tin Ko Latt is a dedicated mental health practitioner with a background in medicine and a deep commitment to mental health advocacy. A graduate of the University of Medicine (1) in 2019, Tin Ko Latt has been actively serving in the mental health field since 2021. Currently, he works as a full-time counselor and trainer at Counselling Corner, where he provides compassionate, person-centered support to individuals and communities. With over 1000 clinical hours, Tin Ko Latt brings extensive experience to his practice. His counseling approach is non-directive, empathetic, and tailored to each client's unique needs, integrating diverse therapeutic techniques within a supportive and non-judgmental space. Ethics and professional growth are central to Tin Ko Latt's values. He conducts counseling under supervision to ensure the highest standards of care while actively engaging in ongoing professional development. Beyond clinical work, Tin Ko Latt is deeply involved in community outreach initiatives aimed at raising awareness and reducing stigma around mental health, believing strongly in the transformative power of education to build a more compassionate society. Outside of practice, Tin Ko Latt embraces self-care through cardio, stretching, reading, and creative pursuits such as music, movies, and art. Looking ahead, he aspires to expand his impact by developing innovative programs and initiatives that address evolving mental health needs, continuing his mission to make a positive difference in the lives of those he serves.

Abstract

Person-centred approach emphasises “being with” someone over “doing something” in supporting mental health of people. This “way of being” is not defined only by techniques, but by presence and empathy towards people's lived experiences.

Experiences from creative expressive workshops in Myanmar showed that facilitators' understanding of participants' experiences, culture, and context help them walk alongside participants' experiences fostering the safe space for sharing emotions and stories despite cultural and social norms and mental health stigma.

Mental health resources are scarce in low-income country experiencing ongoing humanitarian crisis like Myanmar. Professionals and/or paraprofessionals are often trained in evidence-based interventions from multiple modalities with comparatively less emphasis on therapeutic relationship and the counsellor. A case from creative expressive workshop using clay that I facilitated provides an example that therapeutic relationship and presence of facilitator are significant. During this community clay workshop, one participant chose not to create anything but leave the space intentionally empty.

Rather than judging, urging action, or interpreting silence as resistance, I attended to both the empty space and the participant's state. I acknowledged the participant's autonomy while attuning to the unspoken sadness shared between them. Using immediacy, I gently reflected what I had observed and felt, without pressuring the participant to express more.

This created a safe, congruent, and validating environment. The participant felt heard, respected, and gradually disclosed more of their emotions. This experience exemplifies how the facilitative therapeutic presence of the facilitator, not the technical expertise, became the primary catalyst for the positive change in individual participants, followed by the non-judgmental and empathetic dynamic between participants creating a space for them to learn from each other, cultivating community resilience.

Although evidence-based interventions are valuable and way forward, training for mental health should place equal, if not greater emphasis on core conditions for meaningful therapeutic change.

Submission type

Online Individual Talk (20 min)

131

Person-centred debriefing intervention: Integrating core conditions into critical incident stress management

Hein Htet Lwin Oo MBBS¹, Dr Myint Myint Win MBBS², Khin Moh Moh Kyaw B.A Psychology¹, Dr Tin Ko Latt MBBS¹

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Hein Htet Lwin Oo

Author Bio

Hein Htet Lwin Oo, HS-BCP, is a counsellor and educator from Yangon, Myanmar, dedicated to advancing trauma-informed mental health practice. After transitioning from medical studies during the Civil Disobedience Movement in 2021, Hein has worked under ACA-licensed supervision to integrate psychology, neuroscience, and literary analysis into accessible resources for teaching, advocacy, and care. Credentialed as a Human Services–Board Certified Practitioner (HS-BCP) by the Center for Credentialing & Education, Hein brings a systems-oriented approach to counseling, emphasizing empathy, cultural sensitivity, and collaborative learning. He has contributed to international dialogues on humanitarian mental health, offering reflections and resources that highlight both local realities and global solidarity. Known for his humility and relational leadership, Hein designs inclusive learning environments, fosters peer collaboration, and amplifies diverse voices in professional gatherings. His long-term vision is to strengthen Myanmar's counseling profession and build sustainable, equitable mental health infrastructure that responds to community needs while connecting to international standards.



Dr Myint Myint Win

Author Bio

Myint Myint Win is a student counsellor with medical background, holding a postgraduate degree in health social science with over two decades experience in medical practice, a decade in different management roles in non-profit health organizations in both development and humanitarian sectors on gender, sexuality, and reproductive health and rights, nutrition, maternal and child health, and integration of gender in health programming, and about 5 years in mental health and psychosocial support as facilitator/counsellor. With expertise in feminist methodology, contributing to women and girl's development and health sector through technical consultancy in new business development, proposal and report writing, program and knowledge management, monitoring and evaluation of programs. Experienced trainer, mentor and facilitator for workshops, training, consultations and community engagement, expanding expertise to mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS), counselling and climate change. Dedicated to mental health and psychosocial support to have over 400 hours on psychosocial support and counselling, launch of counselling centers, and training materials development for local women led and local ethnic organizations working in conflict-affected areas. Learner in person-centered therapy with interests to contribute globally through local efforts.



Khin Moh Moh Kyaw

Author Bio

Khin Moh Moh Kyaw is a counsellor and educator with extensive experience in mental health and psychosocial support. She graduated from Yangon University with a Bachelor of Psychology and a Diploma in Nursing, later completing advanced counselling training at Counselling Corner Myanmar and specialized programs under the guidance of Johns Hopkins University. For nearly a decade, Ma Moh worked in Singapore at a Nursing and Dementia home, where she deepened her understanding of complex mental health conditions including depression, anxiety, schizophrenia, obsessive-compulsive disorder, and dementia. She also gained valuable exposure to diagnostic and treatment approaches at the Institute of Mental Health in Singapore. Her career has spanned both international and local contexts. In Myanmar, she has served as a mental health counsellor for PLHIV, applied the Common Elements Treatment Approach (CETA) to trauma and substance abuse, supervised psychosocial support for MDRTB patients, and contributed as lead counsellor at Honest Hour and volunteer counsellor at Callmetoday. Specialized in anxiety, depression, trauma, substance abuse, and relationship counselling, Ma Moh is trained in multiple approaches including Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, CETA, and child psychology. She is particularly passionate about the non-directive counselling approach, which she has found effective for Myanmar clients facing emotional challenges. Her long-standing commitment is to empower individuals through counselling and to foster positive change in their lives.



Dr Tin Ko Latt

Author Bio

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Abstract

Following the 7.7–7.9 magnitude earthquake on 28 March 2025, the whole country of Myanmar was in psychological distress. A mental health support team of five

counsellors mobilised to affected area within a week and provided four core interventions including psychological first aid (PFA), PFA trainings, child-centred play sessions for children, and group work grounded in CISM and Rogerian approach. Integrating Rogerian principles: empathy, congruence, unconditional positive regard, into Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) offers a trauma-informed intervention with emotional safety, reducing the risk of retraumatisation.

The retraumatisation risk of debriefing commonly associated with coerced sharing of stories immediately after a traumatic event is mitigated by empathetic presence of facilitators rather than rigid structures of debriefing questions.

Group works started with facilitator explaining about group processes and informed consent on the risks and benefits of workshops, mentioning voluntary participation and availability of help from another counsellor if overwhelmed with emotions. Facilitators rather enforcing the structured questions, focused more on creating the safe space for participants and gave attention to each participant with grounding and relaxing method in between if needed. The phases and questions of debriefing were used as roadmap rather than rigid guidelines. Psychoeducation was done with pamphlets describing symptoms, and grounding methods were taught not only in session but also given in voice recording.

Participants, at the end of sessions, mentioned a sense of relief, understanding of what they were going through, and hope to continue their lives.

This experience highlights that although the traditional method of debriefing may not be the first line of intervention, the structure of CISM combined with a person-centred approach can be valuable. In low-income countries like Myanmar, where resources are limited and crises ongoing, a hybrid model grounded in core therapeutic conditions may offer a feasible and effective way forward.

Submission type

Online Individual Talk (20 min)

132

A Changing world: Growth amidst uncertainty, person-centered approach and therapist

Dr Myint Myint - Win M.B.,B.S; M.A(Health Social Science)¹, Hein Htet Lwin Oo HS-BCP²

¹Seit Mate Swe, Yangon, Myanmar. ²Counselling Corner, Yangon, Myanmar



Dr Myint Myint - Win

Author Bio

A student counsellor with medical background from Myanmar, holding a postgraduate degree in health social science with over two decades experience in medical practice, a decade in different management roles in non-profit health organizations in both development and humanitarian sectors on gender, sexuality, and reproductive health and rights, nutrition, maternal and child health, and integration of gender in health programming, and about 5 years in mental health and psychosocial support as facilitator/counsellor. With expertise in feminist methodology, contributing to women and girl's development and health sector through technical consultancy in new business development, proposal and report writing, program and knowledge management, monitoring and evaluation of programs. Experienced trainer, mentor and facilitator for workshops/ trainings, consultations and community engagement, expanding expertise to mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS), counselling and climate change. Dedicated to mental health and psychosocial support to have over 400 hours on psychosocial support and counselling, launch of counselling centers, and training materials development for local women led and local ethnic organizations working in conflict-affected areas. Learner in person-centered therapy with interests to contribute globally through local efforts.



Hein Htet Lwin Oo

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Hein Htet Lwin Oo, HS-BCP, is a counsellor and educator from Yangon, Myanmar, dedicated to advancing trauma-informed mental health practice. After transitioning from medical studies during the Civil Disobedience Movement in 2021, Hein has worked under ACA-licensed supervision to integrate psychology, neuroscience, and literary analysis into accessible resources for teaching, advocacy, and care. Credentialed as a Human Services–Board Certified Practitioner (HS-BCP) by the Center for Credentialing & Education, Hein brings a systems-oriented approach to counseling, emphasizing empathy, cultural sensitivity, and collaborative learning. He has contributed to international dialogues on humanitarian mental health, offering reflections and resources that highlight both local realities and global solidarity. Known for his humility and relational leadership, Hein designs inclusive learning environments, fosters peer collaboration, and amplifies diverse voices in professional gatherings. His long-term vision is to strengthen Myanmar's counseling profession and build sustainable, equitable mental health infrastructure that responds to community needs while connecting to international standards.

Abstract

Counselor's congruence, empathy and unconditional positive regards are important in establishing a strong therapeutic relationship in Rogers' person-centered therapy. Under rapidly changing context during political, economic crises that interrupt social justice, how the therapist's actualization potential is improved to be congruent is important.

This paper reviewed the concepts and reflected how counselor's congruence is challenged in humanitarian settings. Self-actualization potential according to Maslow and Rogers is reviewed and reflective methodology is adopted to find out the therapist's congruence development in counselling. I agree with Rogers on actualization potential, and propose personal and professional relationships are essential in developing congruence of a therapist. This paper will contribute to the capacity building of person-centered therapists in Myanmar, where the practice in humanitarian settings is still limited.

Submission type

Online Individual Talk (20 min)

133

Changing emotions with emotions - Introduction to Emotion-Focused TherapyDr Imke R. Herrmann PHD, Dr Lars Auszra PHD

Institut für Emotionsfokussierte Therapie (IEFT), Munich, Germany



Dr Imke R. Herrmann

Author Bio

Dr. Imk Herrmann co-founded the German Institute for Emotion-focused Therapy (IEFT) in Munich. She is also founding boardmember of the German Society for Emotion-focused Therapy (DeGEFT). She has played a major role in establishing EFT in the German-speaking countries. To date, she has written several articles and book chapters in German and English about Emotion-focused Therapy and emotional processing. In addition, she is co-author of a book in German (Emotional Focused Therapy: A Practice Manual) and two educational videos on EFT. Imke runs her own practice in Munich and offers individual therapy, couple therapy and supervision in EFT. She teaches EFT in several European countries.



Dr Lars Auszra

Author Bio

Dr. Lars Auszra co-founded the German Institute for Emotion-focused Therapy (IEFT) in Munich. He is also founding chairman of the German Society for Emotion-focused Therapy (DeGEFT) and member of the board of the International Society for Emotion-focused Therapy (EFT). He has played a major role in establishing EFT in the German-speaking countries. To date, he has written several articles and book chapters in German and English about Emotion-focused Therapy and emotional processing. In addition, he is co-author of a book in German (Emotional Focused Therapy: A Practice Manual) and two educational videos on EFT. Lars runs his own practice in Munich and offers individual therapy, couple therapy and supervision in EFT. He teaches EFT in several European countries.

Abstract

In uncertain times, we need guidance, and our emotions can act as an inner compass, providing us with direction. Emotion-focused Therapy (EFT) (Greenberg, 2010) is an empirically-supported humanistic treatment that views emotions as centrally important in human functioning and therapeutic change. It helps people to connect with their emotions in a healthy way and be guided by them. This lecture provides an introduction to the central principles and change strategies of EFT, illustrating how the therapeutic relationship and emotional processing work together to help clients access, accept and ultimately transform painful core experiences. This lecture is intended for colleagues who would like an initial introduction to EFT. The focus is primarily on video demonstrations. After the didactic part, there will be an opportunity for discussion.

Submission type

Individual Lecture (60 min)

Keywords

Emotion-focused Therapy, Emotion, Emotional processing, Emotional change, Core pain

From EGO to ECO – Let's talk about Climate Emotions

Thomas Schweinschwaller Prof. (FH) Mag., Bettina Fleischmann

IPS, Wien, Austria

Thomas Schweinschwaller

Author Bio

Psychologist, in Training as a Person-centered psychotherapist (IPS), facilitator, trainer for organizational change. Lecturer at Porsche FernFH, SFU Vienna and Suttner Privatuniversität. Member of psychologist for future.

Bettina Fleischmann

Author Bio

Person-centered psychotherapist in private practice in Vienna, group psychotherapist (PP), systemic supervisor, sexual therapist, member of the Encounter organization team of PCE Europe and board member of APG•IPS

Abstract

Climate change affects us not only intellectually but also emotionally. Many people experience a mixture of worry, grief, overwhelm, or even hope – yet there are often no spaces in which these feelings can be explored together. This workshop creates an inviting environment to consciously perceive climate emotions and engage in exchange with others.

Current discussions about climate change focus primarily on facts, risks, and technological solutions. At the same time, the topic of climate change cannot be separated from questioning our Western way of life and the need for systemic change. In debates about possible solutions, the inner experiential worlds that significantly influence individual actions often fade into the background. This workshop addresses exactly the questions:

What do I feel when I connect with climate change?

What does “from EGO to ECO” mean to me?

Conscious engagement with climate emotions helps individuals become more aware of their own climate-related feelings and how they deal with them. The insights gained offer impulses for a congruent approach to climate emotions, both in therapy and private life.

Through dialogue with the participants, we aim to open up new perspectives on how to engage with climate issues in a more resourceful way—both individually and as communities. The foundation is trust in the self-actualizing tendency. Participants are invited to mindfully explore their experiences and impressions.

Submission type

Creative Workshop (90 min)

Keywords

climate change, Climate emotions, Anxiety, Hopelessness, Hope

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The Effects of Interactive Focusing-Oriented Counseling (IFC) on Authenticity and Self-Compassion.

Prof KUMIYO SAKAI Ph.D.

Kansai University of International Studies, Department of Psychology, Hyogo prefecture, Japan



Prof KUMIYO SAKAI

Author Bio

Kumiyo Sakai received her PhD in Clinical Psychology from Rikkyo University in 2013. She has been a professor at the Department of Psychology, Kansai University of International Studies. She is a Certified Trainer and Focusing-Oriented Therapist with the International Institute of Focusing since 2012 and certified Teacher of Interactive Focusing in 2021.

Abstract

Motivation: In the contemporary world, where dialogue with AI is becoming commonplace, it is significant to investigate how human-to-human dialogue and empathy impact individuals.

Problem: Interactive Focusing-Oriented Counseling (IFC), based on deep listening and empathy, has been experimentally shown to reduce stress responses and increase focusing attitudes. This study aimed to further examine the effects of IFC, specifically on participants' **authenticity** and **self-compassion**.

Methodology: Nine participants in the experimental group received IFC once a week for eight sessions, while eleven participants served as the control group, receiving no intervention. A two-factor ANOVA was conducted on questionnaire data collected immediately before, immediately after the intervention, and one month post-intervention.

Results: A medium-sized interaction effect was observed on the sense of **authenticity**, showing an increase immediately after the intervention in the experimental group. Regarding self-compassion, the subscale of **self-criticism** significantly decreased immediately post-intervention, and **mindfulness** increased in the experimental group.

Implications: While this research advances the study of IFC's efficacy, the short-term nature of the findings is noteworthy, as these positive effects did not persist at the one-month follow-up. This clearly highlights the challenge of maintaining the effects over time.

Discussion: We hope to discuss the persistent challenge and the direction of future research on IFC with the audience.

Submission type

Individual Talk (20 min)

Keywords

Interactive Focusing, Stress response, Focusing attitude, Authenticity, Self-compassion

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Expanded Focusing Task: Highlighting safety in deepening emotion and optimising experiential work

Dr Bronte McLeod PhD (Clinical Psychology)^{1,2,3}, Vivienne Wisniewski MPsych (Educational and Developmental)³, Prof Lou Cooper DPsych (Counselling)^{3,1}

¹Cairnmillar Institute, Melbourne, Australia. ²Swinburne University, Melbourne, Australia. ³Australian Institute of Emotion Focused Therapy, Melbourne, Australia



Dr Bronte McLeod

Author Bio

Bronte McLeod (she/they) is a Psychologist, Clinical Psychology Registrar, and Senior Lecturer at the Cairnmillar Institute in Narm/Melbourne, Australia, where they serve as Course Coordinator for the Master of Counselling and Psychotherapy. Bronte is a committee member of the Australian Institute of Emotion Focused Therapy and leads the Expanded Focusing Research Group. In addition to their academic work, Bronte runs a small private practice offering emotion-focused counselling for adults across the lifespan. Inspired by nonviolence, liberation psychology, and critical social sciences, Bronte is driven by the question: How can we create therapeutic, educational, and community spaces that support us to be—and become—more fully alive, together?



Vivienne Wisniewski

Author Bio

Vivienne Wisniewski is an Educational and Developmental Psychologist and Supervisor based in Melbourne, Australia, with over 30 years of practice experience. Vivienne is an internationally certified Emotion Focused Therapist and Supervisor-in-training and was trained by Dr Melissa Harte. Vivienne works in private practice with children, adolescents, parents and individual adults, using Emotion Focused Therapy and the Expanded Focusing Task regularly. Vivienne is one of the founding members of the Australian Institute of Emotion Focused Therapy and served on the committee from 2016 - 2024.



Prof Lou Cooper

Author Bio

Dr Lou Cooper (she/they) is a Counselling and Clinical Psychologist, Emotion Focused Therapist, and Professor of Counselling and Psychotherapy at the Cairnmillar Institute in Naarm/Melbourne, Australia. Lou is a founding member of the Australian Institute of Emotion Focused Therapy, where they currently serve as lead trainer, and they host the Emotion Focused Podcast. In private practice, Lou works predominantly with LGBTQA+ clients.

Abstract

The Expanded Focusing Task is a little-known but promising intervention developed at the intersection of Gendlin's Focusing and the emotion theory underlying Emotion Focused Therapy (EFT). The Expanded Focusing Task enables access to and restructuring of episodic memories, making it especially relevant for trauma-focused work. Its emphasis on establishing embodied safety as a prerequisite for deeper experiential work offers a unique model that could inform other therapeutic approaches and tasks.

This panel introduces the Expanded Focusing Task through training and research perspectives, an experiential demonstration, and an interactive Q&A with members of the Expanded Focusing Research Group. First, Lou Cooper traces the Expanded Focusing Task's origins in Narrm/Melbourne, where it has long been a part of EFT training. They then reflect on experiences introducing it internationally through five EFT institutes around the world. Next, Bronte McLeod presents findings from empirical research exploring how EFT therapists use the Expanded Focusing Task in practice and perceive its value, both as a standalone intervention and in conjunction with other EFT tasks. Safety emerged as a key quality participants identified as essential to its effectiveness. Following this, Vivienne Wisniewski offers a live demonstration of the Grounding and Safe Place components that form the foundation stage of the Expanded Focusing Task's model sequence. Finally, the panel will engage in discussion and Q&A, with a particular focus on how the Expanded Focusing Task's safety features hold practical utility for supporting clients with existential threats (e.g., climate change-related trauma) and experiences of marginalisation and minoritisation.

Together, the presenters seek to (re)introduce the Expanded Focusing Task to the international PCE community, offering insights from training, research, and practice that highlight its capacity to foster healing, integration, and transformation in a rapidly changing world.

Submission type

Symposium (60 min)

Keywords

Expanded Focusing Task, trauma, emotional deepening, transformation, Emotion Focused Therapy

List Individual Talks of the Symposium (Title - First Author)

1. Trainer reflections on local and international reception to the Expanded Focusing Task — Lou Cooper
2. "The difference is the safety": Therapists' reflections on the Expanded Focusing Task's capacity to guide clients safety to the depths of their trauma — Bronte McLeod
3. Grounding and Safe Place: An experiential demonstration of the foundational stage of the Expanded Focusing Task — Vivienne Wisniewski
4. Structured Discussion and Q&A: Lou Cooper, Vivienne Wisniewski, Bronte McLeod

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Mental illness stigma in low and middle-income countries: First insights of a systematic review

Dr Antje Frey Nascimento PhD

Universität Basel, Basel, Switzerland



Dr Antje Frey Nascimento

Author Bio

Dr. Antje Frey Nascimento is a clinical psychologist with expertise in global and refugee mental health, women's mental health, contextual treatment factors, and placebo research. She is the head therapist at the Center of Psychotherapy at the University of Basel, Switzerland, and works in an outpatient clinic in Freiburg affiliated to the University of Freiburg, Germany. Further, she is a Postdoc at the Division of Clinical Psychology and Psychotherapy at the Faculty of Psychology of the University of Basel and is a trainer and supervisor for Problem Management Plus (WHO) in the SPIRIT Project of the University of Basel.

Abstract

Mental illness stigma is highly prevalent worldwide, whereas most of the systematic reviews and intervention trials have been conducted in high-income countries. Stigmatization due to mental illness impacts the well-being of affected individuals detrimentally, can lead to further mental health conditions, and affects the social system on a large scale. Across countries, different consequences of mental illness stigma are described, reaching from self-stigmatization and negative self-perception to the experience of severe atrocities, such as social ostracism and physical and sexualized violence. Furthermore, mental illness stigma affects treatment adherence and mental health service utilization considerably. We set out to study mental illness stigma in low- and middle-income countries within the scope of a systematic review project (PROSPERO registration: CRD42019137276), encompassing studies from inception to 2023, including both qualitative and quantitative research, and studies in all available languages. Due to the large body of studies that we found, we analyzed the first results by means of a scoping review approach to synthesize characteristics of the studies, encompassing study designs, assessed outcomes, populations, and countries, among others. Preliminary results will be presented from the ongoing review project. To date, 970 studies have been identified, encompassing research from 229 countries. Many studies have been conducted in Brazil, China, and Nigeria, inter alia. Qualitative and quantitative studies have been identified. Outcomes, measurements, targeted populations, and countries of origin will be delineated. We see that different studies on mental illness stigma have been conducted in LMIC, with some countries providing more evidence than others, hinting at gaps in mental illness stigma research and potentially a lack of awareness in different countries. What is more, the severe degree and the wide range of reported self- and public stigmatization towards mental illness call out for the need for public and educational interventions, and support offers for affected individuals.

Submission type

Individual Talk (20 min)

Keywords

Mental Illness, Stigmatization, Transcultural Psychiatry, Global Mental Health, Systematic Review

The Expanded Focusing Task: An experiential workshop with live demonstration and interactive discussion and Q&A

Vivienne Wisniewski MPsy (Educational and Developmental)¹, Dr Bronte McLeod^{2,3,1}

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Vivienne Wisniewski

Author Bio

Vivienne Wisniewski is an Educational and Developmental Psychologist and Supervisor based in Melbourne, Australia, with over 30 years of practice experience. Vivienne is an internationally certified Emotion Focused Therapist and Supervisor-in-training and was trained by Dr Melissa Harte. Vivienne works in private practice with children, adolescents, parents and individual adults, using Emotion Focused Therapy and the Expanded Focusing Task regularly. Vivienne is one of the founding members of the Australian Institute of Emotion Focused Therapy and served on the committee from 2016 - 2024.



Dr Bronte McLeod

Author Bio

Bronte McLeod (she/they) is a Psychologist, Clinical Psychology Registrar, and Senior Lecturer at the Cairnmillar Institute in Narrm/Melbourne, Australia, where they serve as Course Coordinator for the Master of Counselling and Psychotherapy. Bronte is a committee member of the Australian Institute of Emotion Focused Therapy and leads the Expanded Focusing Research Group. In addition to their academic work, Bronte runs a small private practice offering emotion-focused counselling for adults across the lifespan. Inspired by nonviolence, liberation psychology, and critical social sciences, Bronte is driven by the question: How can we create therapeutic, educational, and community spaces that support us to be—and become—more fully alive, together?

Abstract

The Expanded Focusing Task was developed to safely work with emotional pain and resolve emotional injury and trauma. From a conceptual standpoint, the Expanded Focusing Task was born at the intersection of contemporary trauma research, Gendlin's Focusing process, and the emotion theory that underlies Emotion Focused Therapy (EFT). The Expanded Focusing Task was validated with a small sample during the discovery phase of Task Analysis Methodology, the same research approach used to develop EFT. More recently, our Expanded Focusing Research Group has used qualitative methods to investigate how EFT therapists trained in the Expanded Focusing Task integrate it into their practice and perceive its therapeutic value.

The workshop will begin with Bronte McLeod providing a brief overview of these theoretical foundations and recent research insights, followed by Vivienne Wisniewski facilitating a 40-minute live demonstration of the

Expanded Focusing Task. Participants will then have the opportunity to share reflections and engage in an interactive discussion and Q&A to deepen understanding of the Expanded Focusing Task's model sequence, and explore its application in their own practice and with particular regard for supporting people in this rapidly changing world.

Participants will gain practical insights into how the Expanded Focusing Task's emphasis on safety deepens emotional experiencing and optimises the benefits of experiential work. This will be supported by research-informed insights demonstrating that EFT therapists who are also trained in the Expanded Focusing Task understand its value in terms of facilitating efficient, effective, and meaningful change.

Submission type

Experiential Workshop (75 min)

Keywords

Expanded Focusing Task, trauma, safety, episodic memory, transformation

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Nothing works better? Effects of open-label placebo in diverse populations, conditions and settings

Prof Jens Gaab PhD, Bojana Degen MSc, Nadja Heimgartner MSc

University of Basel, Basel, Switzerland



Prof Jens Gaab

Author Bio

I am Jens and I am interested in conditions, mechanisms and processes of change. I do this in my teaching, my research and my clinical work. I do see humans as basically very social and very emotional and thus, these are the areas that most interest me. The placebo also interests me because it has effects, which cannot readily be explained – unless we see humans from a very humanistic perspective.



Bojana Degen

Author Bio

Hi there, my name is Bojana. I am a researcher in the final stretches of my PhD and I also work clinically as a person-centered psychotherapist. I have substantial clinical experience in various medical and psychological settings, which is sided with a solid expertise in qualitative and quantitative research methods.



Nadja Heimgartner

Author Bio

I am Nadja and I do lots of things. Besides keeping the division afloat, giving seminars and running qualitative and quantitative studies, I do work as a psychotherapist. I am very interested in procrastination as well as the potential of placebo as a mechanism of change, which unexpectedly empowers and helps clients.

Abstract

The placebo is a psychological intervention, often disguised as a pharmacological or medical treatment. Even though quite different in appearance and perception, it shares many aspects thought to be genuine to psychotherapy, such as the importance of the therapeutic relationship, the person of the therapist, the felt meaning and client's expectancy. It has clinically significant effects, but its use is frowned upon as it requires deception which in turn violates the ethical principle to respect the client's autonomy and right to self-determination. But does it necessarily? The advent of so-called open-label placebo (OLP), which are administered openly and with full disclosure of its nature opened the door to harness all the clinical powers in an ethically acceptable way. Here, we will present and discuss the results of three randomized-controlled

trials, showing the effects, the acceptability and the impact of OLP in various populations, conditions and settings, including how OLP are perceived and seen by clients. The results will be discussed with regard to the tenets of the person-centered and experiential perspective.

Submission type

Symposium (60 min)

Keywords

open-label placebo, randomised-controlled trial, conditions of change, procrastination, unspecific pain

List Individual Talks of the Symposium (Title - First Author)

Feasibility and acceptability of Open-Label Placebo in Psychotherapy - Jens Gaab

Open-Label Placebo for non-specific pain in the Emergency department - Bojana Degen

Open-label placebo, imaginary pill versus cognitive behavioural therapy: A randomized trial on procrastination - Nadja Heimgartner

The Encounter Group in the Classroom: Embodied Resistance and Subjugated Knowledge in Conflict-Marked Communities

Dr Yotam Hod PhD¹, Sahar Tueg MA²

¹University of Haifa, Haifa, Israel. ²University of Haifa, Haifa, Israel



Dr Yotam Hod

Author Bio

Dr. Yotam Hod, an Associate Professor at the University of Haifa's Faculty of Education, where he holds the position of Chair of the School of Learning Sciences and Educational Leadership, is also the current President of the International Society of the Learning Sciences (ISLS). His research centers on person-centered pedagogy, utilizing this foundational lens to investigate and design equitable and engaging learning environments at the confluence of technology, learning, and design, with focused interests in its application across maker education, collaborative technologies, and AI-enhanced learning.



Sahar Tueg

Author Bio

Sahar Tueg is a doctoral student at the University of Haifa, Israel, under the supervision of Dr. Yotam Hod.

Abstract

Classrooms often reflect societal power asymmetries, marginalizing diverse student voices despite equitable intentions. This study examines the encounter group, not merely as a therapeutic tool, but as a political intervention capable of disrupting power structures. We focus on a person centered classroom learning community course in Israel, a country with complex sociopolitical dynamics between Arabs and Jews, where the encounter group session brought latent tensions between Arab and Jewish students to the surface. Engaging in a micro-analysis of this pivotal session, we observed how the initial reliance on verbal discourse —academia's traditional currency—served to reinforce the structural dominance of the Hebrew-speaking majority. The Arab students' resulting silence was not passivity, but a hidden transcript of resistance against rules of formation that privileged the dominant group. However, the encounter group's radical insistence on here-and-now authenticity and whole-person presence created a rupture in this hierarchy. Breaking the verbal impasse, the Arab students spontaneously transitioned into collective singing with themes of identity. This act was resistance by art: a profound assertion of subjugated knowledge mediated through More-Than-Representational (MTR) means. The singing transformed the classroom's mobile architecture, shifting the atmosphere from awkward tension to kinesthetic togetherness and allowing marginalized students to reclaim agency within a space that had

previously excluded them. We argue that the encounter group approach is uniquely capable of dismantling rigid sociopolitical hierarchies that standard dialogue often preserves. By holding space for embodied, affective, and non-representational expressions, person centered educators can facilitate deep forms of resistance. In conflictual environments, true inclusion requires creating humanistic spaces where the authentic expression of marginalized identities can challenge the silence imposed by hegemonic structures. Ultimately, this work illustrates the Person-Centered Approach's potential as a profound sociopolitical lens and practice for advancing equity and justice in educational settings globally.

Submission type

Individual Talk (20 min)

Keywords

equity, encounter group, pedagogy, classroom, sociopolitical

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Fostering Person-Centered Classroom Learning Communities in Times of Crisis: A Resilience-Focused Middle School Intervention

Dr Yotam Hod PhD¹, Dr Shiri Kashi PhD², Dr Liat Rahmian PhD², Adiel Benjamin Tammam MA¹, Sahar Tueg MA¹

¹University of Haifa, Haifa, Israel. ²University of Haifa, Haifa, Israel



Dr Yotam Hod

Author Bio

Dr. Yotam Hod, an Associate Professor at the University of Haifa's Faculty of Education, where he holds the position of Chair of the School of Learning Sciences and Educational Leadership, is also the current President of the International Society of the Learning Sciences (ISLS). His research centers on person-centered pedagogy, utilizing this foundational lens to investigate and design equitable and engaging learning environments at the confluence of technology, learning, and design, with focused interests in its application across maker education, collaborative technologies, and AI-enhanced learning.



Dr Shiri Kashi

Author Bio

Dr. Shiri Kashi is currently a post-doctoral fellow at the University of Haifa.



Dr Liat Rahmian

Author Bio

Dr. Liat Rahmian is a post-doctoral fellow within the Ministry of Education, Israel.



Adiel Benjamin Tammam

Author Bio

Adiel Tammam is currently a PhD students at the University of Haifa, under the supervision of Dr. Yotam Hod.



Sahar Tueg

Author Bio

Sahar Tueg is a PHD student at the University of Haifa, Israel.

Abstract

This study examines the implementation of person-centered classroom learning community approach, a pedagogical model designed to synthesize the sociocultural rigor of authentic education with the core values of the Person-Centered Approach (PCA). This approach integrates collective idea improvement and digital literacy with Rogers' principles of empathy, authenticity, and unconditional positive regard. We utilized a quasi-experimental historical design over two years involving middle school classes in one school across a range of disciplines. The first year served as a control (traditional instruction), while the second year introduced the HKBC model. Pre-study measurements confirmed that the two baseline groups were statistically equivalent. However, the intervention coincided with the outbreak of the Israel-Gaza war, creating an unprecedented stress test for the pedagogical model. The conflict severely constrained the study: it interrupted teacher training, introduced significant trauma and stress into the classroom, and ultimately reduced the number of intervention sessions to approximately 50% of the original plan. Despite these harsh constraints, the results were deeply meaningful. We observed statistically significant effects on the social dimensions of learning among the students who learnt using the person-centered model. Furthermore, while not statistically significant, the intervention group demonstrated positive upward trends in both cognitively-oriented and emotionally-oriented competencies compared to the control group. These findings attest to the profound relevance and power of the person-centered approach. The fact that significant social benefits and positive holistic growth occurred despite limited training and reduced implementation time—and amidst existential anxiety—suggests that person-centered classroom learning communities are not merely an instructional alternative, but a resilient framework capable of supporting students through extreme uncertainty. This study validates that even imperfect implementations of humanistic pedagogy can serve as a vital anchor for student well-being and development.

Submission type

Individual Talk (20 min)

Keywords

person-centered, pedagogy, classroom, outcomes, middle-school

Cultivating Climate Agency: A Person-Centered Design for Aligning Student Identity and Inquiry

Dr Yotam Hod PhD, Dr Liat Rahmian PhD

University of Haifa, Haifa, Israel



Dr Yotam Hod

Author Bio

Dr. Yotam Hod, an Associate Professor at the University of Haifa's Faculty of Education, where he holds the position of Chair of the School of Learning Sciences and Educational Leadership, is also the current President of the International Society of the Learning Sciences (ISLS). His research centers on person-centered pedagogy, utilizing this foundational lens to investigate and design equitable and engaging learning environments at the confluence of technology, learning, and design, with focused interests in its application across maker education, collaborative technologies, and AI-enhanced learning.



Dr Liat Rahmian

Author Bio

Liat Rahmian is a post-doctoral fellow within the Ministry of Education, Israel.

Abstract

Effective Climate Change Education (CCE) must transcend the mere transmission of scientific facts; it requires a pedagogical shift that addresses the profound psychological and existential weight of the crisis. Conventional approaches often fail to bridge the gap between abstract global threats and the learner's personal reality, leading to disengagement or anxiety. This study investigates a person-centered pedagogical model designed to foster deep, authentic engagement by integrating the learner's identity with the curriculum. Adopting a Design-Based Research (DBR) methodology, we implemented a 13-week intervention with undergraduate pre-service teachers. The course structure was grounded in Carl Rogers' core facilitative conditions—empathy, congruence, and unconditional positive regard—creating a psychologically safe environment for identity exploration. We utilized the ENDURE framework to analyze the evolving relationship between students' identities (personal narratives and values) and their interests (curiosity and enthusiasm regarding the domain). This framework maps these dynamics into four distinct configurations, distinguishing productive states of "Natural" alignment (rooted in pre-existing identity) and "Stimulated" alignment (sparked by the curriculum) from less effective "Disengaged" or "Imposed" states. Our analysis revealed that the person-centered design successfully scaffolded a significant majority of participants (20 out of 29) into states of productive alignment. By validating diverse lived

experiences and creating space for emotional processing, the pedagogy allowed students to move beyond passive learning. Instead of merely retaining content, learners internalized the material, transforming the "external" problem of climate change into a matter of personal relevance and agency. We argue that these humanistic orientations are not merely supportive but essential for CCE. By prioritizing the internal locus of evaluation and connecting inquiry to the learner's authentic self, educators can empower students to navigate the complexities of the climate crisis with resilience and a sustained commitment to action.

Submission type

Individual Talk (20 min)

Keywords

climate change, person centered, pedagogy, identity, design based research

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On Becoming a Clown: An Autoethnographic Exploration of Clowning and Psychological Support in Social Injustice

Dr Shimpei Okamura Ph.D.

the Faculty of Psychology at Kobe Gakuin University, Kobe, Japan



Dr Shimpei Okamura

Author Bio

Shimpei Okamura, Ph.D., is a Lecturer in the Faculty of Psychology at Kobe Gakuin University, with extensive experience as a psychotherapist in school and psychosomatic medicine settings. As a certified trainer for the International Focusing Institute, he regularly conducts workshops across Japan. Since 2022, he has served as a Board Member of the Japanese Association for Humanistic Psychology. His research focuses on clowning in forensic and welfare settings. Having completed a two-year clown training program, he now performs as a certified clown entertainer in shows, street performances, and meet-and-greet settings. He is also currently exploring the intersection between clowning and focusing.

Abstract

This presentation addresses the conference theme of social inequality by examining how the practice of clowning, which has been conducted for over two decades, operates within welfare and correctional settings to enact a reversal of socially dominant values. The study is grounded in autoethnography conducted by the presenter, a clinical psychologist who has participated in a two-year clown training program as an ordinary citizen. By situating the experience within the broader context of Person-Centered and Experiential approaches, this work explores clowning as a unique form of psychological support.

The clowning approach addressed here differs from caring clowning, in which clowns provide joy or entertainment to people in need of support. Instead, this study focuses on the process through which participants themselves become clowns. The central question is: What psychological functions emerge when a person undergoes the process of becoming a clown—when one engages in *On Becoming a Clown*? Methodologically, the research draws on a previously published Japanese paper authored by the presenter, along with first-person field notes and reflective records from the clowning training experience. These materials were examined using autoethnography as an analytic method, informed by humanistic and phenomenological perspectives.

Findings indicate that becoming a clown involves exaggerating one's vulnerabilities and performing the embodied clown character. As laughter and positive relational responses emerge from the audience, a process of accepting one's vulnerabilities unfolds, one that differs from mere self-deprecation.

In the process of resolving a certain form of incongruence, a clown-like mode of congruence emerges: one's very weaknesses become the defining pole of one's individuality, giving rise to a clowning form of self-actualization. Through humor, embodied expression, and relational play, this may update or extend conventional perspectives in humanistic psychology.

Finally, the potential applications and limitations of clowning in clinical and correctional contexts will be discussed with participants.

Submission type

Individual Talk (20 min)

Keywords

Clowning, Autoethnography, Embodied Expression, Forensic and Clinical Contexts, Person-Centered Approach

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Motivational Interviewing (MI) for Sustainability: An experiential workshop for change

Lena Glaser Msc, Lina Zimmermann BSc, Prof Jens Gaab PhD

University of Basel, Basel, Switzerland



Lena Glaser

Author Bio

Hi, I am Lena and I am a researcher and psychotherapist devoted to change and sustainability. As much as I am troubled by our apparent inability for sustainable change for sustainability, I also see the potential of our humanistic perspective in supporting and driving this needed change. I am thus looking forward sharing and discussing this with you!



Lina Zimmermann

Author Bio

I am Lina and I am a Master student. I have been using Motivational Interviewing to help people to change from taking warm/hot to cold showers (short explainer: Taking cold showers does not only reduce sickness and sick leave days by 30%, but also substantially cuts down the personal CO2 emission...). I have been fascinated how this helps to change and I am very interested to share this in the workshop.



Prof Jens Gaab

Author Bio

My name is Jens and I am interested in anything related to change. In this respect, I often wonder why change is often so hard, even when faced with dire consequences. However, I often see substantial change in the context of an empathetic, congruent and unconditionally rewarding relational context – even when this change was deemed impossible... In short, I do see that we have very helpful tools at hand and in this workshop, I would like to discuss and experience this.

Abstract

Global climate change requires profound behavioral shifts in areas like mobility, consumption, and diet. While information campaigns often fail due to psychological barriers (Gifford's "Dragons of Inaction") and reactance, the person-centered and experiential approach of Motivational Interviewing (MI) offers a powerful alternative. MI, rooted in Carl Rogers' principles, focuses on exploring individual ambivalence and strengthening

intrinsic motivation within an empathic and non-judgemental relationship. This framework is highly relevant, especially given the conceptualization of unsustainable behavior as a “societal addiction” that requires deep, self-driven and sustainable change. This experiential workshop aims to move beyond theoretical concepts and allow participants to directly experience how MI can foster sustainable behavior change —both individually and collectively.

Submission type

Experiential Workshop (75 min)

Keywords

Sustainability, Motivational Interviewing, Cold showers, Societal addiction, Change

Congruence and Vulnerability in the Therapeutic Process: An Act of Courage for Authentic Connection

Sheila Haugh MA Psychotherapy & Counselling¹, Martin A Lange Counsellor²

¹Prague, Czech Republic. ²Buenos Aires, Argentina



Sheila Haugh

Author Bio

Sheila Haugh has practiced as a person/client-centred psychotherapist/counsellor for over 30 years. A former Chair of the British Association for the Person-Centred Approach (BAPCA), member of the board of PCE World and PCE Europe, she currently has a practice of psychotherapy, consultation/supervision, facilitation and training based in Czechia where she now lives. Until recently, she was Director of Studies for a professionally registered programme and a Masters in Person-Centred Psychotherapy in London, UK.



Martin A Lange

Author Bio

Martín Lange is a counselor and FOT who works in private practice with individuals and groups based on the Person-Centered Approach. He has been facilitating counselor training for 20 years. He is part of PCE7, a group of Person-Centered professionals dedicated to organizing Encounters and forums, training professionals, and workshops for the community in general.

Abstract

Congruence, or authenticity, is Carl R. Rogers' most important therapeutic attitude. However, it remains one of the most difficult concepts to understand and measure. In line with this conference's theme, we propose that congruence demands the therapist's willingness to be vulnerable.

We define congruence as the genuine alignment between the therapist's inner experiences and outward expressions. Unlike Rogers (1959), who linked vulnerability to incongruence, we adopt Brené Brown's (2018) view: vulnerability is the courage to 'show up and be seen when we have no control over the outcome'. This is particularly relevant in these times of climate emergency, the apparent shift, particularly in the West, to less inclusive politics and the unknown impact of AI.

This perspective challenges the more usual role of the 'knowing' therapist and requires a permanent commitment to self-development. By embracing vulnerability, therapists tolerate difficult feelings, challenge power dynamics, and facilitate a more relational and mutual encounter. This willingness to be vulnerable is essential for authentic professional practice and, extending beyond the consulting room, promotes meaningful connection and well-being in our changing world.

Learning Outcomes

Participants will have the opportunity to:

- to analyze and articulate the proposed theoretical shift in understanding congruence, specifically by integrating Brené Brown's definition of vulnerability as courageously 'showing up' rather than as an indicator of Rogers' incongruence.
- to develop an understanding of how vulnerability may facilitate a mutual and relational encounter, recognizing how this way of being challenges traditional power dynamics and the role of the 'knowing' therapist within the consulting room.
- to consider the necessity of a permanent commitment to self-development and explore how authentic practice, extended beyond the therapeutic setting, might promote meaningful connection and well-being in response to current sociopolitical and technological crises (e.g., climate emergency, political shifts, and the impact of AI).

Submission type

Individual Lecture (60 min)

Keywords

Congruence, Vulnerability, Power Dynamics, Self-development, Encounter

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Fragile process: a personal experience

Martin A Lange Counsellor

Buenos Aires, Argentina



Martin A Lange

Author Bio

Martín Lange is a counselor and FOT who works in private practice with individuals and groups based on the Person-Centered Approach. He has been facilitating counselor training for 20 years. He is part of PCE7, a group of Person-Centered professionals dedicated to organizing Encounters and forums, training professionals, and workshops for the community in general.

Abstract

In this presentation, I will share my experience of working with a client with a fragile style of processing.

Fragile Process is a term developed by Margaret Warner, Ph.D.

This presentation is based on my encounters with a client named Juana. She shared with me her diary, where she wrote before and after our sessions.

Base on her diary I will show how she started her process, her expectations, and her fears. How important it was to create a space and atmosphere that would facilitate a sufficiently safe and reliable relationship where she could, very slowly, begin to explore her experience. How and under what conditions we did it? What did I find as facilitating factors?

Sharing experiences with colleagues about working with people with a fragile processing style led us to different reflections, searches, and observations.

We have observed that people who are experiencing a life crisis or development crisis find it challenging to process experience. We have called this "Fragile Situational Processes" (FSP). FSPs are temporary, related to a specific circumstantial situation and with the same characteristics of a Fragile Process. For example: vital/circumstantial crisis and evolutionary or development crisis.

This presentation explores how the increasing instability inherent in "a changing world" can trigger Fragile Situational Processes (FSP), making it challenging for individuals in crisis to process their experience and underscoring the vital need for a safe and reliable therapeutic relationship.

Note: The client provided their informed consent to be the subject of a clinical case study.

Submission type

Individual Lecture (60 min)

Keywords

Fragile Process, Fragile Situational Process, Experience, Crisis, Empathy

Meditative Watercolors: Calming in chaos

Dr Christine Abassary PhD

Yorkville University, New Brunswick, Canada



Dr Christine Abassary

Author Bio

Christine Abassary, PhD is an experiential artist combining color, nature and spirituality through an intuitive process, “I have cherished a love for painting and the arts as far back as I can remember.” I studied Psychology and counselling to better understand myself and family, always engaging in the arts in some capacity yet, never fully embracing myself as an artist. I enjoy working initially with paints including watercolors, oils, inks, and lately encaustics which can have unintended outcomes. Eventually within this process I will look for a symbolic meaning or it will emerge. Through collage, mixed media and drawing I seek to communicate my intuitive process. Prior to a historic hurricane helene in western North Carolina, in 2024 I began a series symbolizing my healing process beginning with my original RISE piece, a dragonfly signifying overcoming adversity; akin to a rising phoenix. Shortly thereafter I became a professional River Arts District Artist (RADA) with a working studio amongst over 300 RADA artists. I essentially found my tribe and coined the term Neuroemergence from a strengths-based perspective when describing neurodiversity for those seeking to heal from a disruptive world (Abassary, 2023). I have sought to return the love of arts to others that believed that their personal circumstances prevented them from becoming attuned with their creative capacity through therapeutic art experiences. In addition I own a private counselling practice and am currently an adjunct professor in Counselling for Yorkville University, Canada. I enjoy hiking, trying new cuisine, traveling, dancing, floating down rivers, and making friends. Reference Abassary, C. (2023). Theory of Neuroemergent mindset: New paradigms of understanding. Medwin Publishers, 7(1), 1-3. <https://doi.org/10.23880/mhrij-16000206>. Copyright© Abassary C.

Abstract

Join me for an experiential workshop combining a calming meditation with watercolor painting. I will briefly share my personal journey of finding healing after chaos, hoping to resonate with the PCE World audience, clients and communities you serve, my cherished River Arts District Artists (RADA) community, and beyond. In today’s world—marked by climate crisis, natural disasters, war, and constant, accessible social media coverage of injustices—I believe that engaging in activities that reconnect us to our inherent humaneness and creative capacity can foster resilience in chaotic times.

A few years ago, I began experiencing a disconnect: an inability to focus on basic life tasks alongside a nascent possibility of artistic creation. After COVID-19, I recognized the need to release the long-term fight-or-flight response. This process led to fully embracing my creative capacity and forming a new identity as an artist. Following Hurricane Helene, I became a displaced artist, yet paradoxically, found greater internal peace within my community and my mental, physical, and spiritual self.

Recent neuroscience findings, such as neuroplasticity, demonstrate that adult brains continue to grow past young adulthood when introduced to novel experiences, including art (Shebib, 2022). Shebib (2022) suggests that participating in these experiences can stimulate the generation of new neurons through neurogenesis. Carl Rogers might interpret this process as the self-actualizing tendency—our innate capacity for change when the right conditions are present (Rogers, 1957).

No prior art experience is necessary.

References

Rogers, C. R. (1957). [The necessary and sufficient conditions of therapeutic personality change](#). *Journal of consulting psychology*, 21(2), 95.

Shebib, B. (2022). *Choices: Interviewing and counselling skills for Canadians* (8th ed.). Pearson Canada. ISBN 13: 978-0-13-484248-6

Submission type

Creative Workshop (90 min)

Keywords

Expressive Arts, Watercolor, Flow state, Somatic attunement, Calm

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A Mixed Methods Approach to Enhancing Student Well-Being: Exploring and Comparing Mindfulness and Focusing.

Prof Ellen Gunst¹, Prof Marie Vandekerckhove², Prof Filip Raes³, Dr Marisa Hoslet¹

¹UA, Antwerp, Belgium. ²VUB, Brussels, Belgium. ³KULeuven, Leuven, Belgium



Prof Ellen Gunst

Author Bio

Ellen is a member of the Collaborative Antwerp Psychiatric Research Institute. As coordinator of the postgraduate program in Integrative Psychotherapy, her research interests also lie in this field. Her expertise lies mainly in the field of trauma, attachment issues, and forensic psychiatry. She is particularly interested in mixed method designs, research with single-case studies, and research comparing different approaches (mainly person-centered/experience-centered/emotion-centered and cognitive-behavioral) to investigate which approach works best for which client. Personalized treatment interventions and transdiagnostic processes are central to this.



Prof Marie Vandekerckhove

Author Bio

Marie Vandekerckhove works at the Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB) and the University of Ghent (UGhent). Marie does research on emotion, bottom up experiential versus top down cognitive emotion regulation, existential meaning and wellbeing sleep, the brain. In summary her research involves: affective sciences, neuroplasticity and existential wellbeing.



Prof Filip Raes

Author Bio

Filip Raes (°1977) is Professor of Clinical Psychology at KU Leuven, Belgium where he is head of the Centre of the Psychology of Learning and Experimental Psychopathology. With depression being his main research expertise, he has more than 15 years of experience in both basic and applied research in experimental psychopathology. His basic work includes experimental, labbased studies and longitudinal studies examining cognitive vulnerability processes in the context of depression, both in healthy and patient samples. Major lines of research here are biased memory functioning and disturbed affective processing such as in rumination on negative affect, and dampening and avoidance of positive affect, or – more generally – repetitive negative thinking



Dr Marisa Hoslet

Author Bio

Marisa is a psychologist, focusing trainer, focusing-oriented psychotherapist, and and certified MBSR trainer. She founded the Center for Mindful Living and works at the VUB in the BRUCC Center (Brussels University Consultation Center). The subject of her doctoral thesis(UA) is: "A blended approach to improving student well-being: exploring mindfulness and focusing."

Abstract

In today's fast-paced academic environments, stress among student populations is a pervasive concern affecting well-being and academic performance. A recent systematic review and meta-analysis (Barnett et al., 2021) suggests that further research targeting specific underlying mechanisms of stress and exploring transdiagnostic approaches to intervention provision could significantly enhance our understanding and treatment of student well-being. This research employs a mixed methods approach to investigate interventions aimed at reducing stress symptoms and enhancing overall well-being in student cohorts. Specifically, the research compares two distinct training methodologies: mindfulness training and focusing training. Focusing training has never been studied in this context. The quantitative phase of the study involves the implementation of these interventions across different groups of students at different universities, with measurements taken before, during, and after the training periods to assess changes in stress symptoms and well-being indicators. Additionally, qualitative data will be gathered through interviews and open-ended survey questions to gain deeper insights into the subjective experiences and perceptions of participants undergoing each training program. Through a rigorous analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data, this research aims to uncover the relative effectiveness of mindfulness and focusing in reducing stress symptoms and promoting well-being among student populations. Differences between training conditions in terms of the effect on physical stress symptoms versus emotional stress symptoms will also be examined. In addition, the influence of individual differences in body awareness and cognitive emotion-regulation style at the beginning of both training programmes will be examined to see if and how these coping skills differentially affect the effectiveness of both treatment methods.

Findings from this study will provide valuable insights into the practical implications of these interventions for educational institutions seeking to support the mental health and academic success of their students.

Submission type

Poster

Keywords

student well-being, mindfulness, focusing, mixed method study, stress

Relational Safety, Emerging Agency, and Growth: An Integrated Mixed-Methods Synthesis of Change in Person-Centred Experiential Therapy

Vallidis Alex MSc.^{1,2}, Chara Rontouli - Bacher BSc^{3,4}, Adonis Labrinos MSc.^{1,5}

¹ICPS College for Humanistic Sciences, Athens, Greece. ²Aneken Research Clinic, Athens, Greece. ³ICPS College for Humanistic Sciences, Athens, Grenada. ⁴Aneken Research Center, Athens, Greece. ⁵Aneken research clinic, Athens, Greece



Vallidis Alex

Author Bio

Alex Vallidis is a psychologist and person-centred psychotherapist (BSc, MSc, ECP) based in Athens, Greece. He serves as Academic Lead at ICPS College for Humanistic Sciences, where he trains and supervises students in psychotherapy. His clinical and research interests focus on relational trauma, grief and refugee mental health. Since 2023, he has been a researcher with UNHCR, exploring person-centred approaches to trauma in displaced children. He also founded 'Aneken Research Clinic', a centre supporting student development and reflective practice. Alex is the author of Person-Centred and Experiential Counselling for relational trauma (PCE-rt) and holds leadership roles in PCE Europe, PCE World, and the European Association for Psychotherapy.



Chara Rontouli - Bacher

Author Bio

Chara Rontouli-Bacher holds a degree in Philosophy, Pedagogy and Psychology with a specialization in Psychology from the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens. Following eight years of professional experience in education and school coordination in Baltimore, USA, she pursued advanced training in Play Therapy, Special Education and Sensory Play, subsequently applying these approaches in private practice in Greece. She is currently affiliated with METAdrasi, serving as an Appointed Guardian for Unaccompanied Minors at the Reception and Identification Center in Malakasa, Attica. Currently she is advancing her academic training in Psychology and Psychotherapy through the Psychology program at EUC and the postgraduate program in Person-Centered Experiential Psychotherapy and Counselling at ICPS/UCLan. Within the context of her postgraduate studies, she is completing her practicum at the Anikein research center. Her scholarly interests focus on Child-Centered Education and she is presently conducting research on the relationship between Conditions of Worth and Psychological Defenses within the framework of Person-Centered Therapy.



Adonis Labrinos

Author Bio

Andonis Lambrinos has a background of studies in Engineering, economics, management and philosophy, and during the last six years he has been studying psychology and psychotherapy. More specifically Andonis is a graduate of an MSc in Psychology (Conversion) and is currently a senior student in a BSc in Clinical Psychology and also in an MSc in Person Centered and Experiential Psychotherapy. Andonis has been practicing Person Centered psychotherapy as a trainee therapist since 2024.

Abstract

This collection of mixed-methods, person-centred experiential (PCE) studies examines processes of therapeutic change across one proposal and two research-informed supervision case studies, with a shared focus on safety, agency, post-traumatic growth (PTG), and the complex, non-linear nature of client progress. Collectively, the studies highlight that meaningful psychological change often emerges prior to—or in the absence of—consistent early symptom improvement, underscoring the relational and experiential foundations of PCE practice.

The first study demonstrates that, despite minimal early reductions in anxiety, depression, or trauma symptoms, clients show significant increases in PTG during the opening phase of therapy, with PTG gains moderately associated with later decreases in depressive symptoms. Grounded-theory analysis identifies relational safety, agency, the surfacing of traumatic material, and evolving self-concept as central developmental processes, suggesting that early growth-oriented shifts may precede measurable symptom change

The two case studies offer fine-grained illustrations of these dynamics within long-term therapy. Both clients show fluctuating anxiety, mood, and trauma scores, with relational measures and PTG characterised by variability rather than linear progress. Thematic analyses reveal oscillations between safety and rupture, indirect or delayed insight, and gradual empowerment. External pressures—such as chronic stress, financial strain, or complicated interpersonal environments—emerge as critical contextual factors shaping psychological trajectories. Across cases, the therapeutic relationship is experienced as generally warm and containing, though at times insufficiently structured, prompting client ambivalence about direction and depth of exploration

Supervision plays an essential role in sustaining therapist presence, emotional attunement, and adherence to person-centred principles. Through reflective exploration of emotional reactions, missed cues, and shifting relational dynamics, supervision supports the therapist's capacity to co-create safety, enhance empathic accuracy, and maintain congruence across challenging phases of therapy

Submission type

Online Symposium (60 min)

Keywords

Applied Psychotherapy, PCE , Case Study, Mixed Method , Grounded theory

List Individual Talks of the Symposium (Title - First Author)

1. Post-Traumatic Growth as a Driver of Psychotherapeutic Change in PCE: A Data-Driven, Grounded Theory. - Vallidis Alex
2. Evolving Safety and Subtle Change: A Research Informed Supervision case Study in PCE. - Chara Rodouli Bacher
3. Navigating Safety, Agency, and Stress: A research Informed Supervision Case Study in PCE. - Adonis Labrinos

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Ways of being – and being away. Some existential questions for navigating presence in turbulent times.

Trees Depoorter

Ghent, Belgium



Trees Depoorter

Author Bio

Trees Depoorter studied clinical psychology and philosophy, and works as a client-centered, experiential and existential psychotherapist. She provides individual psychotherapy, group therapy and supervision in private practice in Ghent and Brussels (Belgium), is staff member of the specialization program Experiential–Existential Psychotherapy and Counseling (Focus on Emotion) and member of the Center for Experiential-Existential Psychotherapy (Leuven).

Abstract

The world is rapidly changing: globalization, digitalization and shifting ecological and sociopolitical realities accelerate beyond our understanding or control. Much happens over our heads, unsettling our sense of self and belonging: Who are we, what is our place in this world?

Presence is the ability to stay with what is, remain steady as things unfold, and sense emerging reality. It is embodied alertness that helps us make sense, an openness that allows 'letting go' (of control, identities, hope and despair) and 'letting come' (the future, what transcends us, both good and bad). In turbulent times, this seems an essential attitude and skill. It is also a core therapeutic stance – something we offer clients and continually invite them into, as a paradoxical ingredient of change. Yet presence is far from easy. Intra- & interpersonal and sociocultural forces unsettle or alienate us, leading to many ways of not being present.

Our life moves constantly between presence and absence, between showing up and withdrawing, appearing and disappearing. The challenge of presence touches the essence of being human: Are you *there*? *Where* are you? *Who* are you? *Can* you be? As we navigate ways of being – and being away – we shape how we connect, find ground and create meaning in this turbulent world.

In this talk I will discuss how these existential questions touch the core of presence and clarify that which keeps us from 'being there', and how this is relevant in therapy as well as in life.

Submission type

Individual Talk (20 min)

Keywords

presence, existential, ways of being, alienation, complex changing world

155

Eating Insights: Changers as an Experiential Open-Label Placebo Intervention to Support Self-Actualization

Frederic Linssen Psychologist

Institut für lösungsfokussierte Kommunikation, Bielefeld, Germany. mind-changers, Bielefeld, Germany



Frederic Linssen

Author Bio

Frederic Linssen is the developer of the Changers Intervention and co-founder of mind-changers. He is a psychologist, co-founder and director of the ILK training institute (Bielefeld, Germany), director of the IBS training institute (Aachen, Germany) and works since 25 years as a lecturer and psychologist in private practice. In 2019, his experience led to the idea of promoting change processes by encouraging clients to regularly reconnect with their individual goals and resources and to literally internalise and ingest them. Inspired by Dr. Ben Furman's "Suggestin", he developed the Changers as an "autosuggestive medicine" - the first image-based, individualised open-label placebo (OLP).

Abstract

In a rapidly changing world, many clients struggle to maintain a sense of inner stability, agency, and meaning. *Changers* are an innovative experiential intervention that integrate findings of open-label placebo research with person-centred and experiential values.

Changers consist of small edible wafers printed with individualized images representing a client's personal goal or inner resource. Taken openly and symbolically, they can support self-regulation processes by fostering positive expectation, activating imagination, deepening experiential awareness, and strengthening the client's sense of agency. Early RCT evidence suggests that the Changers Intervention can enhance stress reduction – a resource essential in a world marked by uncertainty and transition.

These edible, personalized, non-directive, client-led reminders help clients realign with their goals and resources. By this they can facilitate embodied meaning-making and self-organizing change.

Once developed for clients needs, manufactured and shipped to his/her home, clients can literally incorporate last sessions' outcomes as a daily self-driven micro-intervention.

Although originally developed outside the classical person-centred tradition, this "psychological vitamin" powerfully resonates with its core assumptions: clients possess an inherent tendency toward growth, and therapeutic change emerges from experiencing oneself differently in a safe, empathic relational space.

Check out this poster presentation and find out how the medicine metaphor can be used to individualize a client-centered reminder to her/his goals and resources.

Visitors to this poster will

- see case examples of personalized Changers
- get access to a videotaped Changers session in english language
- see results of the first Changers RCT-Study
- take home a practical guide to co-construct the Changers with their client

Submission type

Poster

Keywords

Experiential micro-intervention, Open-label placebo (OLP), Person-centered self-actualization, Embodied meaning-making, Symbolic change processes

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The Art of Being Present: Re-examining Rogers' Therapeutic Presence Through a Contemporary Lens

Dr Harald Erik Tichy PhD¹, Dr Christian Metz PhD², Patrick Akrivos Mag.²

¹Sigmund Freud Private University (SFU), Vienna, Austria. ²Forum, Vienna, Austria



Dr Harald Erik Tichy

Author Bio

Person-centered psychotherapist, Buddhist meditation teacher, Yoga teacher, psychotherapy scientist (area of expertise: dialogue between psychotherapy and early Buddhism), lecturer for person-centered psychotherapy and mindfulness meditation at the Sigmund Freud Private University (SFU), Vienna.



Dr Christian Metz

Author Bio

Person-centered psychotherapist and supervisor; training therapist of FORUM; member of the scientific advisory council of the journal *Spiritual Care* (de Gruyter Verlag); for many years facilitator of interprofessional trainings in *Spiritual Care*.



Patrick Akrivos

Author Bio

Patrick Akrivos is an Austrian-Greek psychologist and person-centered psychotherapist, licensed in both Austria and Greece, with a strong cross-cultural orientation. He is also trained in person-centered child and youth psychotherapy and has completed additional specializations, including Emotion-Focused Couples Therapy. Patrick has extensive experience educating parents, teachers, and professionals in Greece and internationally. He has published widely, presented at numerous conferences, and continues to expand his psychotherapy expertise with a deep commitment to cultural sensitivity. For more information visit: praxis-akrivos.at

Abstract

To embody the three core conditions one prerequisite is foundational: to be present! Carl R. Rogers repeatedly emphasized the centrality of the therapist's intention to be fully present. Rogers wrote, *"When I am somehow able to be fully present, then growth occurs and change takes place... Presence is a powerful force"* (Rogers, 1986, p. 198), yet his reflections on being fully present and presence are often overlooked in favor of more widely cited formulations of the core conditions.

Paradoxically, while practitioners treasure the rare moments of deep presence—when they feel simultaneously grounded in themselves and deeply connected with another person—present psychology still offers limited guidance on how to cultivate and sustain such states. Rogers, however, considered this question vital. Between 1979 and 1986, he published a series of reflections exploring the qualities and effects of therapeutic presence, underscoring its profound importance for effective therapeutic encounters. As he noted, *“It is the realness of the relationship which is the most fundamental element in therapy”* (Rogers, 1961, 33).

For nearly four decades, the field lacked a coherent theoretical explanation for how Rogers was able to access this state so consistently. With the discovery of correspondences in the deep structure between Rogers' therapy theory and the early Buddhist understanding of meditation, a theory for this has now emerged for the first time in 2017. What Rogers was able to do intuitively, we can also achieve if we understand this theory and elevate it to an art that we cultivate: the art of being present.

This experiential workshop invites participants to explore therapeutic presence as both a psychological construct and a trainable discipline. We situate Rogers' descriptions of presence within contemporary contemplative science and emerging models of attentional training.

Submission type

Experiential Workshop (75 min)

Keywords

Presence, Dialogue, Contemplation

158

Open-Label Placebos in Psychotherapy: Nothing is what you want it to be

Dr Antje Frey Nascimento PhD, Bojana Degen MSc, Clara Wehlage BSc

Universität Basel, Basel, Switzerland



Dr Antje Frey Nascimento

Author Bio

Clinical psychologist, therapist, and researcher in the field of placebo and context effects



Bojana Degen

Author Bio

Clinical psychologist, therapist and researcher in the field of placebo and context effects



Clara Wehlage

Author Bio

Psychology student and research assistant in the division of Clinical Psychology and Psychotherapy

Abstract

Open-label placebos (OLPs) - placebos administered with full disclosure - are an ethically acceptable and evidence-based way to harness placebo effects in clinical practice. Clinical trials and systematic reviews show clinically meaningful OLP effects across different conditions, from irritable bowel syndrome, chronic pain, up to premenstrual syndrome. Furthermore, OLPs offer valuable insights into contextual and relational mechanisms central to psychotherapy.

Importantly, OLP are compatible with a humanistic perspective on change as they are never empty and inert as long as the client and the therapist agree to give them a personal therapeutic meaning. Accordingly, OLP can be used in any way the client wants it to be, and for therapists, OLP can be a way of prescribing a pill without prescribing a pill.

This workshop introduces the scientific foundations of placebo effects and OLPs by examining their potential integration into psychotherapeutic practice. The focus lies on awareness of ethical principles and the contextual mechanisms of action in psychotherapy, as well as on understanding the intrapersonal experience of receiving OLPs in psychotherapy.

Structure

Following a brief theoretical input, participants will engage in guided role-plays simulating clinical dialogues on OLP embedding in psychotherapy, with emphasis on rapport building, rationale provision, and informed consent.

Outline

1. Introduction to placebo mechanisms and OLP research
2. Ethical foundations: autonomy, transparency, and informed consent
3. Clinical applications of OLPs (pills and imaginative/contextual elements)
4. Interactive practice: group discussions and role-plays
5. Patient experiences and acceptability in OLP interventions
6. Integration of OLP-informed strategies into psychotherapy

Learning Objectives

1. Understand empirical evidence and mechanisms of placebo effects and OLPs.
2. Explore ways to integrate OLP usage and related elements into psychotherapy.
3. Engagement with ethical key elements and autonomy-affirming communication in psychotherapy.
4. Develop skills for transparent treatment rationale provision and strengthening context factors in psychotherapy.

Submission type

Online Creative Workshop (90 min)

Keywords

Open-Label Placebo, Psychotherapy, Experiences, Humanistic Approach, Elucidation

Sound Space – A Creative Pause to Strengthen Inner Connectedness

Leonore Langner BA

APG•IPS, Gablitz, Austria. APCCA, Gravesend, United Kingdom. GwG, Cologne, Germany. PCE Europe, Vienna, Austria. PCE World, Vienna, Austria



Leonore Langner

Author Bio

I am a person-centred psychotherapist, group psychotherapist, and supervisor in private practice in Austria near Vienna, with further training in trauma therapy. Alongside this, I am a sound therapist and tutor at the Peter Hess Academy Vienna (Austrian Institute for Sound-Massage-Therapy), as well as an APCCA-registered accredited person-centred creative arts therapist and tutor at APCCA. Coming originally from an artistic profession, I cannot imagine my life without creativity. Within a therapeutic context, I integrate sound, bodywork, creative arts, and, depending on the client, my two therapy dogs. I also regularly offer workshops and lectures. For many years, I worked in geriatric and palliative care units, as well as with people in unresponsive wakefulness syndrome, primarily using non-verbal methods and Pre-Therapy. This work led to the publication of my book: *Personzentrierte Psychotherapie bei eingeschränkten Kontaktfunktionen. Momente der Begegnung durch Prä-Therapie und Klang* (AV Akademikerverlag, Saarbrücken, 2017). I have always had a strong interest in looking beyond my immediate context and engaging with wider professional and international perspectives, and I have therefore been active in the international person-centred experiential community for many years. I was co-organiser of the World Conference PCE 2018 in Vienna and, from 2019 to 2025, chair of PCE Europe.

Abstract

Many of us recognise this moment during a conference when our minds feel so full of information and stimulating ideas that we struggle to take in anything more. This creative workshop offers a pause for the intellect and an invitation to reconnect with your inner experience.

What within me has been stirred by the keynotes, lectures, and workshops so far?
What is asking to be processed but has not yet been given space?

Moving from concentrated listening into a state of inner connectedness is not always easy. To support this transition, I will offer a sound space using singing bowls. As a sound therapist, I deeply value the gentle vibrations of these instruments, which can help the brain to relax and shift into an alpha state. In this state, we gain greater access to our inner voice and our creative flow. Experiencing this inner creativity can bring us into contact with our own actualising tendency. While we often refer to the actualising tendency in theory, this workshop offers an opportunity to experience it directly, in the spirit of Rogers' words: "Experience is the highest authority" (Rogers, 1961, p. 23).

The workshop will include:

- a brief theoretical introduction to sound and its effects on the body and brain
- an experiential sound and visualisation process, rooted in the here and now of the conference experience
- time for creative expression using art materials and integration
- shared reflection and discussion

Submission type

Creative Workshop (90 min)

Keywords

self-awareness, time to reflect, sound, singing bowls, creative arts

161

Meeting the Dodo with 6 conditions - PCA as a metatheory for all counselling modalities.

Dr Sebastian Heid Dr.phil

Private Practice, London, United Kingdom



Dr Sebastian Heid

Author Bio

Seb Heid works as a person-centred therapist in private practice in London. He came into counselling after previous lives first in academia (PhD in Phonetics) and then in industry (software engineer). He has a strong interest in philosophy and its application to the development of the theory of counselling and the person-centred approach. Born and educated in Germany he lives in the UK for more than 25 years now. From 2017-2022 he was a trustee for the tPCA.

Abstract

Given the rapid and unpredictable changes the world is experiencing which might require unpredictable changes to the practice of therapy, it seems helpful to remind ourselves that the person-centred approach (PCA) is uniquely suited to provide a framework for all future forms of therapy and abstract alternative to common factors explanations of the dodo bird verdict. Following Bozarth and Patterson I want to explore the idea of PCA as a metatheory of counselling, focusing on the integrative implications in Roger's 1957 article on the 6 conditions.

I want to suggest a maximalist interpretation of the 6 conditions as providing an abstract framework for any kind of therapy in contrast to the widespread minimalist interpretation that treats the sufficiency of the conditions as reason to consider everything that goes beyond as superfluous, proposing the principle of non-directivity and avoidance of potentially harmful exercise of power over the client.

The potential danger of therapist expertise as power over the client has been put forward as a strong ethical motivation for pursuing a minimalist account (e.g. Proctor 2017, Moon&Rice 2018). I will argue that minimalism alone is no protection to therapist power but following the principles of congruence, empathy and UPR if properly understood provides a framework to support clients in an ethical way, honouring them as active self-healers, while still being able to provide a wide (integrative) range of responses to meet clients needs. Specifically, I want to argue that while resisting "power over" and focusing on "power with" is crucial, therapist congruence has to be seen as an equally important pillar for ethical practice. Taking congruence seriously means to meet the client in a true human relation without putting on the mantle of an expert that changes on request into a variety of counsellors offering different modalities.

Submission type

Individual Talk (20 min)

Keywords

Person-Centred Theory, Dodo Bird, 6 Conditions, Post-Tribal PCA

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Structure-Bound Experiencing in Humanistic Psychology: Validation of the SBES-G Using Rasch Analysis

Sevgi Baris Sahin B. Sc. Psychology

University of Münster, Münster, Germany



Sevgi Baris Sahin

Author Bio

I am currently pursuing my Master's degree in Psychology with a focus on Learning, Development, and Counseling. I have gained extensive experience in research, diagnostics, and counseling, particularly through my internship at the Special Outpatient Clinic for Adult Autism at the University Hospital Cologne and my bachelor thesis, which involved a Rasch-analytic validation study. In addition to my academic projects, I have worked as a freelance psychologist, structuring and managing psychological assessments and providing counseling, stabilization, and successful reintegration into the workforce for clients at Rebeq GmbH. These experiences have deepened my methodological expertise and strengthened my ability to apply scientific findings in practical settings. I am passionate about the integration of scientific research and societal benefit, aiming to contribute to evidence-based care concepts that sustainably improve health services.

Competencies: • Quantitative and qualitative research methods • Psychological diagnostics and data analysis • Counseling and health promotion • Development of evidence-based concepts

Abstract

The increasing prevalence of mental disorders calls for valid instruments to assess central experiential concepts in person-centered psychotherapy. Structure-bound experiencing according to Gendlin describes access to process-oriented experience and change, making it a core concept for research and practice. The German Structure Bound Experiencing Scale (SBES-G; Ahlemeyer et al., 2022) enables empirical investigation of this construct. The present study evaluates the psychometric properties of the SBES-G using Rasch analysis and construct validity based on data from N = 220 participants.

Rasch analysis revealed an acceptable model fit for 12 of 13 items (Outfit MNSQ 0.6–1.40), high internal consistency ($\alpha = .92$), acceptable person reliability ($> .7$), and high item reliability ($> .9$). The person-item map shows a broad distribution and a differentiated item difficulty hierarchy with seven levels. Construct validity is supported by moderate to high correlations with established external scales (e.g., SCL-K11: $r = .76$; L-1: $r = -.52$). Convergent validity is particularly evident with scales of mindfulness and emotional regulation.

The SBES-G is a robust instrument for assessing structure-bound experiencing in humanistic psychology and person-centered research. It enables a differentiated description of experience levels and their relationship with psychological symptoms. However, further content and psychometric fine-tuning of individual items, as well as validation in clinical samples, is necessary to enhance its applicability. In the presentation, opportunities and challenges of the SBES-G in person-centered research and practice will be discussed.

Submission type

Individual Talk (20 min)

Keywords

Structure Bound Experiencing Scale (SBES-G), humanistic psychology , person-centered psychotherapy , Rasch analysis, construct validity

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The Authenticity Scale may help you track how your clients are doing in a complex world

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Danny Gehlen

Author Bio

Danny Gehlen MSc is a practicing psychotherapist, psychometrician and Focusing trainer based in Cologne, Germany. He investigates how Focusing attitudes and mindfulness should be measured and effectively applied to facilitate mental health.

Abstract

Authenticity is a core value in person-centered and experiential therapy, and it may help decision-making in a complex and changing world. Yet, without suitable self-report questionnaires, German-speaking practitioners cannot reliably track and compare how their clients are doing in a changing world. Thus, the English Authenticity Scale (AS-E; Wood et al., 2008) was adapted and psychometrically tested in a German online convenience sample ($N = 463$). The 25-item Authenticity Scale (AS-G) was essentially unidimensional, Rasch valid and showed good reliability ($\alpha = .88$). Authentic Living, Self-Alienation (inv), Accepting External Influence (inv) emerged as facets ($r = .50 - .53$), not as separate dimensions of authenticity. Convergent evidence was provided with another authenticity measure, the Strathclyde Inventory ($r = .76$), and a short self-efficacy scale ($.56$; Beierlein et al, 2012). Concurrent criterion-related evidence was provided using short scales of the Symptom Checklist ($-.58$; Lutz et al., 2006), strain balance ($.51$; Wieland, 2006), and life satisfaction ($.43$; Beierlein et al., 2015). Therefore, overall psychometric performance was good. Although, the questionnaire was not yet evaluated in a clinical population, researchers may use it in efficacy studies. Practitioners may find it useful for individual (pre-post) diagnostics. Although, change-sensitivity was not tested, the AS-G may potentially help practitioners track an improvement or decline in their own or a client's authenticity over the course of challenging times. Due to its comparable performance, practitioners may prefer its more time-efficient 12-item version (AS-G-12).

Submission type

Individual Talk (20 min)

Keywords

Authenticity, Person-centered, Psychometrics

Body Listening, Distancing, Disentangling: Can German questionnaires inspire you to better think about and teach Focusing?

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Author Bio

Sophia Herbst is a psychologist (M.Sc.) based in Berlin. She is trained in the “Focusing with the whole body” approach, a psychodynamic psychotherapist in training and is also pursuing accreditation in Focusing-Oriented Psychotherapy.



Olaf Georg Scholtyssek

Author Bio

Olaf Scholtyssek MSc is a psychologist based in Cologne, Germany. He is trained in the “Focusing with the whole body” approach, a systemic psychotherapist in training. He also supports organizations and teams strengthening resilience and decision-making through Focusing and mindfulness practices.



Vera Rolfine Fryd Lyngmo

Author Bio

Vera R. Fryd Lyngmo (MSc Counselling) is an assistant professor and PhD student at the Department of Education and Lifelong Learning, at The Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU) in

Trondheim, Norway. Since 2018 she has also worked as a Focusing trainer and practitioner, teaching and developing courses for beginners and advanced Focusers.

Abstract

Person-centered and experiential practitioners may be uniquely equipped to teach their clients make sense of a changing world. The rapid global spread of social media has intensified the circulation of news regarding existential risks and crises (Fedeli & Matsa, 2018), which can lead to feelings of overload, distress, exhaustion and even experiential avoidance (Song, Jung & Kim, 2017; Park, 2019). Freshly listening to what one's bodily experiencing wants to say can update one's old patterns of thinking and feeling and may help to find new authentic responses in a changing world (Gendlin, 1999). Thus, Focusing (Gendlin, 1996) and its corresponding skills and attitudes may provide inspiration for how individual meaning-making can be facilitated (Vanhooren et al., 2021). This symposium gives an overview of German Focusing attitude research. It presents questionnaire validation studies (N = 747, N = 402, N = 320, N = 160) of the newly developed Focusing Skills Inventory (FSI) and discusses how practitioners may better think about, measure and teach the three Focusing attitudes Body Listening, Distancing and Disentangling. Each individual presentation will introduce one of these attitudes and will discuss implications for researchers and practitioners.

Submission type

Symposium (60 min)

Keywords

Focusing Attitudes, Clearing A Space, Body Listening, Distancing, Disentangling

List Individual Talks of the Symposium (Title - First Author)

1. Body Listening as the essential Focusing attitude - Danny Gehlen
 2. Distancing is different from experiential avoidance - Sophia Franziska Herbst
 3. Disentangling is a missing piece for translating Clearing A Space into everyday Focusing attitudes - Olaf Georg Scholtyssek
- Vera R. Fryd Lyngmo will be moderating alongside Danny Gehlen.

The Quiet Radicalism of Remembering: Tenderness as Method, Faith as Felt Sense

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Graham Westwell

Author Bio

Graham Westwell, MSc, full-time working in private practice as a Person-Centred Experiential Psychotherapist and Supervisor in the north west of England, UK and online; previously Senior Lecturer in Counselling and Psychotherapy and Programme Lead/Head of Programmes for Person-Centred Experiential counselling training programmes in UK Higher Education for twenty plus years; recipient of the '2015 Outstanding Research Award' from BACP; previous board member of WAPCEPC; previous reviews editor for PCEP; currently completing PhD.

Abstract

Drawing on findings from my recently completed heuristic PhD inquiry into the phenomenology of PCE practice – entitled '*Grace: A Remembering of Being*', this experiential workshop invites participants into a gentle and embodied inquiry into what it means to *remember our being*, rather than *change our personality*. What do we need to remember and pay attention to, as we share our unique 'way of being' as person-centred practitioners in an increasingly chaotic and conflicted world?

Fricker (2007) names two forms of epistemic injustice directly relevant here: being wronged as a giver of knowledge, and being wronged in one's capacity to understand one's own experience. Both shape which forms of relational experience become speakable, and which are silenced. This workshop explores unconditional positive regard as an expression of the 'listening love' described by Rogers and Tillich (Kirschenbaum & Henderson, 1990). To speak of love in this way is an act of resistance.

Central to this workshop is the concept of the agential field, my own original formulation, rooted in the organismic theory of Rogers (1951) and Gendlin (1981), and answering Tudor's (2025) invitation to return to the organism as the root metaphor of person-centred psychology. The agential field is the interface between inner organismic experiencing and the inter-subjective world that either validates or dismisses it.

Drawing on person-centred and contemplative methods, the workshop explores tender self-acceptance as a pathway to deeper trust in one's own unfolding process. Instead of striving toward self-improvement or attempting to change according to the times, participants are supported to meet themselves with warmth, dignity, and spaciousness.

Inspired by Leijssen (2008), the workshop is an invitation to recognise the sacredness of one's own inner life. Faith is engaged as an embodied sense of being on the path: a subtle inner trust that grows when through 'listening love'.

Submission type

Experiential Workshop (75 min)

Keywords

person-centred, radical self-acceptance, being-with, therapeutic presence, tenderness

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Person-centred creative arts therapy (PCCAT) in a changing world: origins, present challenges and future edges

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Charlotte Farish-Edwards

Author Bio

I am a UK-based person-centred and creative arts therapist. After an 18-year career in secondary English teaching, I retrained as a counsellor and now hold both a Diploma in Person-Centred Counselling and a Diploma in Person-Centred Creative Arts Therapy. I currently work in private practice and within a community women's centre, where I have also facilitated creative journalling and peer support groups. Alongside my wife Fleur, as part of Two Birds Therapy, I offer regular creative therapeutic workshops as well as a monthly peer supervision group for newly qualified counsellors. I have also been involved with the Association for Person-Centred Creative Arts (APCCA) as a board member, tutor and editor of 'The Art of Insight' – the only journal dedicated to Person-Centred Creative Arts approaches. In 2025, I was also a valued member of the organising committee for the 6th PCE Europe Symposium. My work is informed by a deep belief in the healing power of creativity, relationship, and reflection. I integrate expressive and creative approaches into my therapeutic practice, supporting clients to explore their inner worlds through image, metaphor and sand play. My work is underpinned by a strong commitment to relational depth, ethical practice and person-centred values.



Leonore Langner

Author Bio

I am a person-centred psychotherapist, group psychotherapist, and supervisor in private practice in Austria near Vienna, with further training in trauma therapy. Alongside this, I am a sound therapist and tutor at the Peter Hess Academy Vienna (Austrian Institute for Sound-Massage-Therapy), as well as an APCCA-registered accredited person-centred creative arts therapist and tutor at APCCA. Coming originally from an artistic profession, I cannot imagine my life without creativity. Within a therapeutic context, I integrate sound, bodywork, creative arts, and, depending on the client, my two therapy dogs. I also regularly offer workshops and lectures. For many years, I worked in geriatric and palliative care units, as well as with people in unresponsive wakefulness syndrome, primarily using non-verbal methods and Pre-Therapy. This work led to the publication of my book: *Personzentrierte Psychotherapie bei eingeschränkten Kontaktfunktionen. Momente der Begegnung durch Prä-Therapie und Klang* (AV Akademikerverlag, Saarbrücken, 2017). I have always had a strong interest in looking beyond my immediate context and engaging with wider professional and international perspectives, and I have therefore been active in the international person-centred experiential community for many years. I was co-organiser of the World Conference PCE 2018 in Vienna and, from 2019 to 2025, chair of PCE Europe.



Fleur Farish-Edwards

Author Bio

I am a person-centred and creative arts counsellor, supervisor and researcher with over a decade of experience working alongside diverse clients and supervisees across a range of settings. I run a small private practice and co-facilitate therapeutic creative arts workshops and supervision groups with my wife, Charlotte, through Two Birds Therapy. Alongside my clinical work, I am a full-time lecturer and have spent the past several years teaching on undergraduate counselling and psychotherapy programmes. My wider professional portfolio includes external examining, consultancy and supervising both undergraduate and postgraduate research projects. I am also nearing completion of my Professional Doctorate in Psychotherapy Studies, where my creative and voice-centred research explores the experiences of adopted adults. My passion lies in integrating creative arts within therapy, teaching and research, and in supporting personal development within counsellor training and practice. Fresh from hosting the PCE Europe Symposium in Glasgow, I am the current Chair of PCE Europe and also serve on the editorial board of the International Journal of Psychotherapy. Across all my work, I am deeply committed to fostering collaborative, inclusive, creative and experiential spaces within the person-centred and experiential community.

Abstract

This symposium explores the evolving identity of person-centred creative arts therapy (PCCAT) across three interconnected dimensions: its historical roots in trauma and dislocation, its current theoretical and professional positioning, and its future relationship with rapidly advancing technology. Drawing on the work of Liesl Silverstone, **the first paper** situates PCAT as an approach forged in conditions of rupture and survival, while also addressing the historical marginalisation of the model within person-centred and art therapy communities. The **second paper** examines the present moment, focusing on the emergence of PCCAT within pluralistic and person-centred communities, including its increasing visibility through recent publications. It explores how unconscious processes are integrated into contemporary person-centred theory. The **third paper** turns towards the future, considering the implications of artificial intelligence for creative process, therapeutic relationship, and ethical practice. Together, the papers invite reflection on how PCCAT continues to adapt within a changing world, not as a fixed approach, but as a responsive, relational and evolving practice. Dialogue with the audience will explore how therapists can remain anchored in relational dialogue while responding creatively to historical, cultural, and technological change.

Submission type

Symposium (60 min)

Keywords

Person-centred Creative Arts Therapy, Trauma and Displacement, Artificial Intelligence and Digital Creativity, The unconscious, Belonging

List Individual Talks of the Symposium (Title - First Author)

1. Origins in adversity: The emergence of person-centred art therapy from a broken world - Charlotte Farish-Edwards
2. Person-centred creative arts therapy in the present: pluralism, the unconscious, and belonging in a shifting world - Leonore Langner
3. The future edge: person-centred creative arts therapy, artificial intelligence, and the question of relationship - Fleur Farish-Edwards

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„The Bodying Person“- Focusing with the Whole Body (FWB) – Sensing the living process within and without

Astrid A. Schillings Dipl.Psych.

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Astrid A. Schillings

Author Bio

Astrid Schillings Dipl.Psychologist, Psycholog. Psychotherapist (TP, PC), Person-centred and Focusing-oriented Psychotherapist, Focusing Teacher & Certifying Coordinator TIFI, Feldenkrais Practitioner, Somatic Experiencing Therapist, Founder of the Focusing Institute Cologne, Member of the GwG, FOTA, The International Focusing Institute.

Abstract

In this workshop I want to share, some theory and practice I found helpful when being with patients, students as well as myself in a changing world of polarization, uncertainties and ecological disaster. I had to discover more about eco grieving and loss in general. At the same time the inquiry into how disconnecting from (our) nature may trigger dis-ease became a source of confidence.

Focusing with the Whole Body (FWB) and its therapeutic application invite sensing our organismic roots before language. We will address two kinds of incongruence: individual incongruence and cultural incongruence and their consequences in terms of alienating ourselves from the/our living process.

The following questions want to set the tone for our inquiry:

How is the living environment part of our experiencing of meaning?

How is our experiencing of meaning part of the living environment?

Is a sense of participation in nature possible instead of taking from it or using it?

Explorations with some FWB-process-elements like the „Bodying-Process-Language“, „Grounding into Being here“ will be offered. They will help to sense this self-organizing living process, this moving spark in us that we share with all living beings. Intimately inter-woven, one not possible without the other.

Reconnecting to this deep ground of the body-environment process allows a fresh aliveness. Felt Sensing from there may bring the stamina and inner space to hold intricacies, ambivalences and uncertainties - as well as beauties and blessings of the whole - in our bodying awareness.

The work is grounded in Gendlin's expanded understanding of the body and the person. For him body and environment, person and environment are one inter-effecting living process. I have come to call that the „Bodying Person.“

The practical experiential explorations offered may be carried forward into therapy, counselling and every day life ...

<https://www.focusing-institut.eu/images/downloads/publikationen/TheBodyingPerson.pdf>

Submission type

Experiential Workshop (75 min)

Keywords

Focusing, Whole Body, Ecology, Living Process, Experiential

Art as inner resource: A person-centred creative arts therapy workshop for a changing world

Charlotte Farish-Edwards MA^{1,2,3,4}, Fleur Farish-Edwards MSc^{4,2,3,1}

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Charlotte Farish-Edwards

Author Bio

I am a UK-based person-centred and creative arts therapist. After an 18-year career in secondary English teaching, I retrained as a counsellor and now hold both a Diploma in Person-Centred Counselling and a Diploma in Person-Centred Creative Arts Therapy. I currently work in private practice and within a community women's centre, where I have also facilitated creative journalling and peer support groups. Alongside my wife Fleur, as part of Two Birds Therapy, I offer regular creative therapeutic workshops as well as a monthly peer supervision group for newly qualified counsellors. I have also been involved with the Association for Person-Centred Creative Arts (APCCA) as a board member, tutor and editor of 'The Art of Insight' – the only journal dedicated to Person-Centred Creative Arts approaches. In 2025, I was also a valued member of the organising committee for the 6th PCE Europe Symposium. My work is informed by a deep belief in the healing power of creativity, relationship, and reflection. I integrate expressive and creative approaches into my therapeutic practice, supporting clients to explore their inner worlds through image, metaphor and sand play. My work is underpinned by a strong commitment to relational depth, ethical practice and person-centred values.



Fleur Farish-Edwards

Author Bio

I am a person-centred and creative arts counsellor, supervisor and researcher with over a decade of experience working alongside diverse clients and supervisees across a range of settings. I run a small private practice and co-facilitate therapeutic creative arts workshops and supervision groups with my wife, Charlotte, through Two Birds Therapy. Alongside my clinical work, I am a full-time lecturer and have spent the past several years teaching on undergraduate counselling and psychotherapy programmes. My wider professional portfolio includes external examining, consultancy and supervising both undergraduate and postgraduate research projects. I am also nearing completion of my Professional Doctorate in Psychotherapy Studies, where my creative and voice-centred research explores the experiences of adopted adults. My passion lies in integrating creative arts within therapy, teaching and research, and in supporting personal development within counsellor training and practice. Fresh from hosting the PCE Europe Symposium in Glasgow, I am the current Chair of PCE Europe and also serve on the editorial board of the International Journal of Psychotherapy. Across all my work, I am deeply committed to fostering collaborative, inclusive, creative and experiential spaces within the person-centred and experiential community.

Abstract

In a rapidly shifting world, practitioners and clients alike are continually learning how to meet uncertainty, complexity and inner change. This workshop explores how person-centred creative arts therapy can support grounding and depth while also creating a collaborative space where new ideas can emerge, perspectives can shift and creative exploration is welcomed. Our intention is to facilitate an environment in which participants can explore what they are encountering in this changing world and develop their own intuitive responses.

Participants will be guided through a gentle visualisation to cultivate inner resourcefulness, followed by paired reflections to support collaborative meaning-making and renewed perspective-taking. From this experiential ground, we outline key theoretical foundations: a person-centred model of consciousness, the edge of awareness and the understanding that images can hold material from multiple layers of experiencing.

We also acknowledge that imagery can be both resourcing and unsettling, anchoring inner experience while sometimes bringing unfamiliar material into view. Naming this openly supports curiosity, openness and the unfolding of new possibilities within a person-centred framework that honours autonomy and organismic wisdom.

Finally, a live demonstration of person-centred creative arts facilitation will illustrate how insight can unfold within a receptive, non-interpretive relationship. We close with space for joint reflection and idea development, inviting participants to leave with renewed trust in their inner resources and their own capacity to act as agents of change.

Submission type

Creative Workshop (90 min)

Keywords

Person-centred creative arts therapy, Unconscious process, Inner resourcing, Edge of awareness, Creative workshop

Listening in a changing world: Centring adult adoptees' voices through person-centred Narrative Inquiry

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Author Bio

I am a person-centred and creative arts counsellor, supervisor and researcher with over a decade of experience working alongside diverse clients and supervisees across a range of settings. I run a small private practice and co-facilitate therapeutic creative arts workshops and supervision groups with my wife, Charlotte, through Two Birds Therapy. Alongside my clinical work, I am a full-time lecturer and have spent the past several years teaching on undergraduate counselling and psychotherapy programmes. My wider professional portfolio includes external examining, consultancy and supervising both undergraduate and postgraduate research projects. I am also nearing completion of my Professional Doctorate in Psychotherapy Studies, where my creative and voice-centred research explores the experiences of adopted adults. My passion lies in integrating creative arts within therapy, teaching and research, and in supporting personal development within counsellor training and practice. Fresh from hosting the PCE Europe Symposium in Glasgow, I am the current Chair of PCE Europe and also serve on the editorial board of the International Journal of Psychotherapy. Across all my work, I am deeply committed to fostering collaborative, inclusive, creative and experiential spaces within the person-centred and experiential community.

Abstract

Adoption in the UK has changed significantly over the last half-century, yet adults adopted during the era of closed adoption remain marginal in research, policy, and therapeutic discourse. In a world increasingly attuned to power, identity, and injustice, it is vital to understand how adoptees make sense of lifelong experiences of belonging, loss, secrecy, and relational complexity (Keating, 2008). Despite growing visibility in advocacy spaces, adult adoptee perspectives remain under-represented in mainstream scholarship; PCE approaches offer a sensitive framework for hearing these voices.

My doctoral study uses narrative inquiry, unstructured object-elicitation interviews, and Gilligan's Listening Guide (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2006; Gilligan, 2015). Grounded in social constructionist and feminist paradigms (Burr, 2015; Clarke & Braun, 2019), my approach prioritises autonomy, depth, and relational presence. Analysis through I-poems and contrapuntal readings reveals themes of identity negotiation, voice suppression and emergence, silenced histories, and the labour of belonging.

This study contributes to person-centred scholarship by offering a justice-oriented understanding of adoptee lived experience. I invite dialogue on how PCE practitioners can better hear marginalised voices and integrate creative, voice-centred methods into research and practice.

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Submission type

Individual Talk (20 min)

Keywords

Adult adoptees, Voice-centred inquiry, Person-centred and experiential approaches, Narrative and creative methodologies, Social injustice and lived experience

Relational Shame, disconnection and social justice.

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Krista Susman

Author Bio

Krista Susman is a person-centred counsellor, supervisor, lecturer, and manager based in Austria. She currently serves as the head of zb zentrum für beratung, an organisation providing counselling services to individuals and groups in 15 cities across the region of lower Austria. With an extensive background in both practice and research within the person-centred approach, her work is grounded in the commitment to relational depth and the cultivation of community. Her particular interest lies in advancing ways of supporting meaningful lives that go beyond a utilitarian framework of correcting dysfunction, instead focusing on connection, presence, and shared humanity.



Dr Gillian M Proctor

Author Bio

Lecturer on the MA in Psychotherapy and Counselling at the University of Leeds, She has contributed to thinking and practice in person-centred psychotherapy through her teaching and writing, particularly on the issues of ethics politics and power in psychotherapy. Her textbooks on power (Proctor 2018, PCCS Books) and values and ethics (Proctor 2014, Sage) are used in counselling training globally. She has recently conducted research in the areas of online learning and teaching, the student experience of decolonising the curriculum and the emotional impact of working on areas of equity, diversity and inclusion in higher education. She is fascinated by navigating the complexities of understanding unique individuals whilst acknowledging the impact and power of the socio-political context.

Abstract

In his early work, Rogers saw emotions primarily as expressions of the subjective inner world. However, Rogers later shifted his focus toward an intersubjective perspective.

But what are emotions? Current emotion research particularly highlights their cultural dimension (e.g., Lisa Feldman Barrett, Batja Mesquita, Brené Brown). These newer perspectives contrast with a universalist approach that assumes basic emotions are innate, cross-cultural, and thus expressed similarly everywhere. This raises fundamental questions about our (therapeutic) self-understanding: How do our assumptions about emotions influence our capacity for empathy and compassion? How do our fundamental beliefs shape the space for encounter and understanding that we consider essential to the therapeutic process?

We will apply this perspective particularly to the western experience of shame and its relevance to social justice. Shame is integral to the experience of being othered and othering as these oppressive dynamics

depend on separation. To be able to do social justice work, we need to resist the temptation to disappear in shame and aim to stay with who we are and how we are socially positioned to really be open to encounter the other.

Can we learn from non-western experiences of shame to understand such an emotional experience as culturally situated and to move towards shame as an experience to benefit a more harmonious society? This seminar invites participants to explore their experiences of shame in relation to social justice to consider these issues. We will invite participants to embody shame in a movement exercise where each aim to meet without words in shame and explore how disappearance, shame, disconnection and connection feel in the body and in relation.

Submission type

Creative Workshop (90 min)

Keywords

emotion, shame, justice, connection, disconnection

Being together around the fire: cultivating presence within the inner light

Thomas A Broughton¹, Graham Westwell²

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Thomas A Broughton

Author Bio

After twenty-five years as a creative technologist in public-sector digital transformation, I am now building a second career as a Person-Centred counsellor. I work with music, drama, and dance students and also run a small private practice. A universalist Quaker, I spend time each year living off-grid in community, exploring how we relate to one another and to the wider social and ecological world. I enjoy walking, wild swimming, creating modular-synth soundscapes, wandering woodlands, and sitting around the fire. My research interest explores the mystical and transcendent dimensions of human experience within the Person-Centred approach.



Graham Westwell

Author Bio

Human 54 years young, non-binary, vegan 30 years, father, son, brother, husband, guitar player, daydreamer, poet, artist, reader, kirtan singer; soul in a body, educator, counsellor, supervisor, client, researcher, highly sensitive person, sometimes snarky, global learner, tangential, likes listening to blackbirds, lives in the north west of England, facilitated counselling training and led person-centred experiential counselling training programmes for twenty plus years in further and higher education, now working full-time in private practice, recipient of the '2015 outstanding research award' from BACP, previous board member of WAPCEPC, previous reviews editor for PCEP.

Abstract

An experimental co-creative workshop, seeking to cultivate conditions for presence (Rogers, 1980) within us, between us, and beyond us. The inner light, held in Quaker practice and echoed across mystical traditions, points to a unitive awareness grounded not in doctrine but in direct experience. Rogers (1961) likewise affirmed inner experience as ultimate authority, later (1980) recognising its transcendent and spiritual quality to "something greater." Heron's (2011) Being-centred triad of intrapersonal, interpersonal, and transpersonal domains complements this view and grounds the workshop.

Participants are invited to gather—much as distributed people have always gathered around a fire to *Be* together—to settle into shared silence and remember who they are beneath their PCE "tribes." In this quiet circle we centre attention on the inner light as a source of insight rising from within. If moved to do so, emergent insight may be offered into the communal space, attending to the *light between us*—a presence taking form, like embers beginning to glow. In the tenderness, the intrapersonal, interpersonal, and

transpersonal domains may be sensed as lived layers of Being illuminating us from within and through one another.

Through this symbolic sharing, we may discover a unity-in-diversity, and that “what is most personal is most general” (Rogers, 1961, p. 22). A collective orientation may begin to take shape—remembering who we are together when we allow the light within each person to mingle with the light of the whole. From this place, we may find ourselves attending to a wider inner light, one that reaches beyond the circle and gestures toward the destabilised eco-socio-political world in which we live. In doing so, we may sense how presence and the inner light can guide personal and collective discernment in an unsettled and changing world.

Submission type

Creative Workshop (90 min)

Keywords

Encounter, intrapersonal-interpersonal-transpersonal, Presence, Mystical, Formative tendency

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A CHANGING WORLD... from Personal Stories to Collective Power: PCE and Theatre of the Oppressed

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Dr Audace Manirahinyuza

Author Bio

Dr. Audace Manirahinyuza, a political scientist, has led numerous Theatre of the Oppressed initiatives in African war and conflict zones. His work centers on fostering political and pastoral reconciliation and supporting communities in processes of healing and transformation.



Katrin vom Hoff

Author Bio

Katrin vom Hoff is a person-centered child and adolescent psychotherapist with many years of international field experience. She conducts national and international trainings in culturally responsive trauma work and serves as a supervisor and trainer in development cooperation.

Abstract

A CHANGING WORLD... from Personal Stories to Collective Power: Perspectives from PCE and Theatre of the Oppressed

In this workshop, Person-Centered and Experiential Psychotherapy (PCE) meet the political, embodied practice of Augusto Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed. The workshop explores how personal experiences, when enacted in collaborative play, can become sources of courage, resistance, and social transformation.

Motivation: In an increasingly complex and challenging world, individuals often experience isolation and helplessness. This workshop addresses the need for deeper experiences of togetherness, highlighting how individual stories reflect broader collective injuries such as patriarchal violence, social inequality, climate crises, war, and forced migration. Understanding these dynamics within the context of structural violence and power relations can foster empathy, resilience, and collective agency.

Structure and Outline:

1. **Introduction (15 min):** Brief overview of PCE principles and Theatre of the Oppressed methodology.
2. **Experiential Exercises (50 min):** Short, hands-on activities that allow participants to explore individual narratives and their resonance within the group.
3. **Reflection and Discussion (25 min):** Participants reflect on shared experiences and explore pathways from individual stories to collective action.

Learning Objectives:

- Experience the integration of PCE and Theatre of the Oppressed in practice.
- Recognize the connection between personal experiences and broader social issues.
- Explore methods to foster collective action and personal agency.

Discussion with the Audience: Participants are invited to discuss how insights gained in the workshop can be applied in therapeutic, educational, and social contexts, and how collaborative processes can enhance resilience and social transformation.

The workshop emphasizes the process: **from individual story → shared resonance → collective action**, demonstrating that transformation emerges when people understand and act together in response to a changing world.

Submission type

Creative Workshop (90 min)

Keywords

Collective Empowerment , Embodied Transformation, Persona--to-Political-Narrative, Structural Violence Awareness, Participatory Resilience

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Person-Centered Education meets Motivational Interviewing and generative AI

Prof Renate Motschnig Dr.

University of Vienna, Vienna, Austria



Prof Renate Motschnig

Author Bio

Renate Motschnig holds a double assignment as a professor at the Faculty of Computer Science and the Centre for Teacher Education at the University of Vienna, Austria. Renate is author/co-author of more than 180 articles and three books on the Person-Centered Approach, the most recent being “Transforming Communication in Leadership and Teamwork”. Renate has a deep interest in the multiple ways in which thorough understanding and significant learning happen. She is determined to foster a style in higher education and management that is grounded in person-centered attitudes, our co-actualizing potential, and thoughtful support by technological innovations including generative AI.

Abstract

“Changingness, a reliance on process rather than upon static knowledge, is the only thing that makes any sense as a goal for education in the modern world.” -- Carl Rogers, *Freedom to Learn for the 80's*, 1983, p. 120.

Developments in various tribes of PCE and the ongoing technology push let us ask in how far these changes deserve consideration in person-centered education that places “changingness” and the facilitation of significant learning at its core?

Building on Rogers’ principles, this presentation develops bridges to Motivational Interviewing (MI) and to generative AI, integrating theoretical reflection with practical experience from contemporary higher and secondary education. The session will illustrate and critically discuss “bridge-building” endeavors that incorporate MI elements into person-centered classes, enabling participants to consider how MI can enrich (their) educational practice and be adapted to present needs of facilitators and students. Selected MI elements include the elicit–provide–elicit cycle, facilitation of self-regulation, the active role of the facilitator/coach, working with ambivalence, and supporting planning (Miller & Rollnick, *Motivational Interviewing: Helping People Change*, 2013).

Addressing technology, the role of AI chatbots such as ChatGPT in person-centered education is examined in the light of Rogers’ view that “the facilitation of significant learning rests upon certain attitudinal qualities that exist in the personal relationship between the facilitator and the learner.” –

Carl Rogers, *Freedom to Learn for the 80's*, 1983, p. 120. The presentation will propose and explore the potential of a “working alliance” among student and facilitator with ChatGPT in the loop, raising important questions about presence, trust, and ethical use.

Participants’ take-aways will include theoretically founded, practical examples for thoughtfully integrating MI-informed practices and generative AI -tools into person-centered education while staying truthful to Rogers’ humanistic foundations.

Submission type

Individual Talk (20 min)

Keywords

Person-centered education, Motivational Interviewing, generative AI, self-regulation, working alliance

The Therapy Session as a Changing World: A Pre-Therapeutic Understanding of Connectedness

Leonore Langner BA

APG•IPS, Gablitz, Austria. APCCA, Gravesend, United Kingdom. GwG, Cologne, Germany. PCE Europe, Vienna, Austria. PCE World, Vienna, Austria



Leonore Langner

Author Bio

I am a person-centred psychotherapist, group psychotherapist, and supervisor in private practice in Austria near Vienna, with further training in trauma therapy. Alongside this, I am a sound therapist and tutor at the Peter Hess Academy Vienna (Austrian Institute for Sound-Massage-Therapy), as well as an APCCA-registered accredited person-centred creative arts therapist and tutor at APCCA. Coming originally from an artistic profession, I cannot imagine my life without creativity. Within a therapeutic context, I integrate sound, bodywork, creative arts, and, depending on the client, my two therapy dogs. I also regularly offer workshops and lectures. For many years, I worked in geriatric and palliative care units, as well as with people in unresponsive wakefulness syndrome, primarily using non-verbal methods and Pre-Therapy. This work led to the publication of my book: *Personzentrierte Psychotherapie bei eingeschränkten Kontaktfunktionen. Momente der Begegnung durch Prä-Therapie und Klang* (AV Akademikerverlag, Saarbrücken, 2017). I have always had a strong interest in looking beyond my immediate context and engaging with wider professional and international perspectives, and I have therefore been active in the international person-centred experiential community for many years. I was co-organiser of the World Conference PCE 2018 in Vienna and, from 2019 to 2025, chair of PCE Europe.

Abstract

This presentation re-examines Rogers' first necessary and sufficient condition for therapeutic change, "two persons are in psychological contact" (Rogers 1957) and argues that the psychological contact is far less automatic and far more dynamic than commonly assumed. The aim of this presentation is to remind the audience of the importance of Pre-therapeutic theory – an approach that, in my opinion, still receives too little attention in the PCE context.

While therapists often presume that psychological contact is established once a client sits down and begins to speak, a closer look reveals that connectedness within a session fluctuates continuously, both on an intrapersonal and relational level.

Using the conference theme "a changing world" as a metaphor, a therapy session can be understood as a "small, self-contained world of its own", constantly shifting in subtle and sometimes barely noticeable ways: clients may be in touch with their feelings while not being in touch with the therapist, or may connect with the therapist while losing contact with their own inner experience.

Working with my supervisees, I have gained the impression that traditional training focuses on moments when relational contact between client and therapist breaks down yet pays comparatively little attention to intrapersonal connectedness of clients.

Drawing on years of work with clients experiencing contact impairments and on the principles of Pre-Therapy (Garry Prouty), this presentation highlights the value of a pre-therapeutic stance that orients itself toward the client's concrete, perceptible, immediate experience, what is present "right now."

This perspective offers a refined lens for recognizing the grey zone between contact and loss of contact, enabling therapists to accompany shifting states of connectedness by using contact reflections to facilitate the contact functions of the client.

Examples from case studies are intended to illustrate what has been said.

Submission type

Individual Talk (20 min)

Keywords

Pre-Therapy, facilitating contact, Grey zone

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The need for competence in a changing world: When experience meets the three basic psychological needs.

Matthias Guillod M.Sc.

Fribourg, Switzerland



Matthias Guillod

Author Bio

MSc. in Clinical and Health Psychology from the University of Fribourg, is a registered person-centred psychotherapist and trainer. He maintains a private practice in Bulle, working primarily with adults, and provides training and coaching for organizations and higher education institutions.

Abstract

In a changing world where neuroscience complements psychotherapy studies with a dominant root in the reinforcement paradigm, the need to find ways to deepen our understanding based on the organismic paradigm is a major challenge.

Self-determination theory (SDT) is based on an organismic and dialectical conceptualization as PCA.

The development towards a neurobiology of integrative processes has already emerged in SDT. Specifically, the three fundamental psychological needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness have been proposed as playing a transdiagnostic role in psychopathology, and associated with striatum-based reward processing and anterior insula-based subjective feeling. They have also been shown to share a strong correlation with therapeutic alliance in predicting early termination of psychotherapy.

I want to introduce the concept of the competence' need that refer to feel a sense of mastery and efficacy in one's interactions with oneself and one's environment.

Relying on Rogers' conceptualization, I will present the three needs related to the specificities of the different developments of the PCE approaches. In summary, I suggest that the therapist meets the person where they are in order to facilitate the conditions necessary to regain a sense of progress and mastery in their inner and outer experience.

I will conclude with a proposal to develop a theoretical and empirical situational model concerning "when" and "how" different types of intervention support and facilitate the person's therapeutic process according to their needs for competence.

Submission type

Individual Talk (20 min)

Keywords

Self-Determination Theory, Basic Psychological Needs, Competence, Neuroscience, Situational model

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The Free Energy Principle: Does it change how we can refine the organismic valuing process constructs ?

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Matthias Guillod

Author Bio

MSc. in Clinical and Health Psychology from the University of Fribourg (Switzerland), is a registered person-centred psychotherapist and trainer. He maintains a private practice in Bulle, working primarily with adults, and provides training and coaching for organizations and higher education institutions.

Abstract

The intrinsic need to deepen my understanding of the human experience, from its biological foundations to its psychological and spiritual expressions, has been with me since childhood. I savour the infinite game of discovering new knowledge that facilitates my encounter with myself, others and the world in a constantly renewed way. Professionally, this also means finding scientific references that support and nurture my ability to offer helpful conditions in the face of suffering. In today's rapidly changing world, the need to nurture research efforts focused on a person-centered and experiential approach is essential to bringing to life the process of its actualization and formative tendencies.

Rogers described the tension he felt between objective research and the fundamentally subjective nature of human experience. In recent decades, the rise of neuroscience offers new perspective on the subjective nature of our perceptions with new system theories and statistical models. One of them is from Karl Friston and his colleagues on the free energy principle. For me, reading about these developments has sparked a stimulating way of reinterpreting and deepening the conceptualisation proposed by Rogers, which I would like to share and discuss.

First, I will give a brief presentation and illustration of the main concepts of the free energy principle with the Markov blankets, the active inference, and the Bayesian approach.

Then, I will use these notions to offer a new perspective on the actualizing, self-actualizing and formative tendencies. I want also to address some reflections on the organismic valuing process constructs. I will conclude by presenting how this has influenced my clinical understanding, as well as giving the potential relevance it could have to the various developments in the person-centred and experiential approach. Then I will enjoy to open the discussion !

Submission type

Individual Talk (20 min)

Keywords

Neuroscience, Organismic Valuing Process, Active inference, Karl Friston, Bayesian

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Person-centered therapy of a patient with persistent major depressive disorder: a case report

Prof emeritus Hans-Jürgen Luderer MD

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Prof emeritus Hans-Jürgen Luderer

Author Bio

Born in Mannheim (Germany) in 1949, Medical studies in Heidelberg, specialist in psychiatry and psychotherapy. Professor of psychiatry since 1991, chief physician in a psychiatric hospital in Weinsberg (Germany) from 1996 to 2014. Person centered therapist since 1983, lecturer in person-centered psychotherapy since 1994 (Bavarian medical association) and since 2015 (GwG).

Abstract

According to the DSM-5/5 TR and ICD-10/11, major depressive disorder (MDD) is a mental disorder characterized by depressed mood and reduced drive, among other symptoms. Episodes of MDD last at least 14 days, with no maximum duration specified. The 12-month prevalence is 7-8%.

There are genetic and psychosocial risk factors. Twin studies have shown that 37-50% of identical twins and 15-20% of fraternal twins develop the disorder together. Although stress and trauma are risk factors, they are not prerequisites for developing unipolar depression.

MDD is a heterogeneous disorder that usually involves a combination of biological and psychosocial factors. The significance of these factors varies from person to person.

This **case report** delineates the diagnosis, person-centered psychotherapy, and pharmacotherapy of a 25-year-old female patient suffering from a severe persistent depression with low situational and biographical, but substantial genetic risk factors. Several family members had previously suffered from MDD, and two of them had committed suicide, one during the patient's treatment.

The depression required a **multifaceted treatment approach involving psychotropic medication**, in accordance with established guidelines, and shared decision-making processes. The **complex psychotherapy focused on coping with depression symptoms**, including the disorder's long and changing course, recurrent suicidal thoughts, and cases of unipolar depression and suicide in the family.

Detailed descriptions of psychotherapy for patients with very severe MDD are rare in person centered literature. In this case study it will be shown that the patient sees medication as an important part of treatment, but **acceptance is the central relationship issue**, and symptoms, duration, and suicidality are the most important substantive issues.

Submission type

Individual Talk (20 min)

Keywords

major depressive disorder, persistent depression, suicidal ideation , incongruence , person-centered psychotherapy

"At the Threshold of Meaning": Natural Pause at the Intersection of Human Reflection and Generative AI

Prof Soti Grafanaki PhD¹, William Hernandez²

¹Saint Paul University, Ottawa, Canada. ²FECD, Quito, Ecuador



Prof Soti Grafanaki

Author Bio

Soti Grafanaki is a Professor of Psychotherapy and the Director of the School of Counselling, Psychotherapy and Spirituality (Saint Paul University, Canada). She is a certifying Focusing coordinator (New York Focusing Institute) trained in person-centred therapy and focusing-oriented approach. Soti is the co-author of the book: 'The Natural Pause: A path to Peace' and the author of several peer-reviewed papers on the concept of congruence and its impact on the therapeutic interaction. Soti has co-facilitated numerous workshops across Latin America, North America and Europe on the subject of "learning to listen through the pause", as a way to promote felt-sense literacy in vulnerable communities and support the efforts for peacebuilding and social development.



William Hernandez

Author Bio

William Hernandez is the Executive Director of FECD, a social development NGO that works with the most vulnerable groups and communities in Ecuador. He is a certifying Focusing Coordinator of the Focusing Institute (New York). He worked very closely with Gene Gendlin and Mary Hendricks for the development of the Felt Sense Literacy initiative of the Focusing Institute. He has developed and implemented a focusing-oriented social development model to promote sustainable development and peacebuilding in vulnerable communities. As part of this effort, he has offered extensive training and numerous experiential workshops to leaders of community organizations and NGOs in Ecuador and other countries. He has co-authored with Soti Grafanaki the book: "The Natural Pause- A Path to Peace" and is actively engaged in the development of simple exercises and resources which support personal development and enable people to connect with their essential Being.

Abstract

With the recent expansion of generative AI models in various fields, this presentation explores their potential place within the Person-centred and Experiential approaches. The intention is not to persuade or promote the use of AI but to examine a new frontier, where technology and human consciousness may intersect in ways that support reflective depth and meaning-making.

Grounded in 15 years of engagement with the concept of the Natural Pause and its role in felt sensing, reflective listening and empathic presence, we became curious about whether generative AI could assist in articulating aspects of this phenomenon that often remain difficult to communicate. Our exploration focused primarily on theory building, training and research.

Through a six-month period of careful prompting and monitored engagement with AI, we observed that while AI could not ‘feel’ or enter the stillness of the Natural Pause (which requires sentient awareness), it could repeatedly hold a reflective space immediately preceding the Pause. We refer to this space as the threshold of meaning or the “Antechamber” of the Pause. Our exploration highlighted that although the Natural Pause was not reproducible by AI, its emergence could be indirectly supported through the sustained linguistic reflections of the AI.

To illuminate our findings, we will share:

- (1) a written sample emerging from the interaction between human reflection and AI;
- (2) a guided experiential exercise grounded in Focusing practices and developed through our purposeful prompting and monitoring of the AI output.
- (3) a qualitative analysis of eight exchanges between Gendlin and Hernandez on pausing and felt sensing, conducted first without, and then with AI involvement, along with additional points generated through AI’s linguistic resonance.

Our discussion will focus on how generative AI may support innovation in theory, training and research, while preserving the central role of experiential presence in Person-Centred and Focusing-oriented Approaches.

Submission type

Individual Talk (20 min)

Keywords

Generative AI, Natural Pause, Meaning-making, Felt-sense, Focusing-Gendlin

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Lecture: Working with the Inner Critic in Complex Trauma from an EFT perspective

Dr Kurt Renders Clinical Psychologist/ person-centered, existential and Emotion-focused therapist

Focus On Emotion, Antwerpen, Belgium



Dr Kurt Renders

Author Bio

Kurt Renders is a psychologist and a person-centered, existential, and emotion-focused therapist, supervisor, and trainer. He is the coordinator and lecturer of the Postgraduate Program in Client-Centered Psychotherapy at KU Leuven in Belgium. He has a psychotherapy practice in Antwerp, where he provides both individual and group therapy, primarily with clients who have experienced complex trauma.

Abstract

In this lecture, I will briefly review the phases of EFTT (Emotion-Focused Trauma Therapy) as proposed by Paivio and Pascual-Leone. I will pay particular attention to the middle phase of therapy, which focuses on working with difficulties related to the self. These difficulties often take the emotional form of primarily maladaptive shame, guilt or fear.

I will show and discuss a video clip of a therapy session of a two chair dialogue of a young man who is a survivor of sexual and other childhood abuse and how this resulted in a (toxic and) persistent inner critic.

There will be time for discussion, questions and dialogue with the audience.

Submission type

Experiential Workshop (75 min)

Keywords

Two-chair dialogue, Complex trauma, Emotion-focused therapy, Survivor of sexual abuse, experiential

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Direction in Person-Centered Counseling

Prof William R. Miller Ph.D.

University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, USA



Prof William R. Miller

Author Bio

Dr. William R. (Bill) Miller is Emeritus Distinguished Professor of Psychology and Psychiatry at the University of New Mexico where he served as Director of Clinical Training for the Ph.D. program in clinical psychology and co-founder of the Center on Alcohol, Substance use and Addictions (CASAA). Dr. Miller's publications include 70 books and over 450 articles and chapters including the original 1983 description of the clinical method of motivational interviewing. Fundamentally interested in the psychology of change, he has focused in particular on the development, testing, and dissemination of behavioral treatments for addictions. With 50 years of experience in addiction research and treatment, he served as principal investigator for numerous research grants and contracts, founded a private practice group, directed a large public treatment program, and served as a consultant to many organizations including the United States Senate, the World Health Organization, the National Academy of Sciences, and the National Institutes of Health.

In recognition of his research contributions, Dr. Miller is a recipient of two career achievement awards from the American Psychological Association, the international Jellinek Memorial Award, and an Innovators in Combating Substance Abuse award from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. He maintains an active interest in the interface of spirituality and psychology. His books have been translated into 28 languages and the Institute for Scientific Information has listed him as one of the world's most cited scientists.

Abstract

Carl Rogers championed psychology as an empirical science that regards beliefs as hypotheses and responds to emerging evidence. Research shows that what clients say during treatment does matter, and predicts outcome. In counseling and in ordinary discourse, for example, *commitment language* predicts subsequent action. In person-centered counseling, client in-session *experiencing* is linked to positive therapeutic change. The balance of client *change talk* and *sustain talk* presages counseling outcome, and *resistance* responses augur less favorable change.

Studies also demonstrate that therapists can intentionally or inadvertently *evoke* these particular client responses and thereby influence treatment outcome. In this lecture Prof. Miller will draw on 50 years of clinical research, distinguishing *directionality* from *directivity*. Carl Rogers initially described his approach as *nondirective*, then later preferred *person-centered*. It is normal in counseling and in ordinary conversation for one's responses to be contingent on what has been said before, and Truax (1966) demonstrated that Rogers himself responded differentially to the content of client speech. Indeed, responding to clients in a truly noncontingent fashion could be both difficult and bizarre.

In honoring the core value that clients themselves should determine the goals of treatment, how can we ethically use (or not use) strategies known to influence clients' in-session responses and thereby their outcomes? Few would argue that therapists should *refrain* from responding in ways that facilitate positive change. It matters *what* we choose to ask, reflect, affirm, and include in summaries. These choices can be particularly consequential in contexts where consultation has a clear intended direction (e.g., addiction treatment, probation supervision, and child protection social work) and where people are mandated to receive services.

Submission type

Individual Lecture (60 min)

Keywords

Direction, Resistance, Change talk, Goals, Clinical science

Exploring Stuckness in Emotion-Focused and Related PCE Therapies

Prof emeritus Robert Elliott PhD^{1,2}, Dr James Macdonald PhD³, Dr Jan Reidar Stiegler PhD⁴, Simran Chatha MPhil⁵

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Prof emeritus Robert Elliott

Author Bio

Robert Elliott, Ph.D. (they/them, European/American, nonbinary, neurotypical) is Emeritus Professor of Counselling at the University of Strathclyde, Glasgow, Scotland, and a Fellow in the Divisions of Psychotherapy and Humanistic Psychology of the American Psychological Association. A psychotherapy researcher and one of the developers of EFT, their research and practice centers on emotion-focused and other humanistic experiential psychotherapies.

Abstract

Motivation: The aim of this presentation is to lay out the topic of client stuckness in EFT and related PCE therapies, to inspire further work on it, within the context of a changing world.

Problem: Exploration and deepening of difficult/painful experiences is common across various forms of Person-Centered Therapy, including Emotion-Focused Therapy. However, many clients have trouble doing this, resulting in clients and therapists feeling stuck.

Method: I will begin by defining stuckness and asking participants reflect on their experiences of therapeutic stuckness. I will then play an audio recording of an example of stuckness from my practice as an EFT therapist. I will illustrate a qualitative micro-analytic approach to studying stuckness, including possible sources and ways of addressing it.

Results: The presented example contained many instances of EFT exploratory questions and focusing prompts that were rebuffed by the client. Findings to date: (1) There are gradations in client “I don’t know” responses. (2) Question-nonanswer sequences were common and followed by therapist repair efforts, to help the client progress. (3) More serious but less common were outright task refusals (here, to focus inside), which were followed by joint repair efforts, the most successful of which involved therapist empathy for the nonresponse and for the client’s low-level, “best of my ability” attempts to answer to the original question.

Implications: Stuckness interferes with the forward movement of PCE therapy sessions, and can be expected to reflect changes in the world around us. Thus, I hope that careful study of this common phenomenon and in particular strategies for repair will improve psychotherapy practice in PCE psychotherapies.

Discussion: Audience members will be encouraged to reflect on examples of stuckness in their own practice and to note similarities and differences to the example presented here.

Submission type

Individual Lecture (60 min)

Keywords

therapeutic impasses, person-centered-experiential psychotherapies, emotion-focused therapy, qualitative micro-analysis, supervision

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Working with existential crises following traumatic life events: Meaning Re-Creation Work for Meaning Protest in EFT

Dr Juliette Becking

EFTiN, Eindhoven, Netherlands



Dr Juliette Becking

Author Bio

About Juliette Becking Juliette is a clinical psychologist/psychotherapist and one of the founding members of Apanta, a specialized mental healthcare institution for children and adults in The Netherlands. In addition to the management duties she was also and always clinical psychologist/psycho-therapist, supervisor and trainer. She founded Apanta-Academy in 2001 to inspire and train professionals in person-centered experiential psychotherapy, Focusing and Emotion Focused Therapy. In 2019 she founded EFTiN, the Emotion Focused Therapy institute Netherlands, because she felt this was the next step for her to focus entirely on dissemination of Emotion Focused Therapy in the Netherlands and around the world. Previously trained in psychoanalysis, but from 1992 being an personcentered experiential psychotherapist and trainer, she started her EFT-training with Robert Elliott and Jeanne Watson around 2005. Totally caught by EFT she knew this was what she wanted to master, train, and spread. So, after intense training and supervision by the EFT originators she became an international EFT-trainer herself and loves to train EFT. Since 2017 Juliette was nominated and joined the ISEFT board.

Abstract

EFT has systematically developed a range of clinical tasks, indicated by in-sessions markers. The following are well-known examples of these markers and tasks: 'empty chair work' for 'unfinished business' and 'two-chair work' for 'negative treatment of self'.

The 'Re-Creation of Meaning' task for the 'Meaning Protest' marker is not as well known. This is one of three reprocessing narrative tasks, all of which addressing specific problematic, difficult or traumatic experiences. In this presentation, we will focus on the most existential of all tasks, when a client is confronted with a challenging traumatic life event that engenders profound emotional distress and existential protest. This protest is characterised by high emotional arousal, a lack of understanding and being stuck in disbelief. The client suffers a loss of meaning, with the shattering of central assumptions about self, others or the world previously held without question. These shattered cherished beliefs cause the existential protest (the marker), and are central to our meaning re-creation work which aims to re-create meaning out of the life event that violated cherished belief(s).

In this presentation you will learn about the six phases of this highly emotional and existential work in the re-creation of meaning task, with a particular focus on how to work with the broken cherished belief(s) and clients encounter with major existential issues, to finally reach resolution, integration, meaning-making and moving forward in life. *"Existential work starts by realising that the existential givens (Yalom, 1980) belong not only to the client but also to us (Vanhooren, 2022b)". "Therapy is of the essence of life, and is to be so understood" (Rogers, 1951).* Sufficient time will be allocated for discussion, questions and dialogue with the audience.

Submission type

Individual Lecture (60 min)

Keywords

Emotion Focused Therapy, Re-creation of Meaning task, Existential crises, Broken cherished beliefs, meaning protest

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BEYOND AI. STIMULATING SELF-REFLECTION IN CLIENTS AS A METHOD OF ESTABLISHING CONTACT WITH THEIR OWN EXPERIENCE.

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Piotr Dariusz Fijewski

Author Bio

Psychotherapist and supervisor of psychotherapy working in humanistic-experiential approach. Co-owner of Intra Center in Poland. He is author of a method of working with trauma called Symbolic Assertiveness and the method of Short-Term Experiential Psychotherapy/STEP/



Maria Fijewska

Author Bio

Experiential therapist and supervisor, cofounder of Intra Center. She is publisher and co-author of monograph Experiencing and Psychotherapy. She is responsible for the program of School of Psychotherapy in Intra Center.

Abstract

In this workshop, we want to teach a new way of working with clients, working shoulder to shoulder/instead of sitting opposite each other/on the so-called therapeutic screen. It is a way of activating a living experience here and now through self-reflection. Consistent use of this method of working with clients in the therapeutic process allows them to build a strong and supportive relationship with themselves, leading to the emergence of adaptive emotions and regulating agency. This method of therapeutic work is based on the humanistic-experiential STEP (Short Term Experiential Psychotherapy) method used in Poland at the INTRA Centre. The STEP method was presented at the PCE Conference-Athens 2024 .

In this model of work, there is no place for AI. Self-reflection and its experience by the client takes place at the meta-level of consciousness. The client works closely with the therapist/ shoulder to shoulder/ to build a supportive relationship with themselves and there is no need to use the external support that AI can provide.

The workshop will be an opportunity for participants to take part in several practical experiences, which can be both personally and educationally beneficial.

Submission type

Experiential Workshop (75 min)

Keywords

self-reflection, therapeutic screen, contact shoulder to shoulder, living experience, agency

Reimagining EFT for Marginalised Populations: Creating Inclusive Therapy Spaces

Prof emeritus Robert Elliot¹, Dr Tim van Wanrooij DCounsPsych², Dominique Mertens Psychologist^{3,4}

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Prof emeritus Robert Elliot

Author Bio

Robert Elliott, Ph.D. (they/them, European/American, nonbinary, neurotypical) is Emeritus Professor of Counselling at the University of Strathclyde, Glasgow, Scotland, and a Fellow in the Divisions of Psychotherapy and Humanistic Psychology of the American Psychological Association. A psychotherapy researcher and one of the developers of EFT, their research and practice centers on emotion-focused and other humanistic experiential psychotherapies.



Dr Tim van Wanrooij

Author Bio

Tim van Wanrooij, DCounsPsych (he/him, cis, white European, queer, neurodivergent) is a counselling psychologist based in Dublin who specialises in EFT for marginalised individuals and romantic partners. With a background in Social Work and Counselling Psychology, Tim's research, clinical practice and workshops navigate the intersections of emotions, relationships, sexuality, and LGBTQIA+ experiences, bridging clinical insights with broader societal impacts.



Dominique Mertens

Author Bio

Dominique Mertens (she/her, Afro-Caribbean, cis, neurodivergent) is a clinical psychologist and EFT therapist working at the intersection of mental health and social justice. She supports marginalized clients—including people of color, neurodivergent, and queer communities—and provides training and supervision for therapists with an emphasis on decolonizing psychotherapy, integrating EFT principles into collectivist approaches to care, healing, and activism.

Abstract

Motivation Talk/Lecture: Historically, marginalized populations (e.g., ethnic, gender, and sexual minorities) have been underrepresented in Emotion-Focused Therapy (EFT) literature. As therapists, we face a critical challenge: how to effectively address emotional injuries arising not just from personal history, but from ongoing social injustice.

Problem: Traditional EFT's individualistic focus can inadvertently decontextualize clients, risking the oversight of profound emotional injuries rooted in systemic harm. We argue that for EFT to be truly effective and ethical for these populations, it must be systematically reimagined through a Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (JEDI) lens to address the "socially constituted" nature of this pain.

Methodology: Drawing on our recently published theoretical analysis (*Person-Centered & Experiential Psychotherapies*, 2025), we critique EFT's historical limitations and integrate social justice frameworks into clinical theory. We utilize composite case studies to demonstrate the practical application of these adaptations.

Results: We present a framework for "**Situated Empathy**," a therapeutic stance that attends simultaneously to internal psychological processes and external social realities. We detail specific, adapted EFT Markers & Tasks for working with Marginalization-based Anger, Internalized Oppression (reframing the critic as a protective response to safety threats), and Microaggression Repair.

Implications: This work provides a practical roadmap for practitioners, moving beyond theoretical awareness to concrete clinical application. It fosters a more equitable, culturally responsive standard of care that validates the impact of systemic inequity without pathologizing the client's response.

Discussion: The presentation will invite ongoing discussion, thoughts and limitations on the practicalities of shifting from a purely internal focus to a practice applying situated empathy in therapy. We will explore how these specific JEDI-informed markers and tasks can be integrated into attendees' existing PCT practice to better serve diverse clients carrying the weight of systemic harm.

Submission type

Individual Lecture (60 min)

Keywords

Emotion Focussed Therapy, Social Justice, Situated Empathy, Marginalised Populations , Diversity

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Training person-centred psychotherapists in Switzerland within the Swiss health system: Embracing success between compromise and submission

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Olivier Siegenthaler

Author Bio

Trained in person-centred psychotherapy in the 1990s, I have a private practice within a PCA group of therapists. For more than 20 years, I have been involved as a trainer and supervisor at pcaInstitut, the training institute affiliated with pcaSuisse. In recent years, I have been responsible for coordinating psychotherapy training in French-speaking Switzerland and have been able to witness and participate directly in the growth of our training programme following the Swiss health insurance reimbursement of psychotherapy practised by psychologists.

Abstract

How can person-centred psychotherapy training make a significant contribution to mental health within the population in a rapidly changing world? During this lecture, I will briefly outline how the Federal Office of Public Health recognises our psychotherapy training programme and how we have obtained accreditation for a second time for a period of seven years. I will then present the five-year PCA postgraduate training programme, which leads to the federal title of psychotherapist recognised by the Swiss Confederation and the compulsory health insurance system.

In Switzerland, psychotherapy is reimbursed by basic medical insurance on medical prescription for a duration of 30 sessions. Since this recognition in 2022, the mental health landscape has changed considerably, with our training programme attracting more and more candidates. Needless to say, we are delighted with this development. However, it does present a number of challenges: training psychotherapists who are preparing to work in a psychiatric medical context, waiting lists to start training, training new trainers and supervisors, the growth of pcaInstitut, an efficient quality system, etc.

Beyond these management issues, there are deeper and more complex and ethical questions: what compromises are necessary/possible with the public health system while remaining anchored in the epistemology of the person-centred approach? At what point do these compromises become an act of submission and force us to make concessions on fundamental elements of our approach? Should we ever resolve to do so, what would be the consequences for our approach and the clients of giving up this integration within the healthcare system?

At the end of the presentation, I look forward to discussing these issues with you and gathering ideas for the further development of training programmes at our Swiss institute.

Submission type

Individual Talk (20 min)

Keywords

Training, Switzerland, Health care system, Change, Ethical questions

War: Intercultural Dialogue Through Images Workshop using Artificial Intelligence

Valeriia Pryhozhyna

Ukrainian umbrella association of psychotherapy, Dnipro, Ukraine



Valeriia Pryhozhyna

Author Bio

Valeria Pryhozhyna - psychologist, psychotherapist, supervisor. In 2001 graduated from Oles Honchar Dnipro National University with a degree in Psychology. In 2003 completed specialist training in Person-Centred Therapy with the Ukrainian Umbrella Association of Psychotherapists. Since 2014, have volunteered with the Maidan psychology Crisis Service. Now I am a Co-Head of the NGO "Crisis Psychological Assistance of Dnipro and Dnipropetrovsk region" and a Head of the Person-Centred Therapy Section of the Ukrainian Umbrella Association of Psychotherapists. I also maintain a private practice.

Abstract

In today's world, unfortunately, war is once again becoming a phenomenon that people encounter more and more often. At the same time, talking about war can be difficult: the topic may evoke avoidance, overwhelm, fear, helplessness, or a sense that "it is too much to look at." This workshop offers a safe, facilitated space for an intercultural exploration of what inner images, associations, and experiences arise for people from different countries when they say the word "war."

The work begins with a brief introduction outlining the aims and guidelines for psychological safety in the "here and now." Participants then close their eyes for a few minutes and turn to their inner image of war — what appears: a picture, a scene, a symbol, a color, movement, or a bodily sensation. Those who wish to do so describe their image in words. Based on these descriptions, an AI tool visualizes the image, translating an inner experience into an external, shareable object. The resulting image becomes a shared point of attention: the group can respond to it carefully, share emotions and meanings that arise, and the author of the image can specify (уточнить) details and, if needed, adjust the prompt to achieve a more accurate visualization.

The workshop supports intercultural dialogue by allowing participants to describe their images in their native language, preserving nuances of experience and cultural context.

In the final part, the group synthesizes the experience: participants identify common motifs and elements recurring across different images and collaboratively create, with the help of AI, an integrated "group" image of war — as a result of collective imagination and meaning-making. The session concludes with a brief reflection on what this way of "seeing together" offers for mutual understanding among people from different cultures and for international professional dialogue about war and peace.

Submission type

Experiential Workshop (75 min)

Keywords

war, imagery, intercultural dialogue, collective meaning-making, artificial intelligence

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