

Back to the Future/Present Keynote Address - Volker Krohn

Volker provided an entertaining and informative opening address. With the use of a case study he reinforced the importance of assisting the client in understanding the past so as to bring consciousness to the present. Touching on concepts such as repetitive compulsion and negative love syndrome to emphasize the impact of the past he concluded with a thought provoking quote on vindictiveness:

To keep a man down you have to stay with him – Washington

From Pam

What are my Blind Spots as a Counsellor? - Volker Krohn/Kerri Chinner

After the keynote address, I was anticipating the first session involving Volker Krohn and Kerri Chinner. Volker and Kerri started by giving us some insight into their backgrounds and how the Hoffman Process underpins their practice. Both speakers reflected on some of their own trigger points and how they worked through them.

The session split into groups of 3 to work through their own trigger points and reflect where they may have initiated. This process allowed us to explore with others where these trigger points arose from in our past. An activity was used by the attendees where a visualisation process was utilised to look at one tool in the Hoffman process that identifies some kind of symbol from our everyday life. This object is then related to a story in our childhood with the associated feelings and thoughts. The object was also found in our adult life and the story involving the feelings and thoughts was also explored. This process we were told, side steps the conscious mind, and allows for self exploration of trigger points existing within us, that could potentially become a problem during the counselling process.

From Angela

Helping Clients to understand the impact of their past. - Rob Salmon

"With a knowledge of our past we can chart a course for the future".

"Yes I childhoods may have been pooey,
we can either let it make us smelly, or use it as manure and grow with it".

Rob's work focused on the Family of Origin and the impact patterns have on our adult lives. I so enjoyed this workshop, with Rob bringing focus to the impact of patterns that we bring with us into our adults lives from our childhood experiences.

I was so affected by hearing Rob talk about patterns. This is the essence of the work that I have spent years doing on myself and confirmed the absolute importance of the work that I do with my clients.

From Nicci

Coming to Our Senses - Liana Taylor

We were greeted warmly by our facilitator who asked us to outstretch our right arm and gently place our hand onto the shoulder of the person next to us and ask them, "Please turn off your mobile phone". This resulted in peals of laughter from us all as we did turn off our phones. This set the tone for our session, one of light heartedness and a relaxed atmosphere, which was very pleasant to be in.

Liana guided us all through a few serenity meditations, namely, a moving meditation, a meditation on a raisin and lastly a sitting meditation. The raisin meditation involved 'see' the raisin, 'feel' the raisin between our fingers, put the raisin next to our ear and 'hear' the raisin, place it under our nose and 'smell' the raisin and, finally, put the raisin in our mouths and 'taste' the raisin. It was truly and interesting experience to fully appreciate all the different ways we could value that raisin. Liana asked us to think about how often we 'wolfed down' our food, or other experiences, and neglected to notice the experience fully, by all of our senses.

In between these meditations our guide asked us how the experiences were for us, and some people shared their thoughts and feelings of what these meditations were like for them. All of the responses were interesting and varied, and all validated and accepted by Liana. This acceptance reflected Liana's Buddhist beliefs and I found this to be a true expression of these philosophies.

The sitting meditation involved sitting upright in a chair and noticing the breath moving in and out slowly from our bodies. By this time, and after the previous two meditations, I felt very relaxed and even found myself drifting off into a sleepy state. This was proof that these exercises indeed do calm the mind and relax the body, a powerful demonstration in a most gentle fashion.

From Kristin

Shame on You - Pamela Brear

This thought provoking workshop repeatedly encouraged participants to challenge their understanding of shame and the importance of recognizing and addressing shame in therapy. The complexity of shame as an emotion with many definitions and phases reinforced the message that shame is integral in the development of identity. Participants were left with a greater appreciation of the need to make shame fully conscious to the client. The examples of shaming experiences provided by both the audience and the presenter provided many a laugh to balance a serious topic.

From Pam

Supporting People Experiencing Grief and Loss - Gabriele Fitzgerald

Gabriele opened her workshop by asking participants to break into groups and list what had been personally helpful to us after the death of someone close to us, such as: being encouraged to talk, knowing it is ok to be sad, saying "I'm sorry for your loss" or "I don't know

what to say”, hugs and touch, silent listening, funerals services, and listening to your instincts.

Other important points Gabriele raised were: grief does not end by a certain day or date, adjust to the environment in which the deceased is missing. there are no ‘pat’ answers, allow the bereaved to find their own rhythm, mourners will often naturally find ways to develop “continuing bonds” with the deceased.

I would personally like to express my gratitude to Gabriele for the valuable information presented in her deeply caring and professional presentation (including the sharing of her own personal losses), and for broadening and deepening my understanding of counselling the bereaved.

From Carol

Counselling in a multicultural setting - Fattaneh Scott

With the advent of the Global Village, a counsellor finds themselves working with clients from a several different continents, each with different language and cultural backgrounds. Counselling is like “Dealing with an octopus, and we only have one pair of jeans. The other six legs get left behind.”

Multicultural settings provide a need to advocate for social justice, with a major goal to assist the client to adapt to their new environment and lifestyle. This involves metaskills such as: Understanding the client’s context and expectations, seeing behind the situation and shaping the quality of listening. This last skill can become complicated when a lack of understanding can turn a good intention into a malevolence. For example, does both the client and the interpreter understand the nature of “confidentiality” and note taking?

Working in the multicultural setting, a counsellor needs to “Think globally, act locally, and respond personally. To walk the talk, with uncertainty.”

From Peter