



Is there such a thing as an impossible patient?

A seminar series for psychotherapists

Monday evenings 27 September to 6 December 2010

London

Introduction

In this seminar series we are exploring the concept of the 'impossible patient', asking who might be considered unsuitable for therapy and why some therapy relationships fail. Our nine speakers, each highly experienced psychotherapists, will consider the dilemmas they have faced and ways that they have found to make sense of psychotherapeutic relationships that are particularly challenging.

The aim of this series is thus to open up a space for considering why certain people may struggle so deeply with the therapy process. We will ask why traditionally some people have been considered unsuitable or even unworthy of psychotherapy such as psychotic, brain damaged or 'borderline' patients, who are rejected by the psychotherapy services or only accepted into treatment with reluctance. We will question if different views about who can or cannot benefit from a therapeutic relationship reflect different theories about the psychic structures or an objective truth about that person.

Probably every practitioner has worked with people who seem unable to benefit from the relationship. What sense are we to make of those failures? Do we think they are the consequence of a poor therapeutic match or of the patient's incapacity to benefit? Is it possible to know at the assessment stage or will this emerge as the relationship progresses?

The most challenging forensic, psychotic and dissociative cases are considered in the programme, as well as an exploration of psychological structures that threaten to rupture or derail the therapeutic journey and face the practitioner with their greatest challenges.

Programme

27 September 2010

Jackie Gerrard

A Question of Absence

This paper was written in an attempt to process extreme counter-transference reactions to an 'absent' patient, i.e. one who attended her twice-weekly sessions only sporadically. At times she did not come for up to several months, thus incurring a serious debt. However, it was not so much the amount owing but rather the constant cancellations, with seemingly 'rational' excuses about her non-attendance that would provoke an intense frustration accompanied, at times, by furious, almost sadistic countertransference feelings in the therapist. The author attempts to make sense of these feelings in the light of the patient's early relationships, reaching a hypothesis that the absences have been necessary to convey, very powerfully, experiences that may not have been communicated by regular attendance.

4 October 2010

Dr Maggie Turp

Working with Chronically Depressed Patients

The difficulties and anxieties involved in working with patients who self-harm or are suicidal are striking and, as is appropriate, frequently discussed. The difficulties involved in working with chronically, often quietly, depressed patients receive less attention, yet many counsellors and psychotherapists describe these patients as those with whom they feel least effective. This presentation will consider the phenomenology of chronic depression. Drawing on clinical material, the presenter will explore the unconscious dynamics behind the feelings of frustration and self-doubt so often reported by counsellors and psychotherapists working with this patient group.

11 October 2010

Dr Nuri Gene-Cos

The untreatable patient?

I will begin by outlining the multi-disciplinary assessment procedure of complex clinical case - a woman who had been described as untreatable. She suffered from a severe head injury, language and memory impediment as well as intense post traumatic stress disorder following a serious assault. I will describe how the use of sensorimotor therapy, modified EMDR and recognition of her undamaged creativity and desire for connection led to a positive outcome.

18 October 2010

Frances Hawxwell

Dante's medieval cosmos and modern therapeutic process

Taking as read the therapeutic usefulness of a therapist's capacity to survive long-term work with patients who make little progress and who attack themselves and the therapeutic process, this talk describes how the author examined the relationship between depth therapy and Dante's Divine Comedy, reflecting on questions of containment and of "what is the good" as a means of survival in her work with a borderline patient.

1 November 2010

Dr Estela Welldon

The little princess

I shall present the story of a 10 years weekly psychotherapy I undertook with a woman patient, who despite achieving enormous progress at times, developed a powerful negative therapeutic reaction that included manic behaviour and criminal activity. Despite many positive achievements, these episodes signified a most consistent and insidious attempt to attack and destroy me and all what had been accomplished with her infantile-dependent self. I will explain how I attempted to find and rescue the "dependent sane part of the self from its trapped position inside the psychotic narcissistic structure" (Rosenfeld) and how the therapy eventually led a new born, emerging person.

8 November 2010

Dr Dianne Lefevre

Exploring the Impossible

Impossible patient or patient therapist misfit? Impossible in terms of what? What is the aim in therapy and who decides? How do we think about relief of symptoms and gain of insight? Is "getting worse" a bad sign or part of every therapeutic process? Is the therapy to be adapted to the patient or formulaic? Do we think in terms of diagnostic categories or individuals? Is severe psychosis contraindicated when selecting patients for therapy? These questions and many more need thinking through. This is a good time to do it.

22 November 2010

Ruthie Smith

Limits and Limitations

As therapists we hope that the work we do may be of some benefit, so it is sobering when we face the limitation that our skills and experience are simply not enough. Whether or not we believe in the concept of 'the impossible patient', or the idea that psychotherapy is just not suitable for some people, most of us have struggled with particular clients, where nothing seems to work. What do we do when we encounter extreme negativity or when we feel incapable of finding a way out of the relational bind we become stuck in? What do empathy and compassion mean in practise, if as therapists, we experience relentless attack from our patients? Is it holding to endure this, or is the setting of firm limits and boundaries a better approach? This talk will attempt to explore these and other questions.

29 November 2010

Dr Joseph Schwartz

The Impossible Patient: throwing up our hands or an accurate assessment?

With reference to Freud's assessment that only "worthwhile persons" could benefit from psychoanalysis, and the reality that the alternative to psychotherapy might be drug treatment on a psychiatric ward, I will argue that all too often the judgement of "impossible to work with" is informed by class bias, a fear of psychosis and an ignorance of the great strides taken in the effective treatment with psychoanalysis. At the same time most of us have patients for whom psychotherapy doesn't work, or least, doesn't work with us. Now what? I suggest that we have patients who are intractably alone, for whom psychotherapy can't be helpful because they are unable to enter into enough of a relationship for the talking cure to be effective. This is a profound disorder. I will offer examples for discussion.

6 December 2010

Dr Valerie Sinason

DONNA: THE ALPHABET PATIENT: An A-Z of suffering

Andrea has anorexia, Betty is borderline, Brenda has bulimia, Cheryl has conduct disorder, Don is drug addicted, Donna is a dominatrix, Erin is exhausted, George is a gay slave, Harry is homicidal, Lara is lifeless, Mary is manic-depressive, Nora is a novelist, Penny is Psychotic, Paula is promiscuous, Susan is schizophrenic, Sarah is suicidal, Tara is a teacher, Vera is violent, Wanda is a worker. And all, together with many more children, adolescents, adults, creatures share the same body. How can a single therapist work with Dissociative Identity Disorder? Where there is a whole group, community or world in one person as a result of enormous trauma how does the therapist manage?

Speakers' Biographies

Dr Nuri Gene-Cos

Nuri Gene Cos is a Consultant Psychiatrist and trauma therapist at the Traumatic Stress Service, The Maudsley Hospital, London, where she specialises in neuropsychiatry and individual therapy work for people with stress disorders (including Post Traumatic Stress Disorder). She has a special interest in developmental trauma, violence, accident and war and works with victims who have brain injuries as well as psychological conditions. Her doctoral research focused on the psychophysiology in anxiety disorders and she has published several papers in relation to neuropsychiatric issues, bilingualism in relation to psychiatric symptomatology and PTSD. She is currently one of the two lead clinicians for the implementation of the PTSD NICE (National Institute of Clinical Excellence) guidelines in SLAM (South London and Maudsley).

Jackie Gerrard

Jackie Gerrard is a Psychoanalytic Psychotherapist, Senior Member and Fellow of the London Centre for Psychotherapy and registered with BPC. She is a Supervisor and Training Therapist for the LCP and other psychotherapy and counselling organisations. Her private practice is in Elstree, Herts where she sees individuals and couples for therapy and also supervises trainees and qualified therapists. She has published many papers and is shortly to publish a book, through Karnacs, entitled *The Impossibility of Knowing: Dilemmas of a Psychotherapist*.

Frances Hawxwell

Frances Hawxwell is a UKCP registered integrative and supervisor in private practice in Oxford. She has an interest in the relationship between psychodynamic and Jungian theory and in work with dissociative and borderline patients. She has taught for the Department of Continuing Education for Oxford University and has written on the subject of the analytic frame (British Journal of psychotherapy Integration, volume 2, Issue 1).

Dr Dianne Lefevre

Dr Dianne Campbell Lefevre, MB ChB FRCP FRCPsych, worked for 40 years with patients with mental illness including intensive work with people with psychoses. She worked initially as a physician and later as a Consultant Psychiatrist and a Consultant Psychiatrist in Psychotherapy. She ran an MSc course in the Psychodynamics of the Psychoses for 6 years. She is interested in the multiple factors contributing to the genesis, course and effective management of mental illness and in particular in the psychoses and their relationship to PTSD, OCD and DID.

Dr Joseph Schwartz

Joseph Schwartz PhD is a supervisor and training therapist at the The Bowlby Centre in London. He has a specialist interest in the history of psychoanalysis and is the author of the book *Cassandra's Daughter: A History of Psychoanalysis in Europe and America* (1999). Formerly an experimental physicist, he is also author of *Einstein for Beginners*. He was a founder member of the UK Relational School and has a particular interest in the intersubjective field in psychotherapy.

Dr Valerie Sinason

Valerie Sinason Ph D MACP M Inst Psychoanal is a poet, writer, child, adolescent and adult psychotherapist and adult psychoanalyst. She is Director of the Clinic for Dissociative Studies, President of the Institute for Psychotherapy and Disability (IPD) and Hon Consultant Psychotherapist for the University of Cape Town Child Guidance Clinic. She formerly was a Consultant Psychotherapist at the Tavistock Clinic and Consultant Research Psychoanalyst at St Georges Hospital Medical School. A 2nd edition of her seminal book *Mental Handicap and the Human Condition* is about to be published by Free Association Books and a 2nd edition of her edited book *Attachment, Trauma and Dissociation* from Routledge.

Ruthie Smith

Ruthie Smith is an Attachment Based Psychoanalytic Psychotherapist. Ruthie worked for a number of years as a Principal Individual Psychotherapist in the NHS, and prior to that, at the Women's Therapy Centre. She teaches on a number of psychotherapy training programmes including at the John Bowlby Centre, and also teaches A.I.T. (Advanced Integrative Therapy), a therapeutic technology which rectifies neurobiological imbalances caused by trauma. She works in private practice and is currently setting up a trauma centre.

Dr Maggie Turp

Dr. Maggie Turp is a psychodynamic psychotherapist and supervisor in private practice and a chartered psychologist. Her academic career has included lectureships at the University of Reading and at Birkbeck College, London. Since retiring from mainstream academic life, she has been a visiting lecturer at the Tavistock and Portman NHS Trust. She has a longstanding interest in the emergence of psychological distress in the physical realm and the enduring nature of early, body-centred modes of relating. A more recent area of interest concerns integrity and fraudulence as experienced in the consulting room and work in progress includes writing and organising workshops around these themes. Maggie is a member of the Editorial Boards of the journals *Psychodynamic Practice* and *Infant Observation*. Her publications include several journal papers and two books, *Psychosomatic Health: the body and the word* (2001 Palgrave) and *Hidden Self-Harm: narratives from psychotherapy* (2003 Jessica Kingsley). She welcomes correspondence at maggieturp@googlemail.com

Dr Estela Welldon

Dr Estela V. Welldon MD DSc (Hon) FRC PSYCH is the Founder and Honorary Elected President for Life of the International Association for Forensic Psychotherapy; Fellow of the Royal College of Psychiatrists; Honorary Doctor in Sciences Oxford Brookes University; Honorary Consultant Psychiatrist in Psychotherapy at Tavistock Portman NHS Clinics. She is a Member of the BAP, the CBP, IGA, AGP, IAGP and Honorary member of the Society of Couple Psychoanalytic Psychotherapists, Tavistock Clinic. She works privately as a psychoanalytical psychotherapist. She is the author of *Madonna Whore, the Idealization and Denigration of Motherhood* (1988); *Sadomasochism* (2002) and main editor of *A Practical Guide to Forensic Psychotherapy* (1997).

Booking Form

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It is simple, safe and quick to book online at

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Information

Venue Lecture Theatre, Tavistock Centre,
120 Belsize Lane, London NW3 5BA

Times 19.30 Registration
19.45 Start
21.30 End

Dates Monday evenings 27 September to
6 December 2010

CPD 18 Hours
Certificates of Attendance will be given

Fees **Self Funded:**
Complete course: £220
Single seminars: £40

Organisationally funded:
Complete course: £350
Single seminars: £50

Self-funded participants can spread the fee over 2 payments of £260 (online booking only) up until 1 June 2010

Refreshments Tea/coffee are included

Booking Online www.confer.uk.com

Booking Conditions We regret that refunds cannot be given in any circumstances unless you cancel your place in writing before 1 September 2010, in which case we will give you a 50% refund. If you need to cancel after 1 Sept you may pass on your place to another person.

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