
Challenging moments in Trauma treatment: Working with Complex Dissociation

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Challenging moments in Trauma treatment: Working with Complex Dissociation

This workshop will discuss treatment challenges frequently encountered in trauma assessment and treatment from a clinical and neurobiological perspective. Practical strategies on how to deal with these difficulties will be outlined throughout the seminar through clinical case examples and role plays. The importance of the therapeutic alliance and the effect of traumatic re-enactments on the part of both the therapist and the client will be discussed.

Integrative therapeutic interventions aimed at restoring the self through resolution of key symptoms (dissociative flashbacks, dissociative voice hearing, out-of-body experiences, fragmentation of the self, self-mutilation, affect dysregulation, including high intensity emotional states, positive affect intolerance, and emotional numbing) will be described and demonstrated through role plays. Moreover, treatment approaches focusing on re-establishing interpersonal functioning and preventing the inter-generational transmission of trauma will be reviewed. Finally, effective means of preventing vicarious traumatization in therapists will be identified.

The workshop will be in English, with translation to Spanish.

Speaker

Ruth Lanius, MD, PhD, Professor of Psychiatry is the director of the posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) research unit at the University of Western Ontario. She established the Traumatic Stress Service and the Traumatic Stress Service Workplace Program, services that specialized in the treatment and research of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and related comorbid disorders. She currently holds the Harris-Woodman Chair in Mind-Body Medicine at the Schulich School of Medicine & Dentistry at the University of Western Ontario. Her research interests focus on studying the neurobiology of PTSD and treatment outcome research examining various pharmacological and psychotherapeutic methods. She has authored more than 150 published papers and chapters in the field of traumatic stress and is currently funded by several federal funding agencies. She regularly lectures on the topic of PTSD nationally and internationally. She has recently published a book 'Healing the traumatized self: consciousness, neuroscience, treatment' with Paul Frewen.

Program

1. Challenges in the assessment of developmental trauma. Part I

Symptoms related to developmental trauma are often complex and difficult to differentiate from psychological disorders such as bipolar disorder, psychotic disorders, and developmental disorders. This workshop will offer an integrated approach to the assessment of the many facets of developmental trauma, including emotion dysregulation, altered states of consciousness/dissociation, trauma-related psychotic symptoms, and attachment dysregulation.

2. Challenges in the assessment of developmental trauma. Part II

Trauma-related psychotic-like symptoms are common and can differ in phenomenology from primary psychotic symptoms. Hallucinations consist of auditory and nonauditory content that may or may not relate to traumatic content. Child voices are highly suggestive of complex dissociative disorders. Critically, not only do these symptoms resemble those seen in temporal lobe epilepsy, but the temporal lobe is implicated in trauma-related disorders, thus providing a plausible neurobiological explanation. Despite such evidence, these symptoms are frequently considered atypical and misdiagnosed. Indeed, common structured psychological assessment tools categorize these symptoms as possible indicators of invalid testing profiles. The implications of these findings for the assessment of developmental trauma will be discussed.

3. How to Manage Hyperarousal and Intense Negative Affect: Expanding the Window of Tolerance

Traumatized clients sometimes face extreme hyperarousal and associated emotions, including fear, anger, guilt and shame. How do we help clients to become aware of these intense feeling states before they become overwhelming? What strategies can we teach our clients to maintain a feeling of control when they are overwhelmed by intense negative emotions? How can we help clients to avoid self-punishment following intense emotional experiences? This section of the workshop will address these questions using specific case examples. Neurobiological aspects of hyperarousal and intense emotional experiences will also be described.

4. Back to the Basics: Barriers to Breathing and Grounding Techniques

Breathing and grounding techniques are basic tools that have been used in psychotherapeutic practice for centuries. However, traumatized clients often feel non-deserving of breathing. In addition, breathing exercises can trigger traumatic memories, thus rendering these techniques ineffective. The use of grounding techniques, including attachment resources, can also be challenging due to various barriers. This section of the workshop will not only discuss the barriers associated with various forms of breathing exercises and grounding techniques but will also describe specific ways to overcome these barriers through the use of case examples and role plays. Moreover, attachment resource imagery will be illustrated through a case example. The neurobiological aspects of breathing (including heart rate variability), grounding, and attachment resources will also be discussed.

5. At War with the Body: Overcoming Emotional Detachment and Self-Mutilation

Many traumatized clients have become alienated from their own bodies. Feelings experienced during the trauma were often futile and lead clients to become detached from their feelings to the point where they experience profound emotional numbing, detachment, and have a decreased ability to be aware of the feelings of others. In addition, clients are often disgusted and ashamed of their bodies and emotions and resort to self-mutilation. This section of the workshop will describe and illustrate how to assist a client with reconnecting to their feelings using trauma-informed body scans. Moreover, identifying different causes of self-mutilation and how to address them therapeutically will be discussed and illustrated through role plays. Neurobiological aspects of embodiment will also be described. Finally, neurofeedback will be discussed as a potential adjunctive treatment for complex emotion dysregulation issues.

6. Overcoming Positive Emotion Intolerance

Building Capacity for Self-Compassion

Traumatized clients are often flooded with negative emotions after experiencing positive feelings. Moreover, shame can frequently be associated with the feeling of being non-deserving of experiencing positive emotions, including pride, passion, and love. How can we teach clients to overcome intense experiences of shame? How can we teach traumatized clients to be more self-compassionate and thus increase their capacity for positive affect tolerance? This section of the workshop will address specific strategies of dealing with shame and related self-dysfunction, including self-loathing. Moreover, specific interventions that can help to increase self-compassion will be illustrated through case examples. Neurobiological aspects of positive emotion intolerance will also be described.

7. Challenging Moments in Trauma Treatment: Self Fragmentation

Challenges around working with ego states will be discussed using clinical case examples. A particular focus on how to approach perpetrator introjects early in therapy will be discussed; this will be followed by a role play illustrating barriers that can arise when working with perpetrator introjects.

8. Toward a Rebirth of the Self

The last section of the workshop will discuss how the various therapeutic interventions described over the two days can lead to a rebirth of the self, and the self in relationship. This is often associated with a decrease in the profound sense of isolation frequently experienced by traumatized clients. Finally, the audience will be invited to reflect on their experiences over the two days, which will include a discussion of how to avoid and mitigate the effects of vicarious traumatization.

Prices:

Before January 12th: 380 euro

From February 10-29: 450 euro

After March 1st: 500 euro

More information and reservations:

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