

INSTITUTE OF CONTEMPORARY PSYCHOANALYSIS

Emotional Enslavement and Freedom:

Case Conference

Weekend Psychoanalytic Training Program 2020-2021

Instructors: Margaret Allan PsyD, MSW allanmarg@aol.com and Robyn Sewitz PsyD, MSW rsewitz@mac.com

Time: Fridays 2:30pm-5:00pm

Dates: 9/11, 10/23, 12/4, 1/29, 3/19, 4/30

Total Hours: 2 ½ hours X 6 classes = 15 units

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

Using clinical case material we will develop a theoretical understanding of both emotional freedom and emotional enslavement from a number of contemporary psychoanalytic perspectives. We will study this profound dynamic that can exist in our patients' emotional worlds and within the analytic dyad. So often our most wearying encounters with patients are in meeting intractable positions of terrible silences in the face of relational dominations, where all our best efforts to illuminate come up against repeated passivity or seemingly masochistic submissions.

We will explore the manifestation of this dynamic in both its loud and more silent ways, from the more obvious false-self expression theorized by Winnicott, in particular, to the more insidious, less obvious forms of this dynamic in structures of pathological accommodation and emotional colonization as described by Brandchaft et al. We will read a number of theorists including Steven Stern on "Airless Worlds," Adam Phillips on Unconscious Obedience, and Daniel Shaw on the consequences of Traumatic Narcissism. We will endeavor to get close to a phenomenological approach on what it means for both patients and analysts to be authentic and emotionally free, so often at the heart of the psychoanalytic project.

Candidates and Instructors will present clinical cases to illustrate this dynamic and discuss ways that the analyst can work with this difficult, but quite frequently encountered dynamic.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

The overall objective is for candidates to deepen their understanding of how systems of emotional subjugation manifest in both patients and analysts. Candidates will be able to identify characteristics of these systems and develop ways of understanding patients who present with them so that they can help patients become more emotionally free. Specifically, candidates should be able to:

Session #1:

1. Describe what is meant by Donald Winnicott's concept of True and False Self.
2. Discuss the value of overinterpretation as Adam Phillips describes.

Session #2:

- 3.. Define Bernard Brandchaft's concept of pathological accommodation.
- 4.. Describe behavioral and psychological manifestations of pathological accommodation.

Session #3:

- 5.. Define the difference between ordinary states of accommodation and pathological accommodation.
- 6.. Discuss the value of micro-attention, minute by minute tracking in working with the pathologically accommodative patient.

Session #4:

7. Describe the concept of Daniel Shaw's Traumatic Narcissism and how it gets created.
8. Discuss the characteristics of an adult child of a Traumatic Narcissist.

Session #5:

9. Identify what Steven Stern means when he talks about "airless worlds."
10. Analyze the complex relationship between dissociation and identification.

Session #6:

11. Describe the process whereby a patient comes into being as a subject.

12. Discuss the dialectic of empathy and freedom that an analyst contends with.

COURSE READINGS:

There are links to all the articles in the syllabus. You already have the Steven Stern *Needed Relationships and Psychoanalytic Healing* book from last year's Advanced Relational class. We require that you purchase the following books:

Required Books:

Shaw, D. (2014). *Traumatic Narcissism: Relational Systems of Subjugation*. New York: Routledge

Brandchaft, B; Doctors, S; Sorter, D. (2010). *Toward an Emancipatory Psychoanalysis, Brandchaft's Intersubjective Vision*. New York: Routledge

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES SESSION BY SESSION

SESSION 1: 9/11/20

The notion of compliance as an early adaptive response in the life of the infant and child is ubiquitous in Donald Winnicott's' oeuvre. In his formulation of the concept of True and False Self, Winnicott describes a way of operating in the world where the individual is shackled to the demands of the other and (if they are lucky), must sequester more authentic/alive aspects of oneself.

We wish also to build on the Winnicott theoretical reach in exploring a specific form of enslavement in Adam Phillips: *Against Self Criticism*. Here Phillips takes up the uniquely decontextualized experience of tyranny that is encamped in our own minds. We hear it so often in our patients and in ourselves, our exhorting self compassion, or "whose voice is that?" often making little dent in this relentless self-denigrating haunting. He gives us a kind of phenomenology of this pervasive and cruel reducer.

The text is available, however, we would like you to listen to his lecture complete with questions at the end which capture the spirit of this significant contemporary analyst, who sets sail for freedom, a kind of north star, in all his thinking and writing.

Readings;

Winnicott, D.W. (1971). *Playing and Reality* . London, Tavistock
Chapter 4, Playing: Creative Activity and the Search for the Self

[Winnicott, Playing and Reality](#)

Phillips, A. (1988). *Winnicott*. London, Fontana
Chapter 5, Real-making.
[Phillips Winnicott Chapter 5](#)

London Review of Books, (2015, March 3). *Adam Phillips: "Against Self-Criticism" (with Q&A)* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a8mcaCWGFmg>

[Adam Phillips London Review of Books "Against Self Criticism"](#)

SESSIONS 2 AND 3: 10/23/20 and 12/4/20

The work of Bernard Brandchaft spanned some sixty years and explored the domain of human attachment. Brandchaft came to articulate a deeply insidious process in early, insecure attachment systems where the more “malleable” child must forgo an anchoring in their own psychological experience in favor of the emotional needs of the caregiver. This operates beyond awareness to preserve the tie to those caregivers. It persists on in the life of the person, fundamentally organizing future experience, silently and invisibly. This domain of inquiry came to be termed Systems of Pathological Accommodation. Notice in the material of your work with patients, certain possible flags: intractable depressions, constant doubt, the sense of “my life is not my own” to point to a few.

Reading;

10/23/20

Brandchaft, B, Doctors, S, Sorter, S.:(2010) *Toward an Emancipatory Psychoanalysis: Brandchaft's Intersubjective Vision*. New York: Routledge

Chapter 1, Encountering Brandchaft

Chapter 5, A case of intractable depression

Chapter 9, To free the spirit from the cell

12/4/20

Chapter 12, Systems of pathological accommodation in psychoanalysis

Chapter 13, Reflections on the unconscious

SESSION 4: 1/29/21

Daniel Shaw expands his concept of Traumatic Narcissists beyond cult leaders into many relationships: parent/child, analyst/patient, supervisor/supervisee, husband/wife. Within these relationships the Traumatizing Narcissist seeks to abolish intersubjectivity so that recognition goes only one way – to the traumatic narcissist. Shaw defines what he means by a Traumatic Narcissist, describes the relational system they create and the devastating impact this dominance has on the victims. It can be challenging to work with these patients and Shaw has suggestions as to how to deeply understand what it was like for them to live completely subjugated.

Readings:

Shaw, D. (2014). *Traumatic Narcissism: Relational Systems of Subjugation*. New York: Routledge

Chapter 1, The Relationality of Narcissism

Chapter 2, the Adult Child of the Traumatizing Narcissist: Enter Ghost!

Chapter 4, Narcissistic Authoritarianism in Psychoanalysis

SESSION 5: 3/19/21

In this series of articles first Steven Stern proposes the idea that as a result of growing up with parental negation or non-recognition a child's intrapsychic world is as if they are living without air and cannot breathe. The child identifies with the negating parent's view of them so that they become emotionally disabled, with their capacity to think and feel in an integrated way severely limited. Harris responds to Stern's paper by putting it in historical context and Shaw discusses the specifics of Stern's theory in relation to his theory and treatment of adult patients of "traumatically narcissistic" parents.

Readings:

Stern, S. (2019). Airless Worlds: The Traumatic Sequelae of Identification with Parental Negation, *Psychoanalytic Dialogues*, 29:4, 435-450

[Steven Stern, Airless Worlds](#)

Harris, A. (2019). Discussion: "Airless Worlds: The Traumatic Sequelae of Identification with Parental Negation" Steven Stern, *Psychoanalytic Dialogues*, 29:4, 451-459

[Harris Response](#)

Shaw, D. (2019). Double Binds, Unhealing Wounds: Discussion of "Airless Worlds: The Traumatic Sequelae of Identification with Parental Negation", *Psychoanalytic Dialogues*, 29:4, 460-469

[Daniel Shaw, Response](#)

Stern, S. (2019). Breathing Together: Reply to Harris and Shaw, *Psychoanalytic Dialogues*, 29:4, 470-476

[Stern Reply](#)

The Harris article is not required but may be helpful when reading Stern's response.

SESSION 6: 4/30/20

This class will focus on how to help the patient free themselves from the systems of subjugation. Freedom in this context is both freedom for the patient from their early relational experiences and freedom for the analyst from their own accommodative and dissociative tendencies within the analytic dyad. In addition Allan provides an example of the struggle to find freedom and how it may appear in a treatment.

Readings:

Shaw, D. (2014). *Traumatic Narcissism: Relational Systems of Subjugation*. New York: Routledge

Ch. 6, But What do I Do?: Finding the path to freedom

Stern, S. (2017). *Needed Relationships and Psychoanalytic Healing*. London: Routledge.

Ch 6, The Dialectic of Empathy and Freedom

Allan, M. (2019, October 17-20) *Beyond the Requirement to Care: Finding Analytic Freedom with a Woman Heading into Terrible Life Circumstances*, [Conference Presentation]. IAPSP Conference, Vancouver, Canada

[Beyond the Requirement to Care](#)

