

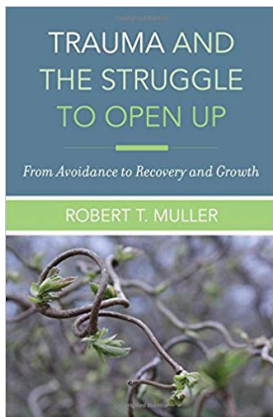
Trauma & the Struggle to Open Up: Relational Strategies to Treat Challenging Trauma Clients*

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Overview: Themes covered in workshop

- How trauma shuts you down
 - How?

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Overview:
Themes covered in workshop

- What trauma therapy is:
 - ...a path to help people *open up*
 - For some, opening up about the trauma
 - For others, open up to life
 - Experience
 - Relationships
 - Their own bodies
 - Their own histories

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Overview:
Themes covered in workshop

- What trauma therapy is:
 - Phase-based (Herman, 1993)
 - Safety
 - Remembrance & mourning
 - Reconnection
 - Paced... *Pacing is critical*
 - "simply telling" yields humiliation soon

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Overview:
Themes covered in workshop

- What trauma therapy is:
 - Growthful... post-traumatic growth
 - A reckoning that confronts elemental questions of life
 - Changes to identity
 - Post-traumatic growth is *not*:
 - looking for "silver lining"
 - Strength in face of adversity
 - Such cultural narratives invalidating to survivors

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Overview:
Themes covered in workshop

- What trauma therapy is:
 - For therapist
 - Meaningful work
 - Risky work... trauma clients risk
 - Uncomfortable work... distressing, triggering



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Overview:
Themes covered in workshop

- What trauma therapy is *not*:
 - Cookbook approach to tx
 - Many unpredictables
 - in path to recovery
 - in tx relationship
 - Infantilizing
 - Some clients seek guru
 - Position of *not knowing*

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Overview:
Themes covered in workshop

- In trauma tx, use attachment theory.

Why?

- Trauma affects attachments
- Attachment system
 - A behavioural system oriented toward *seeking protection & maintaining proximity to the attachment figure* in response to perceived threat or danger

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Overview:
Themes covered in workshop

- Attachment theory:
 - Secure attachment
 - Sensitive, responsive caregiving
 - Parent attuned to child's physical, emotional needs

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Overview:
Themes covered in workshop

- Attachment theory:
 - Insecure Attachment
 - Non-responsive, disruptive, insensitive parenting
 - Children "adapt" to survive

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Overview:
Themes covered in workshop

- Why use attachment theory?
 - Trauma affects attachments and
 - Trauma affects *relationships*
 - 3/4 abuse survivors insecurely attached (Muller, 2001)
 - 2/3 general pop. securely attached (van IJzendoorn)

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Overview:
Themes covered in workshop

- Tx relationship can make or break trauma tx
 - In trauma, tx rel. central...navigation is key
 - Case example

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Overview:
Themes covered in workshop

- Tx relationship can make or break trauma tx
 - Bringing rel. into room made possible:
 - Safety in tx rel.
 - Rel. repair
 - Corrective emotional experience

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Staying silent about the trauma

- *Family secrecy* suppresses trauma stories
 - E.g., Craig Taylor's play

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Staying silent about the trauma

- Why the silence & secrecy??
 - Secrecy protects:
 - From the truth (dangerous)
 - Relationships
 - Image to outsiders
 - Family's/Institution's narrative... stories we tell ourselves
 - Status quo

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Staying silent about the trauma

- *Loyalty* suppresses trauma stories
 - Family loyalty, institutional loyalty
 - In military.... Military sexual trauma (MST)
 - Group loyalty
 - Secrecy about sexual abuse



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Staying silent about the trauma

- Survivors suppress *own* trauma stories
 - Use self-deception
 - Rationalize... "Back then, *all* parents hit their kids."
 - Intellectualize
 - Avoid trauma memories
 - "forget about it"
 - Dissociate
 - Cut-off affect, neutralize memories
 - "yeah but, I wasn't *abused*"... (Berger)

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Staying silent about the trauma

- Survivors suppress *own* trauma stories
 - Case of Annette

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Staying silent about the trauma

- Sometimes therapists collude in the silence
 - Mutual avoidance
 - Re-enacts "bystander" dynamic

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Staying silent about the trauma

- *Some* survivors *don't* suppress trauma stories
 - Secure trauma survivors
 - "Earned" secure
 - Can engage in balanced, honest narrative (about traumatic past)
 - Secure attachment rare (1/4) in trauma
 - Case: "Earned Secure"
 - AAI: Asked if rejected as child

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Opening up about the trauma: A Relational process

- How do trauma stories appear in tx?
 - AAI, brief description
 - Case of Nicholas... mom as "good"

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Well . . . my mother tried to abort me. Oh, the story is actually cute and funny. You see, she and I became very good friends later on. My mom said to me, "I used to jump up and down trying to get *rid* of you." Well, I just thought that was *really* funny. Can't you just picture that? . . . Her pregnant and jumping up and down?!

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Opening up about the trauma: A Relational process

- Trauma stories appear in *fragments*
 - Notice trauma fragments
- Trauma stories told with *ambivalence*
 - In part, avoidance; in part, want to open up
 - Survivors only *want* to stay silent so long
 - Notice ambivalence to face trauma

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Opening up about the trauma: A Relational process

- *Therapist* discomfort with client's trauma story
 - *Mutual avoidance*
 - Shuts client down
 - Enactment... this trauma is bigger than both of us
- Case of Nicholas

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Opening up about the trauma: A Relational process

- I got drawn into an enactment (mutual avoidance)
 - Notice *your* discomfort with client's trauma

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Opening up about the trauma: A Relational process

- Starting to open up stirs dependency, vulnerability
 - When Nicholas "lost it like a baby"
 - Bring tx relationship into room *early on*
 - What was hard about crying just then?
 - What was hard about crying *with me*?
 - Socializes client to tx rel. as focus of tx
 - Ask about client hx of opening up to others?
 - Ask about client hx of *relying on* others?

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How to *Pace* the Process of Opening up

- Why do client's rush into trauma stories?
 - "This secret is a burden"
 - "Telling will fix everything"
 - "If I don't tell now, I never will"
 - "Therapist seems nice enough" (defenses are down)

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How to *Pace* the Process of Opening up

- Problem:
 - Too much, too soon.... overwhelming, humiliating
 - Tx rel. isn't ready
 - Case of Anaya

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How to *Pace* the Process of Opening up

- Containment first
 - Confidence in tx relationship
 - Is it a *holding environment*?
 - Confidence therapist can hold my *trauma*
 - "Will my trauma overwhelm/frighten her?"
 - "Is my trauma too powerful?"
 - Case of David Morris

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How to *Pace* the Process of Opening up

- **Containment *first***
 - Confidence therapist can hold *me*
 - "Will you abandon me?" (if I push you away)
 - "Will you punish me?" (if I push limits)
 - "Will you give in?" (if I cross boundaries)
 - Is therapist *capable* in regard to client?

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How to *Pace* the Process of Opening up

- When client's *rush into* trauma stories:
 - Containment first
 - Case of Canadian pilot

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How to *Pace* the Process of Opening up

- Containment: *Slow the process down*
- Honor the telling
 - Refocus from "trauma details" to telling of story
 - Is this the first time they've shared this?
 - What does it mean to them... having shared this (secret)?
 - Having shared, what are they feeling now?
 - If "relieved," pay attention to varying feelings thru the week

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How to *Pace* the Process of Opening up

- Containment: *Slow the process down*
 - Honor the telling
 - Convey awareness of story's magnitude
 - "I imagine this has had a big impact on you"
 - Convey sense of *your* responsibility
 - "This is an important story you told me"
 - "What does it mean to you... having shared this *with me*?"
 - Conveys you're taking story seriously

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How to *Pace* the Process of Opening up

- Containment: *Slow the process down*
 - Flag the topic for therapy
 - Unpacking the story will be part of our work
 - "Let's flag this as s.t. we'll explore together"
 - Engage the 'low burner'
 - Story is simmering, not at rolling boil *just yet*

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How to *Pace* the Process of Opening up

- Containment: *Slow the process down*
 - Revisit the topic *soon*
 - Don't let weeks pass (elephant in room)
 - Bring it into the room (that session or next)
 - Conveys "your trauma isn't too much for us"
 - Back to Canadian pilot

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How to *Pace* the Process of Opening up

- When the *therapist* rushes into trauma stories
- Back to case of David Morris

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How to *Pace* the Process of Opening up

- Rescue fantasy: Beware the *quick fix*
 - Managed care pulls for quick fix
 - Fast food culture pulls for quick fix
 - "Faster is better"
 - Clients pull for quick fix
 - Want to feel better

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How to *Pace* the Process of Opening up

- Rescue fantasy: Beware the *quick fix*
 - *Therapists* pull for quick fix
 - Hard to see people suffer
 - Sense that stakes are high
 - Client: "Your my last resort"
 - Therapist may take charge
 - Tells the client what to do
 - Disempowers client

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How to *Pace* the Process of Opening up

- Remember:
 - Containment *before* opening up
 - Trauma work takes time
 - *Pace* the process

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Safety strategies in trauma-tx relationship

- Grounding strategies great start.... but:
 - Help dysregulation, *not* safety in tx relationship
 - No safety in tx *relationship?*no tx!

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Safety strategies in trauma-tx relationship

- Taking client's suffering seriously
 - Isn't that obvious?...
 - Easier said than done
- Case of Robin

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Safety strategies in trauma-tx relationship

- Taking client's suffering seriously
 - Some trauma "count" more than others
 - What traumas do we take most seriously?
 - What traumas don't we take so seriously?

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Safety strategies in trauma-tx relationship

- Taking client's suffering seriously
 - Survivors may not take own suffering seriously
 - "I should get over it"
 - "Put on a happy face"

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Safety strategies in trauma-tx relationship

- Taking client's suffering seriously
 - Therapist may struggle to take client suffering seriously
 - How did this happen with Robin & me?
 1. 2nd session, I hear Robin's backstory
 2. What shifted in me? What shifted for us?

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Safety strategies in trauma-tx relationship

- Taking client's suffering seriously
 - Challenge: Reflect on a time when *your* countertransference got in way of taking client suffering seriously
 - What were you defending yourself from?

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Safety strategies in trauma-tx relationship

- Naming* traumatic experiences for what they are
- "Trauma"
 - Calls it like is... grounds survivor
 - Naming makes experience real
 - Example, C.N. Adichie

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Safety strategies in trauma-tx relationship

- Naming* traumatic experiences for what they are
- Naming takes trauma seriously
 - You get it, it was traumatic
 - Naming "trauma" is an act of truth-telling
 - Not obvious to survivors... doubt reality
 - "trauma" explains, not blames
 - "Your past affected you"
 - Also *not obvious* to survivors
 - "BPD" as dx, unhelpful. "Trauma" is.

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Safety strategies in trauma-tx relationship

Naming traumatic experiences for what they are

- Naming "trauma" conveys what this is *not*
 - Not "I was a bad kid"
 - Not "I dressed too sexy"
 - Not "I should get over it"
 - Not sex in any normal healthy sense
- Naming trauma brings validation
- Helps client trust relationship

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Safety strategies in trauma-tx relationship

Validating traumatic experiences, conveys:

- "I get it, your trauma was real"
- Empathic & grounding stance
- Builds trust

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Safety strategies in trauma-tx relationship

Validating traumatic experiences

Problem: Many don't accept validation so readily

- "I'm no victim" identity
 - Most survivors shun "abuse" label (Berger, 1988)
 - Case of Tony Rodgers, raped as young boy

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Safety strategies in trauma-tx relationship

validating traumatic experiences

Problem: Many don't accept validation so readily

- Many invalidate own traumatic histories
 - "I was weak"
 - "I deserved what I got"
 - "I should figure this out myself"

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Safety strategies in trauma-tx relationship

validating traumatic experiences

What to do?

- View validation as a therapeutic *process*
 - Validate, yes... but don't shove validation on clients
 - Be attuned, go at *client's pace*
 - Some need time to come to accept validation
- Be transparent with trauma terminology
 - "Rape" "died" "sexual abuse"

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Safety strategies in trauma-tx relationship

validating traumatic experiences

What else to do?

- Pay attention to client's *reaction* to trauma language
 - Float trial balloons
 - Do they bristle? Feel relief?
 - Notice aloud, "Is that hard to say, 'sexual abuse'?"
 - "As we discuss xyz, what are you feeling *right now*?"
- In time, "trauma" becomes *part of* survivor's identity

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Safety strategies in trauma-tx relationship

Honesty in tx relationship

- Isn't that obvious?...
- Easier said than done
- We get *drawn into* dishonest enactments
 - Secret-keeping
 - Manipulations
- Dishonesty permeates trauma... & we get pulled in

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Safety strategies in trauma-tx relationship

Prioritizing *basic safety* needs

- Hard to do trauma tx in middle of trauma
 - Trauma may be ongoing
- Basic safety first
- Easier said than done
 - Basic safety can take a while
 - Can't get someone to leave abusive partner

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Safety strategies in trauma-tx relationship

Self-regulation brings safety

- Working with Triggers
- Case of Edmund Metatawabin

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Safety strategies in trauma-tx relationship

Self-regulation brings safety

Triggers

- Fast connection to trauma
- Highly idiosyncratic
- *Useful* trauma language
 - Explains, not blames
 - Not client "acting ridiculous"
 - Not client "over-reacting"

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Safety strategies in trauma-tx relationship

Self-regulation brings safety

How to *Use* triggers... Help client:

- ...to *Notice* their triggers
 - Journaling helps

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Safety strategies in trauma-tx relationship

Self-regulation brings safety

How to *Use* triggers... Help client:

- ...to *Get to know* their triggers
 - "What was going on for me just then?"
 - "Why would I be feeling this way *now*?"
 - "What [in the other] was I reacting to?"
 - Neediness, sadness... bossiness, anger
 - "What [in the relationship] was I reacting to?"
 - Closeness, validation... abandonment, rejection
- Mentalize internal experience

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Safety strategies in trauma-tx relationship

Self-regulation brings safety

How to Use triggers:

- What in the *tx relationship* were they reacting to?
 - "I hate it when you're so nice!"
 - DANGER UP AHEAD... (manipulation, exploitation)
 - Empathy can be triggering
- Ask yourself: "What about tx relationship triggered her?"
- Ask client same question
 - Bring tx relationship into the room

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Safety strategies in trauma-tx relationship

Self-regulation brings safety

Grounding techniques

- Anchor to the present, reality
- Activate sensory experience
- Turn client's attention to the present
 - Any of the senses can be used

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Our Online (and Free) Mental Health Magazine:

The Trauma & Mental Health Report

<http://trauma.blog.yorku.ca/>

--Google: Trauma and mental health report

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Navigating the Relationship in Trauma Tx

- What activates *your* attachment system?

Private written exercise (10 minutes)

- Think of a specific time you were behaviourally out-of-control or shut down (relative to *you*) in a *relationship* context?
 - What behaviour of the *other* were you responding to?
 - What were you thinking/feeling?
 - What brought resolution?

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Navigating the Relationship in Trauma Tx

- Countertransference in trauma tx
 - Trauma raises many feelings in us
 - Based on our *own* attachment hx
 - Feeling vs. acting-on
 - *Notice* Countertransference

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Navigating the Relationship in Trauma Tx

- Countertransference *patterns*
 - Re-enact trauma dynamics in tx relationship
 - Victim/perpetrator/rescuer-bystander dynamic
 - Common patterns we *fall into*
 - Something has triggered us

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Navigating the Relationship in Trauma Tx

Countertransference *patterns*

- Trying to “rescue”...*rescue fantasy*
 - Therapist as “rescuer,” client as “victim”
 - Therapist over-identifies with client as “victim”

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Navigating the Relationship in Trauma Tx

Countertransference *patterns*

- *Rescue fantasy*
 - Trying to “fix” the client
 - Therapist works harder than client
 - Notice your affect, body, non-verbal behavior
 - “Telling” client what to do
 - “Telling” client to stop seeing abuser... Problem:
 - Disempowers client
 - Client leaves tx

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Navigating the Relationship in Trauma Tx

Countertransference *patterns*

- *Rescue fantasy*
 - "Indulging" the client (b/c you *feel sorry* for them)
 - "special rules" for this client
 - Loosening time limits (when you normally don't)
 - No charge for cancelation (when you normally don't)
 - Emailing at all hours
 - Problem: weak limits feel unsafe

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Navigating the Relationship in Trauma Tx

Countertransference *patterns*

- *Rescue fantasy*
 - Lax boundaries with client
 - Becoming client's "friend"
 - Lots of self-revelation
 - "Is my therapist capable?"
 - "Is my therapist more 'messed up' than me?"
 - Problem: Lax boundaries feel unsafe

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Navigating the Relationship in Trauma Tx

Countertransference *patterns*

- *Rescue fantasy*
 - Feeling contempt for perpetrator
 - Therapist "hates" perpetrator/non-protective parent
 - Over-identifying client as "victim"
 - Problem: Client may have *mixed feelings* toward parent
 - Case: "To a Safer Place"

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Navigating the Relationship in Trauma Tx

Countertransference *patterns*

- When we feel "bullied" /hurt
 - Therapist as "victim," client in "perpetrator" role
 - Therapist feelings:
 - "afraid" of client's aggression
 - anxious
 - What's going on?..... Client *self-protectiveness*

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Navigating the Relationship in Trauma Tx

Countertransference *patterns*

- When we feel "bullied" /hurt
 - "I'll hurt/reject you before you can hurt/reject me"
 - Client feeling dependent?..... decides to drop out
 - b/c of client fear of vulnerability
 - Self-protective
 - "I'll get angry at you before you can hurt me"
 - "I've had to fight for everything!"
 - Self-protective

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Navigating the Relationship in Trauma Tx

Countertransference *patterns*

- When we feel "bullied" /hurt
 - Client is "testing" therapist
 - Case
 - How did she "test" me?
 - Will I reject her?
 - Will I let her drop out? (give-up on her, like everyone has)
 - Ask yourself:
 - How are client's actions self-protective?
 - Notice your hurt
 - You're feeling the hurt client can't tolerate

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Navigating the Relationship in Trauma Tx

Countertransference *patterns*

- When we "bully" the client
 - Therapist in "perpetrator" role, client as "victim"
 - Happens with perfectly good clinicians
 - Something has been triggered in us

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Navigating the Relationship in Trauma Tx

Countertransference *patterns*

- When we "bully" the client
 - Therapist "gets tough" on client.... when feeling:
 - Frustrated, anxious
 - E.g., multiple suicide threats
 - Disappointed
 - E.g., lack of compliance, progress
 - Incompetent, "out-of-control"
 - E.g., following boundary violations
 - Problem: client ends up feeling hurt, like a failure
 - Notice your anxiety, aggression, disappointment ...

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Navigating the Relationship in Trauma Tx

Countertransference *patterns*

- When we "bully" the client
 - Feeling "hate" (contempt for) client
 - Frustration, loss of perspective, loss of empathy
 - "Hate in the countertransference" Winnicott (1947)
 - Case

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Navigating the Relationship in Trauma Tx

Countertransference *patterns*

- When we “give up” on client
 - Therapist in “bystander” role, client as “victim”
 - We become resigned, complacent
 - Compassion fatigue

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Navigating the Relationship in Trauma Tx

Countertransference *patterns*

- When we “give up” on client
 - Failing to challenge client
 - Don't call out client on self-destructive behavior
 - Lose faith in client's ability to change
 - Case

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Navigating the Relationship in Trauma Tx

Countertransference *patterns*

- When we “give up” on client
 - Feeling “sorry for” client
 - Over-validate, sympathize
 - Therapist rationalizes: “I’m being supportive”
 - PROBLEM: Collusion doesn't help
 - No growth
 - Re-enacts non-protective bystander

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Relationship Goes off the Rails: Enactment, Rupture, Repair

- Traumatic re-enactments common in trauma tx
 - We *act-on* feelings
 - E.g., any of the previous examples:
 - Rescue fantasy
 - "Getting tough" on client
 - Feeling "bullied" by client, etc...
 - Intersection of client's & therapist's attachment hx
 - *Navigating* them is key

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Relationship Goes off the Rails: Enactment, Rupture, Repair

- Traumatic re-enactments common in trauma tx
 - Case of Nigel

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Relationship Goes off the Rails: Enactment, Rupture, Repair

- Traumatic re-enactments common in trauma tx
 - Case of Nigel....
 1. Early in tx
 2. Good tx connection (months)
 - Tx relationship starts to shift (p. 148)

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Relationship Goes off the Rails: Enactment, Rupture, Repair

- Problem: Enactments can lead to tx ruptures
- Why?
 - Enactments feel unsafe
 - Boundary violations (even small) feel dangerous
 - Containment compromised
 - Tx now crossed into using e. o. for unmet needs
 - E.g., Therapist as "guru," with trauma client
 - Tx neutrality has been compromised
- Case of Nigel (p. 148)

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Relationship Goes off the Rails: Enactment, Rupture, Repair

- So....
 - Enactments....
 - Inevitable in trauma tx
 - Sneak up on you
 - Can lead to tx ruptures
 - The trick is *using* them in the tx

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Relationship Goes off the Rails: Enactment, Rupture, Repair

Repairing a ruptured alliance

- Why do we repair a ruptured alliance?
 - If not, no safety
 - Big opportunity for growth. Teaches:
 - Relationships *can* be repaired
 - Relationships are work
 - Relationships aren't doomed

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Relationship Goes off the Rails: Enactment, Rupture, Repair

Repairing a ruptured alliance

- **How to repair a ruptured alliance**
 - **Notice** the enactment
 - Adopt self-reflective stance... *look inside*
 - **Mentalize** your experience with client
 - "What got activated in me?" "Why then?"
 - "What's going on for me that I'm doing/feeling things I normally don't?"
 - "How did my needs activate client?"
 - Requires curious, nonjudgmental stance

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Relationship Goes off the Rails: Enactment, Rupture, Repair

Repairing a ruptured alliance

- **How to repair a ruptured alliance**
 - **Validate** client's experience
 - Validation = relational first response
 - Listen, empathize, don't judge
 - Be genuine, can't fake it
 - This is why you need to *look inside*
 - **Ask yourself:**
 - "How did I hurt my client?"
 - "How did I activate my client?"

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Relationship Goes off the Rails: Enactment, Rupture, Repair

Repairing a ruptured alliance

- **How to repair a ruptured alliance**
 - **Validate** client's experience
 - Stay in *here-and-now*
 - If no validation, client feels uncontained
 - Validation ≠ collusion
 - Goal isn't to agree with client
 - *Understand* client's subjective experience

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Relationship Goes off the Rails: Enactment, Rupture, Repair

Repairing a ruptured alliance

- *How to repair a ruptured alliance*
 - *Validate client's experience*
 - With Nigel....

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Relationship Goes off the Rails: Enactment, Rupture, Repair

Repairing a ruptured alliance

- *How to repair a ruptured alliance*
 - *Provide containment re the conflict*
 - *Why?... present moment still feels unsafe*
 - *Name the conflict, frame it as "conflict"*
 - "Conflict like this can be difficult"
 - "It's hard to be in conflict"
 - *Frame it as relational process... part of relationships*
 - "So how do we want to address this conflict?"
 - "This conflict is hard, but we can figure it out together"

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Relationship Goes off the Rails: Enactment, Rupture, Repair

Repairing a ruptured alliance

- *How to repair a ruptured alliance*
 - *Provide containment re the conflict*
 - *Why name it as "conflict"?*
 - Explains what's not going on between us
 - This isn't end of relationship
 - This isn't betrayal, manipulation
 - This isn't unbearable
 - It's honest
 - We are having a conflict
 - Conflict is messy, difficult
 - *Sitting with conflict helps client grow from conflict*

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Relationship Goes off the Rails: Enactment, Rupture, Repair

Repairing a ruptured alliance

- **How to repair a ruptured alliance**
 - Help client *mentalize*: Unpacking conflict
 - Only *after* we look inside, validate, contain
 - Mentalizing:
 - Invite client to explore motivations
 - What triggered them?
 - Adopt curious stance
 - "I'm wondering what was going on for me/you?"
 - Bring in emotion
 - "What are you feeling *right now*, as we discuss this?"

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Relationship Goes off the Rails: Enactment, Rupture, Repair

Repairing a ruptured alliance

- **How to repair a ruptured alliance**
 - Help client *mentalize*: Unpacking conflict
 - Mentalizing with Nigel
 - "What about what I said triggered you most?"
 - "After reading my email, what'd you worry I was saying to you?"
 - "How did it feel, to *finally* tell me off?"

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Relationship Goes off the Rails: Enactment, Rupture, Repair

Repairing a ruptured alliance

- **How to repair a ruptured alliance**
 - So...Unpacking conflict in trauma tx...
 - ...is a *process*
 - ...takes place in the here-and-now
 - ...always stirring
 - ...can bring posttraumatic growth
 - Nigel cont'd

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Working with Emotion & Mourning in Trauma Tx

In trauma tx, bring emotion into the work

- Why?
- Cutting-off emotion (temporarily) works
- Cut-off unsustainable
- Emotions are powerful triggers.... *"People are everywhere!"*

Research: Emotional arousal + meaning making
better outcome (e.g., Pos, 2017)

Herman: recollection without affect?... no result



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Working with Emotion & Mourning in Trauma Tx

Role-play exercise (25 minute + debrief)

- Groups of 2 (1 "therapist," 1 "client")

"Clients"

- Pick a trauma client you know well
- Pick a client where focus is loss & mourning
- In role, share story of personal loss

"Therapist"

- *Slow* the story down.... *stay in the moment*
- Stay with *emotion & body sensations*
- Start with brief breathing exercise to get client in & out of story

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Working with Emotion & Mourning in Trauma Tx

Case of Angelina

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Working with Emotion & Mourning in Trauma Tx

- Notice *Relationship episodes* (Target et al.) that activate attachment system
 - Autobiographical memory
 - Situate client in time & place
 - "Can you give me an example when...?"
 - Who was around? -describe sensations
 - *Slow stories down*

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Working with Emotion & Mourning in Trauma Tx

- Notice *Relationship episodes* (Target et al.) that activate attachment system
 - Listen for (and pursue) "hot" affective themes in pt's lived experiences:
 - e.g., Rejection, Neediness, Loss, Vulnerability
 - Get to know rel. episodes in immediate personal sense
 - Get to know the characters' names (as opposed to roles)
 - Pt. use of "I" pronoun instead of "you"

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Working with Emotion & Mourning in Trauma Tx

- As affect-laden material come up naturally:
 - *Notice subtle affect*
 - Slight reddening of eyes, slight crack of voice
 - *Pay attention to nonverbal affect*
 - "I'm crying, but I don't know why. Make it stop!"
 - "Let's listen...what is your body trying to say"
 - "What are you feeling right now?"

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Working with Emotion & Mourning in Trauma Tx

- As affect-laden material come up naturally:
 - Notice discrepancy bet. expressed emotion & body language
 - Foot shaking, blushing, nail-biting, etc.
 - "As you tell this story, what are you feeling *right now*?"
 - "Where in your body are you feeling it?"

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Working with Emotion & Mourning in Trauma Tx

- Notice when emotional thread is lost in session
 - Bring client back to the affect
 - Ask about history/lifespan of that affect in ct.'s life
 - "What role has shame/secret-keeping played in your life?"
 - Ask about history/lifespan of that affect in ct.'s family
 - "What role has vulnerability played in your family?"

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Working with Emotion & Mourning in Trauma Tx

- Bring *mourning* into the work
- All trauma is about loss (J. Herman)

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Working with Emotion & Mourning in Trauma Tx

- Help client *face a lost childhood*
 - E.g: my family
 - Loss of:
 - Innocence
 - Hopes & dreams (identity)

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Working with Emotion & Mourning in Trauma Tx

- Help client *face a lost childhood*
 - Loss of part of self that trusted freely
 - "Have I become smarter or just cynical?"
 - In trauma, kids adapt, accommodate adults' needs
 - Protects attachment relationship

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Working with Emotion & Mourning in Trauma Tx

- Help client *face a changed worldview*
 - Loss of illusions about the world
 - World as threatening, unpredictable
 - Life's direction, purpose have changed
 - Have painful, authentic conversations... listen
 - Don't bullshit, don't "convince"
 - "Silver-linings" lead to:
 - "My therapist is naive"
 - "I really *should* be more positive"
 - Drop-out

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Working with Emotion & Mourning in Trauma Tx

- Help client *face a changed worldview*
 - What to do?
 - Challenge is to find meaning in a troubled world
 - Tell clients just that
 - Containment "...hard to find meaning after trauma, but we'll explore together"
 - Paulson & Krippner, Vietnam vets

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Working with Emotion & Mourning in Trauma Tx

- Help client face a changed *view of self*
 - Trauma experiences *change us*
 - To survive:
 - ...in abusive homes, siblings betray
 - ...in bullying, bystanders do nothing
 - ...in divorce, parents vindictive
 - Case of Daryl Paulson

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Working with Emotion & Mourning in Trauma Tx

- Help client face a changed *view of self*
 - Mourn loss of:
 - ..."the you" that once was
 - ...Parts of self
 - Start to accept painful truths about themselves
 - ...Parts they'd never recognized
 - ...Parts that are painful, unflattering
 - Helps bring post-traumatic growth

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Book Titles:

Muller, Robert T. (2018).
Trauma & the Struggle to Open Up: From Avoidance to Recovery & Growth.
 New York: W.W. Norton.

Muller, Robert T. (2010).
Trauma & the Avoidant Client: Attachment-Based Strategies for Healing.
 New York: W.W. Norton.

Place orders online through:
Amazon.com Amazon.co.uk Amazon.ca
 (hardcover or kindle)

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Online Magazine:
 The Trauma & Mental Health Report

York University (Psychology)

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