

POWER AND VULNERABILITY OF THE THERAPIST ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

**A workshop with ANDREW SAMUELS and NICK TOTTON
Saturday and Sunday May 25th - 26th 2019
Stillpoint Spaces, London
Fee: £220 (some reductions)**

Over this weekend we want to explore ways in which the therapist holds power; ways in which the therapist holds vulnerability; and the variety of possible relationships between these two things. While Andrew will focus on vulnerability, and Nick will focus on power – in line with our previous writings and presentations – we don't for a moment imagine that this binary will remain intact over the weekend, nor should it.

This two day workshop will use a wide range of styles including presentation, discussion, supervision and experiential work. It is restricted to therapists and trainees. What happens in the workshop shall stay in the workshop.

The venue is the 'Lab' at the Stillpoint Spaces building in Clerkenwell, London. This is a great setting that will 'hold' deep and perhaps unsettling work well.

***Note:** This workshop is not related to Brené Brown's work, and we will not be exploring her model on the weekend.*

Nick on power: The therapeutic dyad is, among other things, a space where two people struggle over narratives about what is happening now, what has happened in the past, and what may happen in the future. Each person inherently has one vote; so each has a natural incentive to try to make their vote count for more than the other person's.

Many tools for winning this struggle are available to both people – domination, seduction, intellectual argument, emotional manipulation, and so on. However the therapist has some built-in advantages. The therapeutic space is *their space*. They are familiar with it, relatively comfortable in it, and better equipped to define what can and cannot, should and shouldn't happen in it.

This is not to say that the client has no effective tools with which to fight for power. And it is certainly not to imply that we should try to cleanse therapy of all power struggles! I will be arguing that conscious attention to issues of power as they arise in the therapy room, together with an honest attempt by the therapist to acknowledge their own efforts to control the situation, can be an enormous valuable aspect of the work. Pretty much everyone – clients and therapists alike – have suffered in early life

from a deficit of power, and from having their perceptions and experience overruled. We need to notice and explore ways in which this can be repeated in the therapeutic relationship, and ways in which it can be interrupted there.

Andrew on vulnerability: For many years, I've been interested in the impacts on the therapist's self of doing our kind of work. Although such impacts will be experienced personally, they are also deeply rooted in collective, social, political and even ethical dimensions of practice. Some impacts are positive, and these won't be neglected. But what has emerged is that, to paraphrase Freud, the therapy work is not only impossible, but also very difficult.

Impacts range from the perception that the work has made us physically ill, to a range of psychological issues including apathy, depression and disassociation. The idea of the Wounded Healer is constantly hovering, both literally and metaphorically. Yet this idea can also be abused so as to close down exploration of the Shadow aspects of being a therapist.

A natural extension of this interest has been to probe as deeply as possible into *the choice of profession*. Whether therapy is an art, a craft, a vocation – a common debate – there is little sharing and exploring in a safe and contained group setting of the reasons why we become therapists. So, if it is significant that therapists are rendered vulnerable by the work – or, as Nick will present, attracted to the fruits of power - something that anticipates this vulnerability might have been there all along.

Therapist vulnerability, coupled with therapist power, seems to invite the use of mentoring as a tool. Nick and Andrew will mentor each other, and participants will work in a mentoring style in small groups and pairs. There will also be other experiential work.

Venue: Stillpoint Spaces, 23 Clerkenwell Close, London EC1R 0AA, <http://www.stillpoint-lab-london.com/> We are very sorry but the Lab is only accessible by two flights of stairs. There are four toilets, all gender and all stalls.

To book a place on this workshop or to discuss whether it is right for you, also to discuss a reduction in fee, email Nick on nick@3-c.coop or phone him on 01726 817620.