



Dr Neil Scott Gordon

Working with Challenging Clients

23rd October 2004, 10am to 4.30pm

Senate House, Malet Street, London WC1E 7HU

A feature of my work is that the men with whom I come into contact do not fit neatly into some diagnostic classification system. Many have a variety of personality disorder classifications, have abused drugs and alcohol, often have experienced severe sexual abuse and physical violence as children and many now experience transient soft psychotic symptoms, depression and suicidal ideation. Working with the complexity of this presentation is a feature of therapy in high secure settings often leaving you, as the therapist, wondering where to start.

In this workshop, we will focus on how to work with challenging and difficult to engage clients, whatever the setting. We will also explore the relationship between theory and practice offering a critique of context stripped (Mishler, 1986) theorising. As Schön (1994) has argued those of us who inhabit the world of practice are operating in the day-to-day complexity of “the swamp” and as a consequence are legitimately suspicious of those (often far removed from this world) who inform us and instruct us of how we should proceed.

The workshop will provide insights into the micro world of therapists in high secure settings attempting to capture how these swamp workers’ manage the complexity of the psychotherapeutic encounter. A core aim of the workshop is to explore with participants how useful our conceptual framework might be in helping you reflect on your personal clinical experiences with challenging clients.

Dr Neil Scott Gordon is a Nurse Consultant in Personality Disorder at Rampton High Security. He trained in psychodynamic psychotherapy in the mid 1980’s and more recently in Dialectical Behaviour Therapy and Schema Focussed approaches. He recently completed his Doctorate at The Metanoia Institute on the way practitioners adapt their therapeutic style when working with personality disordered offenders. He has been a Senior Lecturer at the Tavistock Institute & the Universities of Middlesex and North London and is currently Honorary Teaching Fellow at Sheffield Hallam University.