COMMUNITY
WESTERN PENNSYLVANIA COMMUNITY FOR PSYCHOANALYTIC THERAPIES

Syllabus:

Destructiveness Reconsidered

Speaker: Michael Mervosh, M.Ed.
Date: Monday, December 16, 2024
Time: 6:15 pm – 9 pm
Seminar
2.75 CE Credits
Fee: Free to Members; Pay-What-You Can Model to Non-Members per our Seminar Series Guidelines
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Description:

This program will look at two important psychoanalytic concepts. We will first explore a key element of Winnicott's conception of '*subject destroys object'* – how it is that a real external object (a real person, and not the internal object) is destroyed in the *developmental process* of moving from object-relating to object-usage.

Secondly, we will explore Winnicott's notion of how this destructive activity is the patient's attempt to place the therapist outside the area of omnipotent control, that is, *out in the world*. Ogden states the therapist then becomes 'the actual living, breathing, emotionally responsive external object' that is (inevitably, inescapably) 'becoming destroyed' in the developmental process leading to the patient's achievement of object-usage.

Finally, we will address how the essential therapeutic task is for the therapist to 'survive being destroyed' – exploring what it takes to survive '*because of being real'* - because we are able to do psychological work with our feelings of being destroyed and surviving destruction.

"Good Will Hunting" illustrates the uniquely complicated ways that individuals become more real and more connected to another through surviving experiences of being destroyed - as emotional ties between various characters are being established, destroyed, and potentially re-established throughout the film. We will discuss in small group selected key exchanges in the film, and relate them to our own case experiences, and life experiences as well.

Program Objectives:

At the end of the program, participants will be able to:

1. Describe the difference between object relating and object usage.

2. Explain Winnicott's notion of '*becoming real because destroyed, becoming destroyed because real'.*

3. Describe how the analyst's survival of 'maximum destructiveness' creates '*externality'* for the patient.

References/Readings/Media

Movie: **Good Will Hunting (1997) On: Amazon Prime Video, Google Play, Apple TV**

Please watch the movie before class. Clips will be shown.

Main Reading:

Ogden, T. (2016) Destruction Reconceived: On Winnicott's 'The Use of an Object and Relating through Identifications'. *The Int'l Journal of Psychoanalysis*, (97)(5):1243-1262.

Supplemental Reading:

Harding, C. (2006) Chapter One, Making Sense of Aggression, Destructiveness & Violence,

Additional Readings:

Beritzhoff, L. (2018). Creating the freedom to move: Reply to Goldberg and Grusky. *Psychoanalytic Dialogues, 28*(6), 727–732.

Cooper, S. (2018). Playing in the darkness: Use of the object and use of the subject. *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association, 66*(4), 743–765.

The Speaker: Michael Mervosh is a licensed Clinical Psychologist, psychotherapist, and founder of *MGM Psychological Associates*, located in Pittsburgh, PA. He has been devoted to full-time private practice, providing intensive individual and group psychotherapy for 30 years.

He has also been in continuous training and supervision over the past 30 years. Over time, he has incorporated approaches from Object-Relations, Jungian Analysis, Developmental Character Psychology, and Psychodynamic psychotherapy. He has a long-standing immersion in the field of mythological studies, particularly through the works of Joseph Campbell. For additional information on the background and experience of the speaker, or to request the speaker's CV, please contact inquiries@wpacommunity.org or see our faculty section on our website at www.wpacommunity.org

Who Should Attend and Instructional Level of Activity: Psychologists, psychiatrists, social workers, counselors with interest in advancing their understanding and application of contemporary psychoanalytic concepts. Instructional level is suited for practicing mental health clinicians. Intermediate level of instructional programming.

Continuing Education Credits: 2.75 *The Western Pennsylvania Community for Psychoanalytic Therapies is approved by the American Psychological Association to sponsor continuing education for psychologists. The Western Pennsylvania Community for Psychoanalytic Therapies maintains responsibility for this program and its content.*

Attendance: To receive continuing education credit, you must sign in and be present for the entire seminar. You will be asked to complete an evaluation at the end of the session.

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