



COMMUNITY

WESTERN PENNSYLVANIA COMMUNITY
FOR PSYCHOANALYTIC THERAPIES

Syllabus: TO WITNESS

Speaker: Sharon Bernstein, PH.D.

Date: November 18, 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

For general programming questions email: inquiries@wpacommunity.org

Description:

In this seminar learners will have an opportunity to consider and think mindfully and experientially about the act of witnessing. As clients/patients we are witnessed and as psychotherapists we are witnessing. During our time together we will consider the function of witnessing—essentially studying that to be seen a human must be witnessed and therefore the therapist human must be able to see the otherness of the other. We will consider whether one can or must witness themselves.

As learners we will think about whether words can capture the experience of being witnessed or the experience of witnessing—In our time together we will consider some thoughts expressed by various writers from varying analytic perspectives. (Winnicott, Erickson, Miller, Akhtar, Stern) We will wonder together whether the aspects of ourselves that are known to ourselves (or could be known to ourselves if we open ourselves to knowing). are enhanced, deepened, and broadened by being witnessed. We will wonder if there is danger in the asymmetric relationship of therapy of a client/patient feeling determined by “being witnessed” .

Humans come to an awareness of themselves through the reflected appraisal of others. (Erik Erickson) In this seminar we will think about the various ways we witness and are witnessed. We will try to examine the phenomenon of witnessing.

Program Objectives:

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

- 1. Define the concept of witness. Define the function of witnessing.**
- 2. Discuss witnessing as an idea presented by Donnell Stern presents through the movies The Incredible Shrinking Man and Cast Away.**
- 3. Identify the importance of witnessing and being witnessed in therapeutic interactions.**

References/Readings

Stern, Donnel B. Partners In Thought: A Clinical Process Theory of Narrative, The Psychoanalytic Quarterly, 2009; Volume LXXVIII, Number 3.

Akhtar, Salman. Forgiveness: Origins, Dynamics, Psychopathology, and Technical Relevance. Psychoanalytic Quarterly, 2002; Volume 71 (2)

Media

The Incredible Shrinking Man. Available on Netflix

Cast Away . Available on Prime Video

The Speaker: Sharon Bernstein is a licensed private practice psychotherapist in the Point Breeze neighborhood of Pittsburgh. Sharon has been practicing psychotherapy for 40 years with people of all ages. Beginning in 1976 at St Francis Community Mental Health Center as a consultant and mental health educator to parents and teachers as part of the National Institute of Mental Health growth grant, where she spent 23 years in various roles, Sharon has evolved into an analytically oriented therapist for children, adolescents, and adults. Sharon has been supervising newer psychotherapists who are interested in developing their analytically oriented skills.

Sharon received a Ph.D from the University of Pittsburgh Department of Counselor Education.

She has studied and been supervised in various theoretical perspectives including: Object Relations, Child/Adolescent Development, Family Systems, and Relational Psychotherapy. She has studied various modalities of psychotherapy.

Sharon is a member of the American Psychological Association and a member of the Greater Pittsburgh Psychological Association. She is an ongoing member of several peer supervision groups. She helped to develop and continues to nurture and participate with Keeping Our Work Alive a continuing long-term study seminar.

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. *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.

The Western Pennsylvania Community for Psychoanalytic Therapies values cultural and social diversity. Full participation in the educational activities of the Community is available to any qualified individual regardless of age, race, creed, gender, disability, sexual orientation, or ethnic background.

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FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION on the background and experience of faculty, on fees and cancellation/refund policies, our general Continuing Education procedures, and complaint procedures, email inquiries@wpacommunity.org, or write to Western Pennsylvania Community for Psychoanalytic Therapies, 145 44th Street, Pittsburgh, PA 15201, or go to our website at www.wpacommunity.org

There is no commercial support or potential conflict of interest for this program.