

From Othering and Exclusion to Acceptance:  
*Therapeutic Interventions for Stigmatised Clients*  
Video Course  
Christiane Sanderson

Video Course  
CPD/CE credits: 6

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In today's world, most of us are anxious and battling our personal demons - whether we are therapists or clients. Mental health problems are common, and on the rise, affecting thousands of us. Despite this, there is still a strong stigma around those suffering from or asking for help for mental health issues. This is exacerbated when people with mental health problems experience discrimination - being passed up for promotions, steady job roles, avoidance by friends, families refusing to acknowledge it... there is only a very fine line dividing stigma and discrimination. While stigma is the inherent attitude we have about someone with mental health issues, discrimination is acting negatively based upon that prejudice.

Erving Goffman's seminal work from 1963 delineated stigma as an attribute that discredits individuals, resulting in their exclusion from full societal acceptance. **Outdated but inherent institutional biases and professional labelling only work towards entrenching these attitudes, thereby engendering a milieu of social injustice, marginalisation, and compromised mental health.** It even influences how society, institutions and the justice system view those suffering from mental health issues.

In combination, these can lead to *self-stigma* wherein perceived, and direct experience of stigma is internalised by clients who then introject associated negative attitudes about their mental health status into their core identity, believing themselves inadequate, incompetent, weak, unreliable or solely responsible for their poor mental health.

Moreover, those associated with stigmatised individuals or groups such as family, friends, or mental health professionals can also themselves be stigmatised through a process known as ***courtesy, or (dis)courtesy stigmatisation*** wherein they provoke disapproval merely by associating with a stigmatised individual or group.

As psychotherapists, psychologists and counsellors, we must proactively create safe therapeutic spaces conducive to open exploration of our clients' experiences, steering clear of stigmatising language or attitudes while fostering an environment of inclusivity and empowerment. Embracing cultural humility and promoting epistemic equality can serve as potent tools in mitigating further stigmatisation and reinstating our clients' autonomy and dignity.



This webinar will begin by looking at how trauma and mental health-related stigma is predicated on: social, institutional and/or professional stigma. We will then evaluate how understanding the intricate interplay between trauma and mental health-related stigma becomes imperative, as it emanates from a complex web of historical, political and economic disparities. **Combined with systemic attitudes ingrained in professionals and institutions, this confluence often precipitates self-stigma**, wherein individuals internalise societal prejudices about their mental health, fostering a deep sense of inadequacy and deterring themselves from seeking assistance. We will explore **how this can lead to traumatisation and a fear of seeking help in case they encounter further stigmatisation, which can exacerbate a deterioration in their mental health, chronic shame, isolation and loneliness.**

Further, we will delve into psychological manifestations, witnessing how stigma can lead to:

- **Emotional dysregulation:** Heightened responses of anxiety, depression, and anger become the unwelcome companions of those stigmatized
- **Chronic shame:** A pervasive cloak of shame and worthlessness descends, corroding self-esteem and well-being
- **Denial of symptoms:** Stigmatized individuals may find themselves denying or downplaying their mental health challenges, further deepening their distress and impeding their engagement with therapy
- **Social withdrawal:** Stigma becomes a force driving individuals into isolation, severing ties with supportive networks and deepening feelings of loneliness
- **Impaired self-concept:** The erosion of one's identity and self-worth leaves behind feelings of incompetence and self-doubt, shaping every interaction and decision

Through this exploration, participants will:

- Recognize the intricate facets of stigma and its profound psychological impacts
- Assess how stigma influences help-seeking behaviours and shapes individual journeys
- Explore the contextual factors that fuel the perpetuation of stigma in our societies
- Examine the ripple effects of courtesy stigma on healthcare professionals and service provision
- Develop the skills needed to address trauma and stigma within therapeutic contexts, with a strong emphasis on inclusivity
- Learn effective techniques to navigate emotional dysregulation, chronic shame, and impaired self-concept
- Implement strategies rooted in cultural humility and epistemic equality, empowering clients and forging pathways toward healing while mitigating further stigmatisation

#### Learning Objectives:

- Discern the multifaceted nature of stigma and its manifestations and evaluate the impact of stigma on individuals and their proclivity towards seeking assistance
- Examine contextual determinants contributing to the perpetuation of stigma
- Analyse the repercussions of courtesy stigma on healthcare professionals and service delivery
- **Discuss how to address trauma and stigma within therapeutic contexts, emphasizing inclusivity and empowerment**
- Apply techniques to effectively address shame, humiliation, and self-blame
- Implement strategies of cultural humility and epistemic equality to empower clients and mitigate further stigmatization

#### About the speaker



**Christiane Sanderson BSc, MSc.** is an Honorary Senior Lecturer in Psychology at the University of Roehampton, of London with 35 years of experience working with survivors of childhood sexual abuse and sexual violence. She has delivered consultancy, continuous professional development and professional training for parents, teachers, social workers, nurses, therapists, counsellors, solicitors, the NSPCC, the Catholic Safeguarding Advisory Committee, the Methodist Church, the Metropolitan Police Service, SOLACE, the Refugee Council, Birmingham City Council Youth Offending Team, and HMP Bronzefield.

She is the author of *Counselling Skills for Working with Shame*, *Counselling Skills for Working with Trauma: Healing from Child Sexual Abuse, Sexual Violence and Domestic Abuse*, *Counselling Adult Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse*, 3rd edition, *Counselling Survivors of Domestic Abuse*, *The Seduction of Children: Empowering Parents and Teachers to Protect Children from Child Sexual Abuse*, and *Introduction to Counselling Survivors of Interpersonal Trauma*, all published by Jessica Kingsley Publishers. She has also written *The Warrior Within: A One in Four Handbook to Aid Recovery from Sexual Violence*; *The Spirit Within: A One in Four Handbook to Aid Recovery from Religious Sexual Abuse Across All Faiths* and *Responding to Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse: A pocket guide for professionals, partners, families and friends* for the charity *One in Four* for whom she is a trustee.

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