

Parentification: The Hidden Weight of Reversed Attachment Video Course

Dr Kathrin Stauffer

Video Course
CPD hours: 3 / CE credits: N/A

Price: £69



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In a healthy attachment relationship, the caregiver intuitively attunes to and mirrors the baby. This process both helps the baby organise his or her experience and also constitutes a central part of forming an attachment bond. However, what happens when the caregiver is unable to do this? One possibility is that the baby *reverses* the process and attunes to, and mirrors, the caregiver - because a reversed attachment is better than none at all for a baby.

This phenomenon, known as parentification, represents a dysfunctional yet often overlooked aspect of childhood development. Instead of receiving care, these children provide it, becoming parents to their caregivers. While at the time this is a remarkable solution to a challenging situation, its repercussions may ripple far into adulthood: Potentially large chunks of the mind that should be available to contribute to a sense of self end up being confiscated by another person. Difficulties separating from this person then go hand in hand with difficulties forming a clear identity.

We will distinguish between **Emotional parentification** and **Instrumental parentification** which make very different demands on a child and typically take place at different stages of a child's life. Both can have long-lasting, inter-generational, detrimental effects. In this therapeutically-oriented webinar, we will explore both these classifications as well as their ramifications for later life.

We will examine the role of parent gender in parentification, as some recent research has highlighted some differences in outcomes depending on the gender of the parent and of the child. However the main focus of the Workshop will be on Emotional parentification during the Attachment period, because this is the form of parentification that leaves the deepest scars.

Specifically, we will **delve deeper into the intergenerational transmission of parentification**. Parentification is often transmitted across generations, in part due to attachment issues in childhood that continue to affect people well into adulthood.



Parentified children, including many therapists, often carry the weight of this reversed attachment throughout their lives. The psychological impacts are profound, leaving individuals grappling with a complex array of challenges:

- **Identity Confusion:** Struggling to establish a distinct sense of self, parentified individuals may find themselves caught in a perpetual tug-of-war between the caregiver false self they've adopted and the wounded, authentic self that yearns for recognition and love.
- **Difficulty Receiving Care:** Despite their adeptness in providing care, these individuals may struggle to receive care both from self and from others. Moreover, the fracture in their personality may leave them ill-equipped to navigate reciprocal relationships where giving and taking are well balanced.
- **Emotional Fragmentation:** **The division between the caregiving false self and their more authentic deeper feelings represents an internal split**, which can make it challenging to access deeper feelings of being loved and nurtured and therefore feeling happy and fulfilled.

This workshop offers a unique opportunity to explore the roots and ramifications of parentification, shedding light on:

- **Attachment History and Mechanisms:** Gain a deeper understanding of attachment theory and the intricate mechanisms underlying parentification and compulsive caregiving
- **Exploring Consequences:** Delve into the lasting impact of parentification on individuals' lives, examining how it shapes relationships, sense of self, and overall well-being
- **Therapeutic Approaches:** **Discover key therapeutic interventions aimed at improving the manifestations of parentification, with a particular focus on addressing difficulties in receiving care**
- **Navigating Self-Care Challenges:** Learn to navigate the complexities of self-care, recognizing that the journey to kindness and compassion towards oneself may require patience and detailed exploration. Knowing about parentification has the advantage of helping us understand that self-care for many therapists is difficult and may place them at risk from burnout.

This webinar will help us:

- Understand the concept of parentification and its impact on childhood development, particularly how children assume caregiving roles due to disrupted or missing attachment dynamics
- Recognize the psychological impacts of parentification, including identity turmoil, difficulty receiving care, and emotional fragmentation, and their implications for relationships and well-being
- Cultivate practical strategies for navigating self-care challenges, fostering patience, resilience, and self-compassion for both therapists and clients
- Through case consultations, refine skills to devise effective therapeutic interventions for clients impacted by parentification, demonstrating empathy, insight, and cultural sensitivity

Through a blend of theory, experiential exercises, and case consultations, participants at this workshop will embark on a journey to navigate the intricate terrain of reversed attachment relationships. Hopefully they will emerge from this journey with more compassion and some therapeutic skills to recognise and work with the issues resulting from reverse attachments. Join us as we unravel the layers of parentification and pave the way towards healing and wholeness.

Learning Objectives:



- **Implement body psychotherapeutic and relational psychotherapy interventions aimed at addressing parentification**, focusing on improving self-care, exploring the deeper dynamic, and integrating fragmented aspects of self
- Discuss practical strategies for navigating self-care challenges, fostering patience, resilience, and self-compassion for both therapists and clients
- **Participate in experiential exercises to deepen understanding of parentification and apply theoretical concepts to real-life scenarios**, enhancing therapeutic skills and clinical practice

About the speaker

Kathrin Stauffer PhD, UKCP Registered Body Psychotherapist, is the author of 'Emotional Neglect and the Adult in Therapy: Lifelong Consequences to a Lack of Early Attunement' (W.W. Norton 2020). She was born and educated in Switzerland. Originally a research biochemist, she retrained at the Chiron Centre for Body Psychotherapy. She lives in Cambridge and works in private practice as a body and humanistic psychotherapist, EMDR practitioner, trainer and supervisor. www.stauffer.co.uk

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Questions and requests for information: customerservices@nscience.co.uk

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customerservices@nscience.co.uk

US: +18337161044

UK/Europe:
+44(0)2070961722

Australia:
+1800861953