

**Affirmative Therapy for LGBTQ+ Clients:  
Navigating Gender, Sexuality, and the Impact of Chemsex**  
Video resource pack

**Dominic Davies & Silva Neves**

**Video Course**  
CPD / CE credits: 6



Online video access remains available for 1 year from the date you receive the video course.

This video resource pack includes:

- *Gender, Sex and Relationship Diversities: Working with LGBTQ+ Clients - Building an Affirmative Practice (Dominic Davies, CPD/CE credits: 3)*
- *Chemsex: a crutch to deal with shame & stigma? Helping LGBTQ+ clients find safety & grounding (Silva Neves, CPD/CE credits: 3)*

This video course bundle brings together two highly relevant and timely courses designed to equip psychotherapists and counselors with the knowledge and skills to work affirmatively with LGBTQ+ clients. The first course, "Gender, Sex, and Relationship Diversities: Working with LGBTQ+ Clients", delves into the unique challenges that LGBTQ+ individuals face when seeking mental health care. Participants will gain an understanding of the diverse gender identities, sexual orientations, and relationship styles that present in the therapy room. This course emphasizes the importance of creating an affirmative, non-judgmental therapeutic space that challenges heteronormativity and addresses the stigma and microaggressions that LGBTQ+ clients often encounter in society and within clinical settings. Therapists will develop cultural competence in working with Gender, Sex, and Relationship Diversity (GSRD) clients, using case studies and reflective exercises to adapt their practices.

Building on this foundation, the second course, "Chemsex: A Crutch to Deal with Shame & Stigma?", focuses on the increasingly prevalent issue of chemsex among gay, bi, and LGBTQ+ individuals. This course explores the complex motivations behind chemsex participation, including the burden of loneliness, stigma, and internalized homophobia. Participants will learn how to assess chemsex behaviors through a biopsychosocial lens, and will be equipped with harm minimization techniques to help clients engage in safer use. A trauma-informed approach is emphasized, particularly through the 3-phase model for treating the underlying shame and stigma driving chemsex behaviors. This course provides essential insights into building therapeutic collaboration with clients and developing strategies for stabilization, grounding, and recovery.



By engaging with this video course bundle, therapists will gain a nuanced understanding of working with LGBTQ+ clients, learning to address both the external challenges of societal stigma and the internal struggles around identity, shame, and substance use.

### Learning Objectives Across Both Courses:

By completing both video courses, participants will be able to:

- Discuss how diverse gender identities, sexual orientations and relationship styles are present in the therapy room and **the specific enquiries that we need to learn to make** in initial sessions; while being compassionate & completely non-judgmental
- Discuss the cultural context relevant to therapy working with GSRD clients – specifically discussing the **latest debates and polarisations** in society around gender & sexuality
- Explain **the therapeutic processes of GSRD therapy**, including skills and clinical interventions
- Discuss **how to assess Chemsex in gay and bi men, and MSM**
- Explain how to work with harm minimisation
- Explain how to treat the underlying causes, including shame.

This comprehensive video course bundle will equip practitioners with the tools and insights necessary to provide culturally competent and trauma-informed care for LGBTQ+ clients, addressing both their identity-related needs and challenges around chemsex and substance use.

This video resource pack contains two complete workshops (CPD/CE credits: 6) that cover:

#### Part 1: Gender, Sex and Relationship Diversities: Working with LGBTQ+ Clients - Building an Affirmative Practice (Dominic Davies, CPD/CE credits: 3)

Research has shown more people are identifying as *non-heterosexual* than ever before – making it imperative for psychotherapists, counsellors and psychologists to update themselves with Gender, Sex & Relationship (GSRD) Diversities. This becomes a key consideration as **we are increasingly called upon to effectively provide therapeutic services that meet the specific needs of clients who identify as LGBTQ+**. Furthermore, latest figures show that up to 4.5% of adult population may identify as gender-diverse, **while an even higher percentage may have questions about their own gender identities – questions, that are increasingly relevant in our clinical settings as therapists.**

Even though there has been greater visibility in recent years, LGBTQIA+ individuals continue to be more likely to experience mental-health difficulties – owing to the **overarching presence of societal stigma**. Also, they are **more likely to encounter microaggressions** when seeking mental health support, often expecting to meet with a lack of culturally competent care.

This intellectually stimulating and practical webinar by Dominic Davies, who specialises in Gender, Sexual and Relationship Diversity (LGBTQI+) and is the Founder and CEO of Pink Therapy; aims to update us on the current best practice guidelines that inform working with GSRD clients. The overall goal is to present an overview of the diverse gender identities, sexual orientations and relationship styles, **with a particular emphasis on clinical practice and how we can adapt the therapeutic process to meet the specific needs of these client groups.**

Through an interactive workshop, we will discuss:

- How diverse gender identities, sexual orientations and relationship styles are present in the therapy room and **the specific enquiries that we need to learn to make** in initial sessions; while being compassionate & completely non-judgmental
- An awareness of the cultural context relevant to therapy working with GSRD clients – specifically discussing the **latest debates and polarisations** in society around gender & sexuality
- An overview of the core theoretical concepts in GSRD therapy – including how we can **avoid being heteronormative in practice**



- Understanding some of **the unique therapeutic processes of GSRD therapy**, including skills and clinical interventions which will be illustrated by case studies.
- An opportunity to reflect on our own blind spots, prejudices, and learning growth

#### Learning Objectives:

- Discuss how diverse gender identities, sexual orientations and relationship styles are present in the therapy room and **the specific enquiries that we need to learn to make** in initial sessions; while being compassionate & completely non-judgmental
- Discuss the cultural context relevant to therapy working with GSRD clients – specifically discussing the **latest debates and polarisations** in society around gender & sexuality
- Explain **the therapeutic processes of GSRD therapy**, including skills and clinical interventions

#### Part 2: Chemsex: a crutch to deal with shame & stigma? Helping LGBTQ+ clients find safety & grounding (Silva Neves, CPD/CE credits: 3)

As therapists, we are aware of the casual use of psychoactive substances in social gatherings. We understand that in social gatherings, substance use helps to loosen inhibitions, strengthen social bonds, reinforce connection and a sense of belonging. It also acts as a tool to seek out and enhance pleasure, to transcend the sense of self and the world.

Chemsex works much the same way for gay and bi men and LGBTQ+ individuals. Typically, three specific drugs (*chems*) are involved: Methamphetamine (Crystal Meth), Mephedrone (Mcat, Meth), GHB and GBL (G, Geebs or Liquid Ecstasy). Ketamine and cocaine are sometimes also considered chems. These drugs facilitate sustained arousal and induce feel-good emotions and a feeling of instant rapport with sexual partners. Sex can last for hours, or even days with multiple sexual partners.

Chemsex mostly takes place in private sex parties, in someone's home, behind closed doors. **Currently, chemsex is so prevalent among gay men and MSM that health professionals call it an epidemic affecting much of the gay community.**

However, Chemsex is not just a quick party high, it has deeper underlying issues:

- Gay, bi and LGBTQ+ people often try to cope with the burdened life history of loneliness, shame and emptiness in various ways, including casual sex encounters, fuelled by *chems*
- Other reasons for taking part in chemsex are associated with feelings of stigma and **issues around self-esteem, worries about sexuality and HIV status and internalised homophobia**
- Chemsex creates important issues around consent during sexual encounters, as often individuals lose their capacity to consent under the influence of drugs
- There are mental health issues emerging which include **sadness, anhedonia i.e., the inability to experience pleasure, irritability, undue anxiety, intense suspiciousness, emotional outbursts, social anxiety, and, in more severe cases, hallucinations, paranoia and psychosis**
- Chemsex can start off as being an intense, exciting or even liberating experience at the beginning, but as it involves very potent and addictive substances, it can lead to a state where substance use may become the major source of pleasure, connection and coping
- The risk of being infected with HIV, hepatitis B and C, as well as other sexually transmitted diseases is many times higher for individuals taking part in chemsex

As therapists, for us to be able to help our clients who take part in chemsex to:

- avoid the damaging physical and mental consequences
- to understand the ethical issues around consent



- to work with harm minimisation
- to explore and heal from the underlying issues of shame, stigma and loss of self-esteem

It becomes vital for us to create a non-judgmental attitude and cultural competency in communication with our clients which includes:

- **Using biopsychosocial and sexology-informed approach**, including a GSRD (Gender, Sexual and Relationship Diversity) aware method to assess chemsex in our clients
- Building a therapeutic collaboration with clients and gradually helping them with safer use for stabilisation and grounding
- Learning how to treat the underlying causes of Chemsex with the trauma-informed 3-phase model: stabilisation, processing and integration

At this intellectually-stimulating and practically-oriented webinar, we will **explore the mental and emotional issues around chemsex, substance and alcohol use during sexual encounters, and reflect on strategies for harm minimisation** so as to create opportunities for our clients to lead healthy, fulfilling lives with confidence in their sexual identities and practices.

In this seminar, delegates will learn:

- The aetiology of Chemsex
- **How to assess Chemsex in gay and bi men, and MSM** – The assessment will comprise a biopsychosocial and sexology-informed approach to understand clients' erotic mind and sexual behaviours. This assessment will also include a GSRD-aware method, challenging heteronormativity
- How to work with harm minimisation. This is a sex-positive method in helping clients reduce the risk of Chemsex rather than an abstinence method. Drawing on the work from Chemsex pioneer David Stuart, therapists will learn how to build a therapeutic collaboration with clients and gradually help them with safer use for stabilisation and grounding. Behavioural techniques, as well as psychological resourcing will be used
- How to treat the underlying causes, including shame, using the 3-phase model. Once clients have enough grounding in safer use, therapists will learn how to treat the underlying causes of Chemsex with the trauma-informed 3-phase model: stabilisation, processing and integration. **Therapists will also learn how to work effectively with shame, throughout the treatment plan**

#### Learning Objectives:

- Discuss **how to assess Chemsex in gay and bi men, and MSM**
- Explain how to work with harm minimisation
- Explain how to treat the underlying causes, including shame.

#### About the speakers

**Dominic Davies FNCIP, FNCPS.** (he/him) is the Founder and CEO of Pink Therapy. He has been a psychotherapist, clinical sexologist and practice consultant for 40 years. He directs an international two-year post-qualifying online training in GSRD Psychotherapy.

Over the years, Dominic has received several honours and awards for his pioneering work in gender and sexuality. In 2015 he received the Practitioner award from the Sexualities Section of the British Psychological Society. He is the only non-psychologist ever to receive this award.

In 2016 he was made a Fellow of the National Counselling & Psychotherapy Society, and in 2018 Dominic received the Lifetime Achievement Award for Sexual Freedom.



Dominic has also been made a National Council of Integrative Psychotherapists Fellow. Fellowship is the highest level of membership for these professional bodies.

In 2021 Dominic was named one of 50 Distinguished Gender and Sexual Health Revolutionaries by the University of Minnesota.

Dominic (with Charles Neal) co-edited the first three British textbooks on working with LGBT clients published in 1996 and 2000, and he has contributed numerous other papers and chapters to the literature of this emerging field. He has presented at many national and international conferences. After almost a quarter of a century, he has co-edited (with Silva Neves) two more Pink Therapy textbooks aimed at GSRD therapists and Sex & Relationship Therapists in Europe. *Erotically Queer* and *Relationally Queer* (Routledge). He also co-authored with Silva Neves a seminal chapter on Gender, Sex and Relationship Therapy as a theoretical model in the Sage Handbook of Counselling and Psychotherapy (5th edition)

Dominic has been referred to as one of the grandparents of Gender, Sex and Relationship Diversity Therapy in the UK and Europe.

**Silva Neves** is a COSRT-accredited and UKCP-registered psychosexual and relationship psychotherapist, and a trauma psychotherapist. He is a Pink Therapy Clinical Associate. Silva specialises working with people from the LGBTQ+ communities. He is a COSRT-accredited clinical supervisor and a Course Director for CICS (Contemporary Institute of Clinical Sexology).

He is the author of two books: *Compulsive Sexual Behaviours, A Psycho-Sexual Treatment Guide for Clinicians* (Routledge) and *Sexology: The Basics* (Routledge). He also co-edited two books with Dominic Davies: *Erotically Queer* and *Relationally Queer* (Routledge). He is a member of the editorial team for the leading journal *Sexual and Relationship Therapy*.

Silva is the recipient of the Sexual Freedom Ally Award 2023. He often contributes to the media on various sex and relationship topics and speaks internationally.

**There is no known commercial support for this program**

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[customerservices@nscience.co.uk](mailto:customerservices@nscience.co.uk)

US: +18337161044

UK/Europe:  
+44(0)2070961722

Australia:  
+1800861953



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