

When Trauma Work Overwhelms: *Counter-Transference, Resilience, Transformation*

An online webinar over two evenings with
Christiane Sanderson

Zoom Webinar
15 & 22 November 2024, Fridays
Times on both days:
6:00 pm – 9:00 pm, London UK
1:00 pm – 4:00 pm, New York, USA

CPD/CE credits: 6

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As psychotherapists and psychologists, we find meaning in trauma work. It offers profound opportunities to witness human resilience, allowing us to connect deeply with the core strengths of the human spirit. The journey from devastation to recovery is not just about healing clients—it's about finding purpose in being a part of that transformation. Through this work, we connect deeply with the core strengths that define the human experience.

Yet, this work is not without its shadows. The same path that brings us close to healing also exposes us to intense suffering. How do we process the emotional residue, for example, that lingers after helping a client confront childhood abuse? **The complex emotional landscape of trauma work can be both deeply fulfilling and exceptionally challenging, leaving us grappling with feelings of sadness, helplessness, and vulnerability.**

Trauma work carries a significant emotional toll. The continuous exposure to clients' traumatic narratives can subtly erode our emotional resilience, leading to secondary or vicarious trauma. Have you noticed how your worldview shifts after hearing countless stories of violence? **The world starts feeling unsafe, hypervigilance creeps in, and our sense of well-being begins to fray.**

But it doesn't stop there. The trauma we witness can stir our own unhealed wounds. **How do we handle the resurgence of narcissistic needs, trauma-induced dissociation, or even shame?** These reactions are not just emotionally distressing; they can disrupt our professional effectiveness, leading to counter-transferential reactions—trauma reenactments, projections, or even denial of our clients' reality.



Managing these intense emotional responses while bearing witness to trauma puts us at risk for burnout and vicarious trauma. **The cumulative weight of these experiences can lead to emotional exhaustion, compassion fatigue, and a profound sense of disillusionment.** Recognising these signs early is crucial—it's not just about survival, but about transforming these experiences into opportunities for self-care as well as personal and professional growth.

This training is meticulously designed to equip us, as practitioners, with strategies to mitigate the challenges inherent in trauma work while amplifying its deeply rewarding aspects. Through a blend of clinical vignettes and hands-on exercises, this training, designed by renowned Trauma expert Christiane Sanderson, will empower us to find greater meaning and purpose in our work, nurture hope, and build a robust framework for resilience. Emphasizing the importance of self-awareness, self-care, and a supportive professional community; the training underscores the role of mutual support in sustaining resilience and contributing to the collective strength of the field.

To thrive in trauma work, we must cultivate what can be termed as **counter-resilience**—the ability to transform the psychological impacts of our work into sources of personal strength and professional competence. How can we turn these challenges into growth? **Reflective practices, mindfulness, and a deep awareness of how this work affects us are essential.** By harnessing these practices, we can foster resilience, emerging not just as survivors of the emotional toll, but as stronger, more capable professionals.

Experiential learning is a cornerstone of this training. Participants will engage in self-reflective exercises that encourage them to explore and articulate the personal motivations and rewards that drive their work in trauma. These activities will **help participants deepen their capacity for empathy, compassion, and accurate interpretation of clients' experiences, even when confronted with difficult emotions such as rage or shame.** Furthermore, participants will engage in small group discussions and peer feedback sessions, fostering a collaborative environment where they can share insights, challenges, and strategies for managing counter-transferential challenges, including clients' projections, projective identification, and emotional attacks.

Through this webinar, we will:

- Deepen awareness of the cumulative effects of bearing witness to trauma, including the emotional and psychological impacts on both client and practitioner
- Identify and manage specific counter-trauma reactions, including the re-emergence of narcissistic needs, trauma-induced dissociation, rage, and shame
- Recognise the impact of unresolved personal trauma on professional practice and develop strategies to address these influences
- **Navigate counter-transference by maintaining presence, empathy, and objectivity in the face of clients' projections, projective identification, and emotional attacks**
- Cultivate resilience by finding and sustaining meaning and purpose in trauma work, ensuring ongoing motivation and alignment with personal values
- Build and sustain a supportive professional community through the sharing of experiences, challenges, and self-care strategies
- Develop and implement effective self-care practices that foster self-compassion, counter-resilience, and vicarious transformation in the context of trauma work
- **Enhance capacity for empathy, compassion, and accurate interpretations of clients' experiences, even when confronted with challenging emotions such as rage or shame**

Overall, participants will learn to leverage their awareness of the cumulative effects of bearing witness to trauma, maintaining professional and personal boundaries, and ensuring effective therapeutic interventions while managing intense emotional reactions.

Learning Objectives:

- Discuss the cumulative effects of bearing witness to trauma, including the emotional and psychological impacts on both client and practitioner
- Identify and manage specific counter-trauma reactions, including the re-emergence of narcissistic needs, trauma-induced dissociation, rage, and shame
- Discuss the impact of unresolved personal trauma on professional practice and develop strategies to address these influences
- **Navigate counter-transference by maintaining presence, empathy, and objectivity in the face of clients' projections, projective identification, and emotional attacks**
- Develop and implement effective self-care practices that foster self-compassion, counter-resilience, and vicarious transformation in the context of trauma work
- Explain how to maintain professional and personal boundaries while managing intense emotional reactions and ensuring effective therapeutic interventions

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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