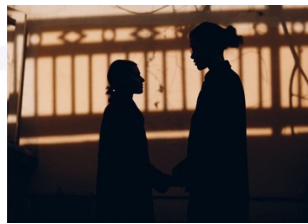


Maternal Secrets:  
*The Unspoken Transmission of the Motherline*  
Video Course  
Dr Brooke Laufer, Psy.D.

Video Course  
CPD hours: 3



Online video access remains available for 1 year or 3 years from the date you receive the video course, depending on the ticket type.

*"Tightly guarded family secrets, awkward pauses in communication, missing photographs, hidden letters, unexplained tears at the mention of a city far away, phobically avoided television shows, and telling slips of tongue, together constitute the invisible pathway through which traumatic experiences of one generation are passed on to the next."*

— Gabriele Schwab, *Haunting Legacies: Violent Histories and Transgenerational Trauma*

*"What is silenced in one generation becomes the whisper of the next."*

Mothers carry both their stories and their silences.

What is not spoken—the withheld grief, the unnamed fear, the forbidden memory—does not vanish. It alters shape, finding expression in a daughter's anxiety, a son's distance, an inherited caution that seems to have no origin.

In this one-evening seminar, Dr Brooke Laufer, clinical psychologist and internationally recognised specialist in maternal mental health, invites us to **explore how secrets move through the maternal line—not through words, but through gestures, omissions, and embodied traces**. Drawing on psychoanalytic, archetypal, and contemporary trauma perspectives, Brooke examines how unprocessed experiences of loss, abuse, displacement, and social constraint become part of a family's emotional DNA—transmitted through both psychological pathways and, as emerging research suggests, epigenetic ones.

### **The Silence Beneath the Story**

A mother's silence may arise from protection, shame, or cultural expectation. Yet these silences often carry the greatest psychic weight. When pain cannot be named, it becomes encrypted within the body and passed on through relational cues, dreams, and unconscious repetitions.



*She sits across from you—articulate, insightful—describing a childhood that sounds unremarkable. And yet something feels absent: not what was said, but what remains carefully unspoken. There are gaps in the narrative. Subjects her mother never discussed. A pervasive sense that certain questions must never be asked.*

*As the therapeutic work deepens, you begin to notice: she holds her body the way her mother did. She startles at the same triggers her mother avoided. A dread without name threads between them—alive in the present, inherited from the past. It feels entirely, devastatingly real.*

**This is the legacy of maternal silence. Not the trauma itself, but its ghost—transmitted through omission, encrypted in behaviour, and inscribed in the psyche and, emerging research suggests, potentially in the nervous system of the next generation.**

Brooke will trace this process—from Freud's "family romance" to contemporary theories of epigenetic and symbolic inheritance—showing how therapists can identify the faint outlines of secrets that shape a client's inner world.

These clinical encounters reveal how silence itself can function as communication—a message delivered in the language of absence.

### **The Psychic Architecture of the Secret**

Drawing on the work of Abraham & Torok, M. Gerard Fromm, and Julia Kristeva, **this training explores the notion of the "crypt"—an internal tomb where an ancestor's unspoken experience remains sealed but alive.** In therapy, these cryptic transmissions emerge as uncanny repetitions: an inexplicable fear of men, a pattern of abandoning relationships, a sudden grief that belongs to someone else.

As Fromm writes: "What human beings cannot contain of their experience—what has been traumatically overwhelming, unbearable, unthinkable—falls out of social discourse, but very often on to and into the next generation as an affective sensitivity or a chaotic urgency."

Understanding these hidden architectures allows therapists to approach inherited material with both reverence and curiosity—transforming the secret from a haunting presence into something thinkable and speakable.

### **The Maternal Line as Conduit**

Brooke situates this transmission specifically within the motherline—the bodily, emotional, and symbolic connection between women across generations.

While the maternal body gives physical life, it can also convey unhealed psychic material: a grief that never found words, a violation never told, a cultural or religious silence that forbade mourning. This transmission occurs through multiple pathways:

- **Psychological mechanisms:** Repetition compulsion, projective identification, and relational enactments
- **Symbolic transmission:** Dreams, somatic symptoms, phobic avoidances that have no clear origin in the client's own experience
- **Biological pathways:** Emerging research on epigenetics suggests that trauma may alter gene expression, with some studies indicating these alterations could potentially be inherited by subsequent generations

The less a mother is able to process and give meaning to her trauma, the more likely its unspoken traces will surface in her children's lives. When a mother begins to transform the unthinkable into even a tentative,



imperfect narrative, she helps protect her children from carrying the trauma's most enduring and destructive effects.

Through mythic and clinical lenses, we'll explore how mothers unconsciously communicate what they could not articulate, and how daughters metabolise that inheritance through anxiety, perfectionism, or ambivalence toward motherhood itself.

### **Why This Training, Why Now**

Therapists regularly encounter clients whose symptoms seem to exceed their own lived experience—yet make profound sense when viewed through the lens of intergenerational transmission. These clients present unique clinical challenges:

- How do you help a client grieve a loss they cannot name?
- How do you address trauma that was never explicitly disclosed?
- **How do you support a daughter in separating her own experience from her mother's un-lived life?**
- How do you hold compassion for the mother's protective silence while acknowledging its harm?

This training equips therapists to recognize when a client's story carries another's emotional signature—and offers clinical frameworks for working with inherited silence in ways that are containing, ethical, and ultimately liberating.

### **Clinical Resonance: Listening for the Unspeakable**

For therapists, the challenge is not to "excavate" secrets but to create conditions where they can safely unfold. Brooke will discuss:

- How transference and countertransference reveal intergenerational material
- How the therapist's own maternal history may echo the client's
- **Using dreams, slips, and somatic cues as entry points for hidden narratives**
- Balancing interpretation with containment—when to translate, when simply to witness
- Supporting clients in making the unspeakable speakable without retraumatization

Through clinical vignettes and discussion, participants will learn how to recognise when a client's story carries another's emotional signature—and how to help transform inherited silence into language that heals rather than binds.

### **Case Illustration**

*A woman in her thirties begins therapy for a cluster of migrating somatic symptoms — medically unexplained pains she fears signal an autoimmune illness. After months of inconclusive medical consultations, she turns to psychotherapy.*

*In early sessions, she often speaks of her mother, who spent much of her own life in bed with ambiguous ailments. The client and her siblings had learned to stay quiet and care for her, though no clear diagnosis was ever given. Gradually, fragments of the mother's history emerge: a Syrian refugee who survived both imprisonment and time in a camp before settling in Germany, she had never spoken of her past.*

*As the client begins to piece together this sealed-off story, an insight dawns — that her own chronic distress may not be uniquely hers, but the embodied echo of her mother's unprocessed suffering. In giving language to that inherited pain, she begins to release an unconscious loyalty to her mother's trauma — reclaiming her body as her own.*



## What You'll Learn

By the end of this workshop, participants will be able to:

- Identify how maternal secrets and silences transmit unconsciously through relational, symbolic, bodily, and potentially epigenetic channels
- **Understand psychoanalytic concepts of the "crypt" and "unspeakable" as frameworks for intergenerational trauma, drawing on the work of Abraham & Torok, Fromm, and Kristeva**
- Recognise clinical indicators of inherited grief, shame, or prohibition within therapeutic dialogue and somatic response—including symptoms that seem to exceed the client's own experience
- **Analyse the psychological and behavioural effects of unprocessed maternal trauma on children, including patterns of overprotection, ambivalent attachment, and relational re-enactments**
- Apply therapeutic strategies that invite expression without intrusion—using curiosity, containment, and embodied attunement to help clients voice what has long been unspeakable
- Work skilfully with transference and countertransference when maternal lineage themes emerge, including awareness of the therapist's own maternal history
- Support clients in transforming inherited silence into narrative integration and self-understanding, breaking cycles of intergenerational transmission

## Why This Matters

Every family carries stories that were never told. Some were censored by culture, some by survival, and some by love. But the psyche keeps score.

When therapists can recognise the emotional residues of these secrets, therapy becomes a space not just for the individual's healing, but for the quiet restoration of an entire lineage.

As therapists, we are uniquely positioned to help clients make sense of what they carry. To witness the unwitnessed. To speak the unspeakable. And in doing so, to interrupt cycles of transmission that have persisted for generations.

Maternal Secrets offers clinicians a rare opportunity to approach these invisible inheritances with sensitivity and depth—bringing what was unspeakable into language, and what was buried into light.

## About Dr Brooke Laufer

Dr Brooke Laufer, Psy.D., is a clinical psychologist, writer, and educator whose work explores the intersection of maternal psychology, intergenerational trauma, and depth psychology. With more than 15 years of clinical experience, she has specialized in perinatal mental health, maternal ambivalence, and the darker, less acknowledged aspects of motherhood.

Brooke is the author of *Uncovering the Act of Maternal Infanticide from a Psychological, Political, and Jungian Perspective* (Routledge, 2024), which examines the forces—personal, cultural, and archetypal—that shape maternal experience. Her work on intergenerational transmission extends from this foundation, exploring how maternal trauma—whether through action or inaction, speech or silence—shapes the psychic lives of subsequent generations. Her clinical work is informed by Jungian psychology, relational psychoanalysis, and contemporary trauma research.



Known for her intellectual rigor and clinical warmth, Brooke creates learning environments where complex, often taboo material can be explored with both honesty and compassion.

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