

Too Much, Too Soon — and Then Nothing Moves
*Pacing Trauma Therapy When Clients Rush In, Shut Down, or Pull Us
into Over-Functioning*

An online masterclass with
Professor Robert T. Muller

Zoom Webinar

28 January 2027, Thursday

Times:

6:00 pm – 9:00 pm, London UK

1:00 pm – 4:00 pm, New York, USA

CPD hours: 3



Location: Online streaming only

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depending on the ticket type)

“Some clients tell too much, too soon. Others tell us almost nothing. Both can leave the therapist working too hard.”

In trauma therapy, pacing is not simply a technical question of how much material to cover in a given session. It is a relational act, shaped in both directions: when disclosure becomes flooding, when silence becomes a form of protection, when avoidance carries more clinical meaning than the content it avoids, and when the therapist’s own wish to help begins to drive the work beyond what the client can actually use.

These are not peripheral clinical concerns. They are the problems that occupy supervision, that generate the cases therapists carry with a persistent, low-level unease—the sense that something is not quite landing, that the work is moving but not deepening, that a change of approach is needed but its nature remains unclear.

Returning to nscience after a long history of highly valued workshops in London, Dublin and online, Professor Robert T. Muller brings decades of clinical and scholarly experience to one of the most demanding questions in relational trauma work: how do we know when to move closer, when to slow down, and when our own urgency to help may be setting a pace the client cannot yet use?

In *Trauma and the Avoidant Client* and its successor *Trauma and the Struggle to Open Up*, Muller has charted the clinical terrain of the defended, the avoidant, and the client who approaches recovery obliquely—advancing toward contact and then retreating from it. This evening takes those insights into the consulting room itself: into the moment-to-moment relational negotiation of pace, the countertransference that distorts it, and the clinical discipline of learning to read both client and therapist as participants in how the work moves.



Part One: When the Client Rushes In

The client is disclosing fast. Too fast, perhaps. The sessions are intense, detailed, flooded with material. She seems engaged, willing, present. She keeps going further. The therapist keeps up.

This is not always progress.

Premature disclosure in trauma therapy can look, and feel, like the therapeutic relationship finally beginning to bear weight. The client is trusting. She is bringing the material. The question of what to slow down, and why, is not always legible in the moment.

Disclosure that outpaces the client's capacity to process is not therapeutic depth—it is flooding. And flooding, in relational trauma work, does not consolidate the therapeutic relationship. It frequently strains it, generating shame, dysregulation, and occasionally an abrupt retreat from the very contact the client seemed to be moving toward. What presents as openness may be, on closer examination, a form of approach-avoidance: the client moving fast precisely because sustained proximity feels more exposing than intensity.

In this section, Muller examines what urgency in a trauma client's presentation communicates—relationally, and about the attachment history driving it—and how therapists can read the pace of disclosure as clinical data rather than as a measure of progress. He will address how to introduce slowing without disrupting the alliance, how to work therapeutically with flooding once it has occurred, and how the relational patterns that make early rushing probable also shape what the client most needs when the momentum drops.

Part Two: When the Client Pulls Away

The sessions are calm. Organised. The client presents thoughtfully. He mentions something difficult and moves on. The therapist feels reasonably useful. The work continues. Nothing much changes.

Withdrawal in trauma therapy is among the most clinically underestimated features of long-term relational work. Not because it is difficult to observe, but because it is easy to accommodate. The client who intellectualises, who sustains a careful emotional distance, who misses the session before the difficult one—this client is not presenting as a clinical emergency. He is presenting as a well-functioning adult making reasonable use of therapy.

What he may be doing is something more precise: communicating, through the medium of avoidance, something he cannot yet approach directly. As Muller's work on the avoidant client has documented, the defended relational style is rarely simple refusal. It is a finely calibrated management of proximity—an attempt to remain in therapeutic contact without crossing into the territory where that contact becomes genuinely threatening.

Muller will explore how therapists can recognise when therapeutic stability has quietly hardened into shared avoidance—and what clinical moves, relational and interpretive, allow the work to resume its depth without collapsing the safety that made it possible. He will address silence as communication, guardedness as diagnostic information, and the specific challenge of working with clients who have constructed an entire relational style around maintaining others at a survivable distance.

Part Three: When the Therapist Starts Working Too Hard

The third pacing problem belongs to the therapist—and it is the one clinical training tends to leave out.

Trauma therapists are drawn to this work partly through a well-developed capacity for attunement. Under clinical pressure, that capacity can become a source of distortion. The impulse to reassure, to stabilise, to interpret prematurely, to function as the containing presence the client may never have had—this is not simply compassion. It is also, at times, the therapist's own anxiety finding its clinical expression.

Over-functioning in trauma therapy does not announce itself as excess. It presents as responsiveness, as thoroughness, as an unusually sustained engagement with every piece of material the client brings. Beneath the client's gratitude, something else is often being registered: a subtle, unconscious pressure to produce the kind of material, and the kind of progress, that confirms the therapy—and the therapist—is working.



This dynamic sits close to the clinical territory Muller explores in Trauma and the Struggle to Open Up: how therapist urgency, even when well-intentioned, can become part of the relational pressure the client is already struggling to manage—replicating, however inadvertently, something of the original relational trauma so difficult to bear. This section of the evening will address the countertransference signatures of over-functioning—the urgency, the excess of question-asking, the push toward insight before the ground is prepared—and how therapists can begin to work with these pulls rather than enact them. It will also examine how therapist over-functioning interacts with the two client pacing problems: how it tends to amplify rushing and to quietly ratify withdrawal.

Part Four: Finding the Therapeutic Pace

The final section draws these three pacing dilemmas into a clinical framework for thinking about pace as a relational negotiation—one that is never simply the therapist’s decision and never simply the client’s, but is always a co-construction shaped by the history, the defences, and the current relational field both parties bring to the room.

Muller will address how therapists can track relational readiness across sessions: the signs, behavioural and affective, that a client is approaching the boundary of what can currently be held, and the clinical discipline of responding to those signs without either withdrawing prematurely or pressing past them. He will examine how to build safety that is sufficiently robust to allow difficult material to surface without triggering the flooding it is designed to contain.

He will also address rupture and repair not as failures of pacing but as its most productive mechanism—the relational events through which a more truthful and sustainable therapeutic pace becomes negotiable, and through which the client’s capacity to trust the therapist’s judgement about how fast to go is itself gradually established.

This evening may also serve as the starting point for a wider sequence with Professor Muller, with future sessions potentially extending into navigating complex ruptures with challenging trauma clients and the clinical work of forgiveness in trauma therapy.

What You Will Take Away

- How to distinguish productive trauma engagement from premature emotional flooding, and what clinical response each requires
- How to read withdrawal, silence and avoidance as relational communications rather than as resistance to be overcome
- How to recognise the countertransference signatures of therapist over-functioning—urgency, excessive availability, the unconscious pressure to produce visible progress
- How to pace traumatic material in ways that build relational safety without colluding with the avoidance that keeps the work from deepening
- How to work with clients who alternate between intense disclosure and sudden retreat—and what that alternation reveals about the underlying relational organisation
- How to use rupture and repair as part of the pacing work itself, rather than as evidence that something has gone wrong
- How these dynamics present in online therapy, where relational cues are compressed and miscommunications of pace can go unregistered for longer

Professor Muller has delivered his clinical teaching to audiences across the US, Canada, the UK, Ireland, France, Italy, Australia, China, and New Zealand. His approach is known for its clinical precision, its relational honesty, and its willingness to address the parts of trauma therapy that training typically avoids. nscience is delighted to welcome him back.



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About Professor Robert T. Muller

Professor Robert T. Muller is Professor of Psychology in the Faculty of Health at York University, Toronto, and a Fellow of the International Society for the Study of Trauma and Dissociation. He is the founding editor of The Trauma and Mental Health Report and the 2024 recipient of the Pierre Janet Award in Trauma Scholarship—one of the most prestigious honours in the field.

He is the author of two landmark books in trauma therapy:

Trauma and the Avoidant Client: Attachment-Based Strategies for Healing —

<https://www.amazon.ca/stores/Robert-T.-Muller/author/B0033AFO5A>

Trauma and the Struggle to Open Up: From Avoidance to Recovery and Growth —

<https://www.amazon.ca/stores/Robert-T.-Muller/author/B0033AFO5A>

Trauma and the Avoidant Client has sold more than 20,000 copies globally and remains one of the most widely read clinical texts on the relational treatment of trauma.

Professor Muller has delivered his clinical teaching to audiences across the US, Canada, the UK, France, Italy, Australia, China, and New Zealand. He has presented for nscience on six previous occasions: in London in 2016 and 2017, in London and Dublin in 2018, online in 2019, and in a two-day London intensive in 2020.

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