

Workshop Title: Therapeutic improvisation in working with stepfamily members 'Stepfamilies bring out the worst in people and challenge them to find the best in themselves' (Papernow, 2013).

Facilitator: Dr Claire Asherson Bartram

Facilitator Biography:



Dr. Claire Asherson Bartram

is a senior Gestalt therapist working with individuals, couples, groups clinical and academic supervision. Her practice is in London and includes 3 ongoing groups. She is on the BGJ editorial team. She was on GAUK's Committee for over 10 years, and during the early days of UKAGP. Claire loves the improvisational spirit of Gestalt.

Claire's interest in stepfamilies arose from her own family where she and her partner both had children from previous relationships. Her doctorate, focused on mothers in stepfamilies. She has run numerous workshops on stepfamilies at conferences and co-wrote a book 'Altogether Now'.

Capacity: 6 - 30

Outline / Aims:

Jazz improvisation is possible through the musician having familiarity with harmony and techniques from which to draw. The equivalent for a Gestalt therapist, is their life experience, their ability to respond intuitively, creative techniques and their knowledge of the field. This is important when working with couples and individuals from complicated families.

Stepfamily situations (also called blended) can become conflicted and troubled, with issues that in microcosm reflect world conflicts such as the need to protect, boundary issues, rivalry and threat. Stepfamily situations are often challenged by the different feelings that the adult couples hold towards the children and it can seem that no one is able to get their needs met. Children in these situations have experience change, loss and loyalty binds which can cause them to act out. At the same time, stepfamilies have the potential for creative solutions to difficulties, for the family to discover and accept who they are – different from a biological family - and for personal growth.

The aim of this workshop is to offer tools that strengthen attendees' abilities to improvise, and support positive development in the interesting and often troubled field of stepfamilies. It will be a confidential space for experimentation in which we may draw from examples in our lives, and therapeutic practices.

Alignment:

In relationships, couples and families there is a constant movement between the polarities of stasis and fluidity. A Gestalt therapist uses their knowledge and techniques to explore the potential within a stuck situation and move to the fluid creativity of play. This is what I aim to encourage in relation to working with stepfamilies, or indeed managing your own.