

Psychosocial and Relationship-based Practice



Claudia Megele

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Claudia Megele

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Meet the author

Claudia Megele is a Senior Lecturer and PQ/CPD Programme Leader at Middlesex University, and she is also the Head of Practice Learning at Enfield Council. Claudia's psychosocial and interdisciplinary approach is shaped by her studies which include psychology, sociology, social work and psychotherapy, and her professional experience which ranges from play therapy with terminally ill children at Red Cross Children's Hospital to psychotherapy with adults at the NHS, and from front-line social work with children and families to research on identity, mentalisation, empathy and relationships.

Claudia has also served in a number of public and third-sector posts and organisations including: Member of the advisory board of the National Children's Bureau (NCB), Trustee at Mind, and the Chair and Vice-Chair of Tower Hamlets Police and Community Safety Board.

Foreword

If you really render social work to its basics then there isn't much left other than the relationship between worker and client, practitioner and service user. Of course, social workers have statutory duties and powers, can access and organise resources, and do employ a variety of theoretically based techniques and interventions. But each of these only takes place in the medium of the worker-client relationship. The quality and character of the relationship therefore matters, it matters a great deal.

I began my career in social work more years ago than I care to remember. Two of the key texts that I valued reading during my first days as a childcare officer (we're talking pre-Seebohm, pre-1971 here) were Margaret Ferard and Noel Hunnybun's 1962 book *The Caseworker's Use of Relationships* (with a foreword by John Bowlby, no less) and Isca Saltzberger-Wittenberg's 1970 book *Psycho-analytic Insight and Relationships: A Kleinian Approach*. Since those days, the importance of the relationship in social work has had something of a roller-coaster career. At the moment, relationship-based practice is enjoying a slight renaissance. In part, this is a reaction to the many years of political and bureaucratic enthusiasm for measuring, checking and assessing everything that could be measured, checked and assessed. A measure is a dangerous tool, said the economist Robert Skidelesky, for it tends to take the place of whatever it purports to measure. And because the humanity of relationships is not easily captured by these measuring instruments, the fundamental importance of the relationship lost its status under performance-minded regimes. Its value was diminished. Losing sight of the relationship was always bound to end with social work losing its heart and with it, irony of ironies, losing its efficacy and social credibility.

The relationship between one human being and another has long fascinated social scientists, philosophers and the helping professions. It is, after all, where so much of our life takes place, as people, parents, partners, professionals and service users. But it is a complicated, often tricky place, subject to the turbulence of our own and other people's thoughts, feelings and behaviour. And it gets more complicated and even trickier when feelings are running high. Anxiety, anger, fear, shame, sadness – they can all confuse and confound the normal give-and-take of social behaviour. And stress, of course, is one of the main culprits when it comes to upsetting and derailing relationships. Under stress, our anxieties rise, our reflective capacities are thrown. Past experiences distort the way we see and feel about present events. Reason is lost and our defences distort, disfigure and disturb. The world of stress and anxiety, fear and anger, worry and loss, hope and despair, heartache and joy is the world in which social workers find themselves on a daily basis. Therefore, if they don't give thought

to matters of feeling – their own as well as their clients and colleagues – then their practice will, at best, be in danger of being at sea and at worst be insensitive and brutal.

Claudia Megele has written a book in which the *emotional labour* of doing and being a social worker is beautifully and fully explored. She brings conviction as well as scholarship to the task of describing and defining a relationship-based practice. We are introduced to many of the great figures who have devoted their lives to thinking about human relationships and what is involved when we seek to help a fellow human being. Freud, Adler, Bion, Klein, Bowlby, Ainsworth, Fairbairn, Winnicott, Fonagy and Berne are all discussed. Their ideas for relationship-based theories, practices and understandings are explained and evocatively applied to a number of rich, detailed, unflinching case examples. The cases are the heart of the book. They capture the everyday reality of social work, making the idea of a well-thought-through psychosocial, relationship-based practice all the more compelling.

Each chapter explores a number of key relationship ideas and applies them to a case, in place and over time. We are helped to think about and feel things from both the worker's and client's point of view. Cases begin to make sense as step by step we are shown how to humanise our practice by applying the insights of psychoanalytic thinking, object relations theory, narrative therapy, attachment theory, transactional analysis, family therapy and motivational interviewing. The part that defence mechanisms, transference and counter-transference play in relationships under stress, including worker-client relationships, is threaded throughout the pages. The effects of early life experiences, trauma and loss are recognised. And the value of reflecting, mentalising and helping people mend their broken, incomplete stories is described and explained.

Claudia has woven the raw realities of front-line social work with current thinking about how our psychological development and emotional make-up influence the way we engage and relate with clients and colleagues. When we recognise ourselves and other people as complex, often flawed but ever-hopeful, then we can edge our way towards being more understanding, empathic, patient and tolerant. Our relationships might then be helpful; our practices supportive and therapeutic. Claudia Megele's excellent book, *Psychosocial and Relationship-based Practice*, is for all those who would like their social work to be inspired by the best in evidence-based thinking and relationship-inspired theory.

David Howe
Emeritus Professor of Social Work
University of East Anglia, Norwich

What others say about this book

Claudia's writing is a refreshing mixture of theory and strategy, while also provoking the reader to reflect on their application into practice. Megele presents very specific interventions taken by the social worker with very specific responses of family relational and interactive sequences, including conversational exchanges as well as psycho-social contexts. For example, there is a discussion of working with grief of the mother, as it relates to the sudden death of her teenage son, who had in his childhood been under child protection scrutiny. She contrasts ways of managing the particular clinical situation within historic and current theory and practice; this section exemplifies the uniqueness of this text. An unusually detailed focus on a case study over time, combines with a review of relevant literature related to theory and strategy in managing grief, and with challenging questions to the reader. This engaging book is an excellent teaching tool for practitioners to enhance and inform relationship building skills.

Lyn McDonald, Professor of Social Work,
Middlesex University

As social work training returns to a more client-centred focus this book will be invaluable for students entering the profession. It will make sense for those who want to prepare for practice as well as those who may want reassurance or a reminder of a psycho-therapeutic approach to work with clients. But it also has much to offer practitioners in other fields such as health and counselling. It is readable, engaging and written with a clarity that will enable readers to feel confident that they understand the theory and the processes and are ready to move these into their practice.

Mary Baginsky, Senior Research Fellow at King's College,
Past Assistant Director of Children's Workforce Development Council

This book explains key psycho-dynamic concepts and applies them to cases in ways that illuminate superbly how relationships can be skilfully used to help vulnerable service users. It does this while ensuring workers' own internal lives and experiences of relationships are kept firmly in the picture, drawing out the agonies and ecstasies, joys and sorrows of people's lives when deeply engaged in social work.

Harry Ferguson, Professor of Social Work,
Centre for Social Work, School of Sociology and Social Policy,
University of Nottingham

Acknowledgements

This book has been a challenging and wonderful journey and, therefore, I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who took the time to read the book and its different chapters and shared their insights with me.

In particular, I am humbled and deeply grateful to Prof. David Howe for his inspirational foreword to this book. You have always been a source of inspiration and infinite knowledge and insight for me and many generations of social work practitioners, students, academics and researchers. Therefore, having your foreword and endorsement has meant more to me than I can express.

My great appreciation and thank you to Dr. Mary Baginsky, Prof. Brigid Featherstone, Prof. Donald Forrester, Prof. Harry Ferguson, Prof. Lynn McDonald, Prof. Stephen Joseph, Prof. Sue White, Nushra Mansuri and Jenny Simpson for reading the various chapters of the book and sharing your thoughts with me. Your positive feedback has been an enormous source of encouragement.

I would also like to thank Dr Peter Buzzi whose profound insights and invaluable feedbacks have infinitely enriched this book.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all students, practitioners, academics and researchers who through their everyday generosity give from self and enrich many lives, knowing well that there is nothing more enriching for the heart and our self than giving from the heart and self. So, thank you so much for all you do. This book is dedicated to you and I hope you enjoy reading it.

The structure of this book

This book has been written so that it can be used by students, practitioners, academics and researchers with different levels of experience and expertise. Each chapter of the book can draw on what has been discussed in previous chapters and the reader is encouraged to do so. However, each chapter is also self-contained and, therefore, can be used by itself as a complete and separate piece of work and/or study.

Excluding the introduction and concluding reflections the remaining eight chapters are structured to enhance clarity and coherence of content and ease of reading.

Chapter summary presents a brief snapshot of the chapter and its content.

Chapter objectives present the main objectives of the chapter.

Case study narratives are divided into sections, with each section presenting part of the case narrative including: historical backgrounds, events, dialogues, thoughts, and more. Each section includes case study narrative followed by reflection, and discussion sections.

Reflection: Each case narrative section is followed by a few questions to encourage reflection and further discussion. Try to discuss your reflections with your peers and colleagues to validate your thinking and see other people's perspectives.

Discussion: The discussion section offers an analysis of the narrative, and aims to unpack one or two salient and relevant points from the narrative. This ensures that all discussions are focused on specific learning outcomes and are cumulative in nature; however, it also means that discussions are not exhaustive and do not include every point/issue in relation to each section of narrative.

After each case narrative try to answer each of the questions in the reflection section as completely as you can, and then read the discussion section and reflect back on your earlier answers. Also try to apply the new information and discussion to the entire case while drawing on the previous sections and chapters that you have read.

In line with systemic tradition, after completing each section, or each chapter try to apply everything you have read so far to all the different narratives in the current and previous chapters.

It is always a powerful approach to try to scaffold our knowledge by tapping into other people's knowledge, thinking and expertise. Therefore, one powerful way to help broaden and deepen

the learning from the book is to discuss the case narrative and the reflection questions with your peers. Such discussions enhance our knowledge and broaden our perspective.

I hope you enjoy the book and that it can contribute toward an eclectic and systemic approach to a robust evidence-informed psychosocial and relationship-based practice in social work, social care and allied professions.

SAMPLE

Introduction

In the midst of the second decade of the twenty-first century social work is faced with unprecedented opportunities and challenges in its development and in definition of its role and mission as well as practice and interventions (Ferguson, 2011; Howe, 2009). Indeed, in spite of differences in approach, and perhaps intended meaning, there seems to be an increasing unanimity of voices proclaiming the need for evidence-informed and holistic relationship-based interventions.

Social work operates at the sharp end of society's fears, anxieties and traumas, and intervenes in people's lives at a time when they may be overwhelmed by dysphoric emotions and distress and when there is a loss of equilibrium and homeostasis in their lives and they are struggling with problems/difficulties/issues that are negatively affecting their sense of self and experiences. Therefore, relationships in general, and psychosocial and relationship-based practice in particular are essential core components of social work knowledge and practice.

However, this book does not provide *answers* in a simplistic or definitive sense, the world of practice is far too complex for any such attempts. Also this book is not meant as an exhaustive or a single solution, explanation or interpretation of relationships or practice encounters. Instead, this book begins with storied practice narratives combined with reflections and discussions to offer a coherent collection of ideas and a plausible approach, among other plausible approaches, for an enhanced understanding and a deeper appreciation for the intricacies of human relationships and the complexities of practice.

Therefore, this book is aimed at highlighting the complexities of everyday practice and offering a critical and evidence-informed approach to psychosocial and relationship-based practice. In doing this, the book draws on a range of therapeutic and disciplinary approaches including: psychology, relational psychoanalysis, object relations theory, and transactional analysis, narrative therapy, systemic approaches, family therapy, cognitive and behavioural

approaches, and others, to present a rich systemic and eclectic approach to integrative contemporary social work and social care practice.

This book offers a collection of case studies that provide an in-depth appreciation, discussion and analysis of the complexities of the lived experiences of users of services and practitioners, as well as the dynamics of relationships and their healing and yet challenging potential in everyday practice.

However, it is important to note that all case studies in this book are storied and narrativised accounts to demonstrate the multifaceted and complex nature of social work and social care practice. Therefore, any similarities with any cases or individuals are purely coincidental.

Objectives and uses of this book

As described above, the main objective of the book is to offer a critical and evidence-informed systemic and integrative approach to psychosocial and relationship-based practice and interventions.

This book uses a narrative case study approach to introduce and unpack theories, concepts and principles, and to demonstrate their application in practice. This book is written so that it is applicable at various levels of experience and expertise, and to enable the reader to readily apply the learning from the book to their own practice, and to learn more about own emotions, thoughts, experiences and self. Furthermore, all the discussions, analysis and arguments in the book are research and evidence informed.

Given the above approach, this book may be used in many different contexts and for a variety of purposes. For example, this book may be used:

- for in-depth study of extensive case studies and practice examples with relevant analysis;
- as a reference for analysis of your own casework in practice;
- as a reference for analysis of essays, papers, reflections and other coursework in social work pre or post qualifying and CPD courses;
- as a reference and case study source for skills development and for professional training courses;
- as a reference for reflection and in-depth discussion;
- as an evidence-informed and practice-oriented reference for psychosocial and relationship-based practice in social work, social care, health and allied professions;
- as a handy reference for practice and education for practitioners, students, academics and researchers;
- and others.

What is psychosocial and relationship-based practice?

Aware of earlier work on the theme of *relationship-based practice*, especially those by Cooper (2014), Howe (1998), Ruch (2005, 2010), Sudbery (2002) and Trevithick (2003) and I agree with Ruch's assertion that:

none of these authors attempts a discrete definition of the concept of relationship-based practice, so we are content to hold the book open on an absolute definition. In fact, this dilemma properly reflects the nature of the terrain, which is rich and diverse and may always be hard to pin down to a simple formula.

(2010, p 10)

Notwithstanding the above, psychosocial and relationship-based practice and interventions take place at the intersection of the individual's psychological/internal world and subjective states (eg happiness, sadness, depression, etc) and their social/external world and objective statuses (eg age, race, poverty, unemployment, etc). Therefore, they are interdisciplinary by nature, systemic in thinking (holistic with cyclical reciprocity) and integrative in approach and practice (drawing upon and integrating multiple approaches).

Indeed, drawing on Howe's (2009, p 12) wisdom:

If we are fully to grasp the nature of human experience, we need to understand ourselves biologically and psychologically, sociologically and politically, experientially and spiritually, existentially and interpersonally, artistically and creatively.

Why a psychosocial and relationship-based practice?

From its inception and the early works of Elizabeth Gurney Fry (1780–1845) for reforms in the British prison system, to Arnold Toynbee's outreach programmes and practical socialism, social work has been, and remains, firmly rooted in relationships and the concern for greater equality, equity and social justice.

At its heart, social work has always been an enabling and empowering relationship-based practice. Therefore, contemporary psychosocial and relationship-based practice may be understood as a systemic and evidence-informed interdisciplinary approach to empowering relationships.

Social work drew upon other disciplines such as existential psychology, developmental psychology, psychoanalysis, phenomenology, sociology, social policy and critical theory to create a *subject* with essential humanistic values, universal subjectivities and great human and social potential.

By recognising the individual's essential humanity and potential sociability social work was able to understand the individual's inherent social self. Hence, social work produced an image of the *subject* which was at the same time both subjective and social (Parton, 2008). Indeed, the therapeutic and relationship-based social work was accompanied by increasing theoretical orientation influenced by:

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- Neo-Freudianism and the ego-psychology;
- John Bowlby (1951);
- Donald Winnicott (1964);
- and others at the Tavistock.

However, the advent of computers and their application in the mid and late 1900s resulted in a misguided notion of *knowability*, *calculability* and *predictability* based on increasing information. This made the human *subject* more *knowable* and more *calculable* and led to an emphasis on eliminating risk with increased information gathering and formulistic models of decision-making which resulted in a shift from relationship-based practice to *form-ulistic* (form-driven) and procedure-driven practice.

One consequence of this has been the MacDonaldisation (Dominelli, 1996; Howe, 2009; Ritzer, 1995) and increasing marketisation of services that change:

the ethos of the professional intervention from one of trust to that of contract culture where everyone involved from providers and purchasers to customers only related to each other through contractual obligations that had been agreed ... guidelines, manuals act as a defence against the anxiety of 'not knowing'.

(Aymer and Okitikpi, 2000, p 69)

The above was accompanied with a shift away from therapeutic approaches that individualised problems and pathologised the individual to social models of practice that emphasised the structural and social aspects of problems. Although these criticisms of relationship-based approaches were important in raising awareness of the social and structural dimensions of individual experience, they generated a pendulum effect where there was a significant shift toward socially oriented practice without sufficient consideration for the individual and psychological dimensions of people's lives.

Indeed, exaggerated swings in professional practice and perspective are invariably unhelpful as they fail to acknowledge the critical balance that is essential for effective practice and interventions.

In contrast to the above, systemic psychosocial and relationship-based approaches to social work practice go beyond passive inclusivity, and offer a message of hope and empowerment through co-production of services and an effective person-centred relationship with users of services with a critical, integrative psychosocial perspective.

Indeed, relationships are foundational to our sense of self and humanity, and human behaviour, and professional relationships are an integral component of any professional intervention. When a practitioner makes a phone call, or meets with a user of services in an interview room, visits a home, or participates in a multi-professional meeting, they are engaging in professional relationships that embody *social work*.

However, although building positive relationships with others is an important element of relationship-based practice, to think that relationship-based practice is limited to building

good relationships with users of services, or that relationship building with users of services is an end to itself, is to miss the point.

While it is true that people do not come to us looking for a relationship, and while it is no substitute for practical support, nevertheless we are one of the few groups who recognize the value of relating to others in a way which recognizes their experience as fundamental to understanding and action.

(Coulshed, 1991, p 2)

Empowering psychosocial and relationship-based practice requires both self and other-awareness and a mindful embodied practice of social work theories, values, principles and capabilities that result in the creative and thoughtful art of relationship. By being *present* practitioners demonstrate commitment and offer containment and a holding relationship that is empowering for users of services and enable positive change.

However, relationship-based principles encompass intrapsychic (within people) and interpersonal (between people) dimensions of human experience and interrelations/interactions. Indeed, the avoidance of recognising the complexities of practice and relationships can itself be understood as a defence mechanism to mask the anxieties, complexities and uncertainties associated with social work practice and interventions.

Human relationships are complex and multifaceted, and relationships are not simply calculative and rational. They are instead enwrapped in affective, conscious and unconscious emotions, memories and experiences that enrich and deepen as well as complicate relationships and relationship-based practice.

Indeed, as suggested by various authors such as Howe, Ferguson, Cooper, Ruch and others, the challenge of good and effective social work practice/interventions is to maintain *respectful and safe uncertainty of not-knowing* and to defend the *complexity* and contain the anxiety of emotionally charged human encounters and lived experiences. This can then guide and transform relationships into a key powerful resource in social work practice and interventions.

There are a number of factors in social work interventions that uniquely enrich and at the same time complicate social work practice/interventions. These include:

- 1.** Social work bridges the individual's internal subjective states such as pain, want, suffering, love and hate, and their objective statuses such as old age, crime, debt, illness and mental health.
- 2.** Social work interventions involve both practical/instrumental as well as developmental dimensions.
- 3.** Social work practice encompasses the range of human experience including its:
 - a.** objective statuses such as unemployment, old age, crime, etc;
 - b.** cognitive aspects such as thoughts, values, beliefs and attitudes;

- c. affective, emotional and subjective aspects such as happiness, sadness, depression, etc;
 - d. behavioural aspects such as externalising behaviour, etc;
 - e. social aspects such as community action and cohesion, social inclusion and social transformation;
 - f. political aspects such as influencing policy and aspiring for greater social justice and equity.
4. Social work practice straddles the public and private spheres and impacts the personal, professional, organisational, societal and global dimensions of people's lives and experience.

The interdependent and intertwined nature of internal (psychological) and external (social) worlds of individuals cannot be neatly separated. Therefore, it is important to adopt integrative and systemic psychosocial responses to structural inequities and social imbalances and problems.

Each social work intervention is a unique human encounter that should be appreciated in its rich detail. Hence, a collaborative and co-productive relationship-based approach to interventions with a psychosocial perspective and a reflective and effective *use of self* are foundational to empowering practice that can enable and maintain positive change. Such an approach to interventions hinges on recognition and respect for individuals and their preferred narratives and honours the autonomy, expertise and experiences of users of services.

It is important to note that the above is not a passive stance. To the contrary, effective psychosocial and relationship-based practice in social work and social care is a deeply engaged experience that is systemic in thinking and *person-centred yet directive* in practice.

Indeed, as suggested by Winnicott (1975[1953]) human experience and *reality* takes place within an in-between space between self and the *Other*, mother and the child, internal and external worlds, '*...the thumb and the teddy bear...*' (p 2), and between what has been and what is unfolding and yet to be. Therefore, a holistic/systemic and integrative psychosocial understanding of relationships and relationship-based practice is indispensable for effective and empowering interventions and to bring about and maintain positive change.

Terminology

Language is the medium of human thought and its expression. Through language we make sense of our experiences, construct meaning and generate and maintain an identity narrative and a sense of self and *reality*. Language is not neutral and as Derrida (1976) and Saussure (1998) argue, meaning is not derived from a link between a word and what it describes, meaning is generated based on difference and a dynamic web of relations, symbols and meanings including social, cultural, religious and political pretexts. Therefore, taking note of the power and importance of language and considering the controversies and the traces associated with the terms *client* and *service user* in the context of social work and social care, in this book we will use the term *users of services* which does not carry the same traces.

Content

This book has been written so each chapter can draw on what has been discussed previously and the reader is encouraged to do so. However, each chapter is also self-contained and, therefore, can be used by itself as a complete and separate piece of work and/or study.

Chapter 1: Colour of love: thinking of Jack

This chapter covers: attachment and potential space

Chapters 1 and 2 introduce some basic concepts and theories in relation to understanding of the individual and their intrapsychic and interpersonal experiences and growth. Specifically, Chapter 1 offers an introduction to the concepts of emotional labour, mentalisation, attachment and potential space as some of the fundamental ideas that will be used and that we will build on throughout the book.

An explicit recognition of emotional labour offers us the opportunity to better manage the emotional toil and demand of everyday practice. We will expand on this with the concept of secondary trauma and the importance of good supervision for effective practice. However, the concept of emotional labour is also aimed at rendering the emotional labour and the challenging journey of our users of services visible in practice. At times it may seem that the user of services is not exerting sufficient effort to achieve a given objective; however, it is important to consider that they may be experiencing significant emotional labour that exhausts their resources, energies and capabilities for physical or psychological labour or for tasks that may otherwise seem simple or trivial.

The discussion of mentalisation, attachment and potential space lay the foundation for further chapters in the book and are essential for a better appreciation of individual experience, motivation and behaviour, and for understanding of relationships and relationship-based interventions.

Chapter 2: Colour of love: it's all about Jack

This chapter covers: validation, motivation, respectful challenge, splitting, diversity and social identity, parenting and role modelling

Following on from Chapter 1, this chapter examines *feeling stuck* and the question of validation and *respectful challenge* in relationships with users of services. This includes a discussion of object relations and Melanie Klein's concept of splitting. We will also clarify the difference between, and emphasise the importance of, not internalising *problem narratives* while internalising locus of control.

The second section of the chapter is focused on social identity in practice. This section begins by highlighting the importance of continuity in life narratives and follows with a discussion of diversity and the need for an anti-discriminatory and anti-oppressive stance.

This chapter concludes with a discussion of parenting, parental capacity and the importance of positive role models.

Chapter 3: Why not me?

This chapter covers: psychological and ego defences

This chapter introduces the concept of ego defences and examines some examples of how they may be used in practice. Specifically, this chapter discusses: suppression, repression, reaction formation, displacement, sublimation, denial, rationalisation, projection and projective identification.

The concluding section of the chapter discusses projective identification and its importance and vast application in practice, highlighting how projective identification is the basis for bias and stigma.

Chapter 4: Finding a home for Alice

This chapter covers: psychological and ego defences: schema, stereotypes, cognitive schema and bias, transference and countertransference, and belonging and identity

This chapter introduces the concepts of cognitive schema, stereotype and cognitive bias. The chapter also discusses how the different consonant and dissonant information may reinforce or challenge our schemas and how through the processes of assimilation and accommodation we reconcile the new information with our model of external world.

The chapter then proceeds to explore the concept of transference and countertransference and concludes with a brief discussion of belonging and identity.

Chapters 3 and 4 set the foundation for greater understanding of own and others' emotions and behaviours and the dynamics of relationships.

Chapter 5: The long shadow of the past...

This chapter covers: trauma, post-traumatic growth, touch and listening to children's voices

Trauma is a major source of individual and societal distress and a central issue in practice. Therefore, this chapter explores trauma and vicarious trauma, or secondary trauma, and post-traumatic stress and their effects. The chapter also introduces post-traumatic growth as well as examining the concept of developmentally appropriate communication with children.

The chapter begins with an introduction to the concept of trauma, its intergenerational transmission and some of its effects. This is followed by a discussion of vicarious/secondary trauma and its impact. This section also includes a discussion of touch in social work and social care practice.

The chapter highlights some of the challenges in interpreting children's narratives from a developmental perspective, followed by an exploration of play and role play and their significance, and the importance of developmentally appropriate communication with children.

The chapter concludes with a discussion of post-traumatic growth, and the importance of a trauma-informed psychosocial and relationship-based practice.

Chapter 6: A broken narrative...

This chapter covers: transactional analysis and narrative approaches

This chapter introduces narrative approaches and transactional analysis. Specifically, the chapter begins by introducing the person-centred approach of reflecting back and externalisation of *problems*. This is followed by an example of re-authoring narratives and shifting to the person's preferred narratives.

The chapter then introduces transactional analysis and how it can be used to reflect upon our own thoughts, emotions and behaviour, and to support our users of services.

The chapter concludes with a discussion of loss and grief, and by introducing remembering conversations as an effective narrative intervention that relocates the person/lost object in the life of the user of services and allows continuity of the bonds between them.

Chapter 7: Searching for love in all the wrong places

This chapter covers: family therapy and systemic approaches

This chapter offers an introduction to systemic family interventions.

The chapter begins with a brief reflection on domestic violence followed by a discussion of systemic thinking and systemic family approaches. This includes:

- structural family interventions, examining family organisation/hierarchies and relationships;
- strategic family interventions, brief solution focused interventions; and
- family life cycle model.

The above intervention approaches enable practitioners to work collaboratively with the family, agree the definition of the family and the scope of interventions, and to visualise its boundaries and the type and quality of relationships between its members. By modifying relationship boundaries practitioners can support families to effect change in behaviour that can address the family's concerns/*problems*/difficulties.

The chapter concludes with a discussion of the use of *outsider witness* and *definitional ceremonies* to support users of services in initiating and sustaining positive change. This is an especially powerful approach to enabling users of services to adopt a new narrative and to address *problems*/challenges.

Chapter 8: Searching for love in all the wrong places (Part 2) – that's the way I feel about myself

This chapter covers: motivational interviewing, cognitive and behavioural approaches

This chapter begins with a brief note about gangs and gang membership followed by a discussion of rape and multiple perpetrator rape. The chapter then continues with a brief note on self-harm, before introducing motivational interviewing and demonstrating its application in practice with a full annotated example of a motivational interview in a home visit.

The chapter will then introduce cognitive and behavioural interventions and approaches.

The concluding section offers a discussion of unresolved trauma and its impact. This section offers an example of unresolved trauma and its transmission through projective identification between father and child. The chapter concludes by emphasising the importance of identifying and assessing such dynamics in practice.

Chapter 9: Concluding remarks offers a brief personal reflection and perspective about the current status of social work and social care and the prospect of psychosocial and relationship-based practice.

Examining the relationship between science and society, in the latter quarter of the last century, we note a significant shift from science setting the stage for society to society setting the agenda for science. Indeed, the focus of knowledge and knowledge generation changed from the application of knowledge to the knowledge produced in the context of application. This was a significant shift from a search for causality and objectivity to an appreciation of context and subjectivity. However, the increasing emphasis on evidence-based approaches based on bio-medicalised models of research and intervention has re-inverted this balance toward more objectifying practices that see '*people with problems and people as problems*' (Howe, 1987, p 56). Howe (2009) eloquently captures this divide:

Relationship based social work is not necessarily hostile to science, but it believes that experience rather than experiment underpins our shared humanity.

(p 12)

This highlights the importance and urgency of evidence-informed psychosocial and relationship-based approaches for contemporary social work and social care practice. Furthermore, social work has always adopted an applied interdisciplinary approach to its interventions and research. Therefore, the recent and increasing demand and recognition for interdisciplinary approaches to research and practice offer unprecedented opportunities for greater appreciation of social work and social care practice and research in general and psychosocial and relationship-based practice in particular.

Taking inspiration from Howe's insight, this book inverts the traditional approaches to writing that begin with an explanation of theory followed by examination of case studies. Instead, this book begins with practice narratives and case studies followed by reflection and a discussion that draw on and ground theories within the context of practice.

This book is for practitioners, students and academics, or anyone with an interest in evidence-informed and critical psychosocial and relationship-based practice.

Whether read throughout and whole or as single chapters or any other order, I hope you enjoy reading the different stories and the reflections as well as discussions. I also hope that this book can inspire practitioners to defend complexity and the systemic nature of human relationships, and to serve as a companion to shed light on your journey of discovery and the thoughtful art of evidence-informed psychosocial and relationship-based practice.

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