6-day residential Group Relations Conference

Role, Competition and the Real World

Sunday 21 – Friday 26 September 2008
High Leigh Conference Centre, Lord Street, Hoddesdon, Hertfordshire EN11 8SG, U.K.

The overall aim of this residential Conference is to help members understand more fully rational and irrational organizational processes and their professional roles within the working environment and in the larger social world.

The Conference explores issues such as authority, leadership, competition, the management of uncertainty and the complexities of taking up a role within the boundary of an institutional setting.

Membership of the Conference is open to students on psychodynamic counselling courses at Birkbeck College for whom it is a course requirement, and to applicants from outside the institution who have a particular interest in and experience of group dynamics within organizations. This gives the Conference greater richness and diversity and thus provides further opportunities to explore what it means to be a member of this temporarily created institution.

CONTEXT

We live in a complex society in which our capacity to find and attribute meaning and value to our work, social networks and institutions is constantly challenged. Our fears and uncertainties in and about the world create powerful feelings and we are acutely aware that, if we are to survive, we need to continue to develop and expand our capacity for creativity and connectedness. However, our society is organized on competition and the globalisation of a market economy. In such a climate, competition gives rise to positive forces such as the capacity to engage, connect and express competence, whilst its darker side contains the more destructive forces of envy, rivalry, greed and ruthlessness.

PURPOSE

What then, can a Group Relations Conference offer when faced with such difficult and complex thoughts, feelings and ideas? How can we think about our responsibilities, our capacity to embrace or avoid taking authority and the elusiveness of certainty? How can we work with the concept of democracy, in the political system of the organization and in our capacity to take, make and shape a role?

This Conference offers opportunities for understanding the processes that facilitate and hinder the work of people and groups when they are members and parts of an organization. Members will be able to challenge their own and others’ certainties or responses and consider for themselves what it may mean to take a risk to discover something new or different.

The primary task of this Conference is:

To offer members the opportunity to experience and examine conscious and unconscious processes in the exercise of role, authority and leadership; and, by exploring competitive and collaborative feelings allow new, creative ways of thinking and acting to emerge.
OBJECTIVES

Conference members will have the opportunity to:

• explore and examine uncertainties and anxieties, both overt and covert, that shape our societies and often paralyse our thinking or lead us to acquiescence, intolerance or indifference

• look at how rational and irrational forces operate in institutions by drawing on our own experiences at work and our shared experiences of the Conference as an institution

• experiment with ways of working with difference and the impact of difference on leadership

• develop capacities for the exercise of authority and taking up leadership roles

• explore the management function each of us has within, and how the management of vulnerability affects leadership and our capacity to exercise authority

• understand more fully the interplay between constructive and destructive competitive forces at work in organizations.

If you need further information or wish to discuss the suitability of this conference to your needs please contact

Jan Baker, Conference Director
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Helen Aitchison, Associate Director for Administration
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CONFERENCE METHOD AND STRUCTURE

The basic approach is to learn from the ‘here and now’ of experience by participating in conference events as they unfold. To this end, a variety of groups and events are offered so that the members can examine, study and reflect upon processes, both overt and covert, in and between groups of different sizes. The conference design allows members to explore and evaluate how they affect and are affected by others, both members and staff. Reviewing and reflecting upon all these experiences, as well as considering how to apply the learning to institutions ‘back home’, is central to the conference design.

The Conference events are:

Plenaries
The Conference opens in full plenary of staff and members. The purpose is to introduce the Conference and give members and staff opportunities to reflect on their experiences of crossing the boundary into the Conference as a temporary organization. The final plenary gives an opportunity for reflection on the learning from the Conference as a whole.

Small Study Groups
The task of the Study Group, which has up to 12 members, is to provide opportunities to learn in small face-to-face groups about interpersonal relationships as they unfold. A staff member acts as consultant to the group. Members choose their own groups.

Large Study Group
The task is to experience and learn about interpersonal relations as they occur, but in a setting which consists of the total conference membership. Consultants are in role to help with this task by offering their observations about what they think is happening in the group.

Review Groups
The task of these groups is to review and reflect on the roles taken up in the Conference so far, and to focus on areas for further development. Members are allocated to a small group with a consultant.
Institutional Event
The task is to understand the total Conference as a developing organization. Under scrutiny are the dynamics between groups as they interact with one another, and between the membership and management. What may be explored is what sort of organizational culture is operating and how we may understand more fully its dynamics and interrelated systems. In this event staff are available for consultation and the management group will conduct its work in open sessions.

Marketplace Event
The task of this event is to explore issues of competition, competence and desire within an unmanaged marketplace environment. Staff work in consultancy roles.

Community Event
This event explores what it means to be a member of this community and to take up the role of citizen. It allows for the consideration of societal events and processes and considers what sort of community action may be desirable and/or possible within this event.

Application Groups
The task is to apply Conference learning to current work issues as presented by members. Members work in the same groups as in the Review Groups and are asked to bring an issue to which they can apply the Conference experience and explore what they have learnt. Each group has a consultant.

Exit Groups
These groups, which have the same membership as the Review and Application Groups, meet at the end of the Conference in order to explore the ending process and give thought to crossing the boundary of the Conference back into home and work life.

CONFERENCE STAFF

Jan Baker (Director) – Tutor, MSc Psychodynamic Counselling courses, Birkbeck College; Counsellor and Psychotherapist; Organizational Consultant

Carlos Sapochnik (Deputy Director) – Organizational Consultant; Visiting Tutor, Consultancy and the Organization, Tavistock Clinic, London; Principal Lecturer, Middlesex University

Helen Aitchison (Associate Director for Administration) – Counsellor; Health Advocate, The Haven, Paddington

Will Scott (Administrator) – Honorary Counsellor, Kings College, London; Honorary Counsellor, The Lorrimore, London; Honorary Counsellor, West Kent PCT, Sevenoaks

Gabi Bonwitt – Board Member, OFEK, Israel; Organizational Consultant; Clinical Psychologist and Psychoanalyst

Louise Edberg – Authorised Psychologist, Business Area Manager, Falck Healthcare Sverige AB; Member of IFSI Orientation Committee, Member Praxis International Network, France; Member AGSLO, Sweden

Norma Gould – Tutor, MSc Psychodynamic Counselling with Children and Adolescents, Birkbeck College; Head of Counselling, Bacon’s College

Judith Levy – Senior Teacher, Hebrew University of Jerusalem; Faculty, MBA Management and Business Psychology, College of Management, Rishon LeZion, Israel; Organizational Consultant, Executive Coach

Liz Omand – Tutor, Adult MSc in Psychodynamic Counselling, Birkbeck College; Psychotherapist and Supervisor

Anne Marie Reilly – Tutor, MSc Psychodynamic Counselling, Birkbeck College; Senior Counsellor, University of Westminster; Psychotherapist and Supervisor

Shankarnarayan Srinath – Consultant Psychiatrist in Psychotherapy and Organizational Consultant, Cambridge

Janice Wagner – Psychotherapist, Harvard Vanguard Medical Associates, Boston, USA; Faculty Field Advisor, Boston University School of Social Work, USA; Associate, A.K. Rice Institute

Simon Western – Honorary Teaching Fellow, Lancaster University Management School; Leadership Consultant and Executive Coach; Author
APPLICATION/REGISTRATION FORM

Please complete in BLOCK LETTERS

• There is no additional charge for 1st and 2nd year students on the MSc Psychodynamic Counselling courses.
• There are a limited number of spaces for external applicants at a fee of £825 all inclusive. The closing date for external applications is 15 August 2008

Please make cheques payable to Birkbeck College.

Return to
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PARTICIPANT’S DETAILS
The information below denoted by an asterisk * will appear on the membership list. Please write clearly!

NAME*

ADDRESS

TELEPHONE work home mobile

E-MAIL*

Best way to contact you (please tick) ☐ home phone ☐ work phone ☐ mobile phone ☐ e-mail

EMERGENCY CONTACT (next of kin)

PLACE OF WORK

JOB TITLE*

PRINCIPAL ROLE(S) IN YOUR JOB

COUNSELLING PLACEMENT* (if applicable)

DIETARY REQUIREMENTS (e.g., vegetarian, vegan, etc.)

OTHER SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS

IF YOU ARE NOT A CURRENT OR PAST BIRKBECK STUDENT, please detail previous training (with dates), institution, and approach. Please include any group relations experience.

IF YOU ARE NOT A CURRENT STUDENT AT BIRKBECK, please supply name, role and contact details of someone who can comment on your suitability for a group relations event.

Name
Role
Contact details

WHAT DO YOU HOPE TO GAIN FROM ATTENDING THIS CONFERENCE?

WHERE DID YOU HEAR ABOUT THIS CONFERENCE?

Signed

Dated

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