

# Psychological Approaches to Psychosis



Report of training held Sept - Dec 2003  
Department of Psychological Therapies, Shropshire

## Introduction

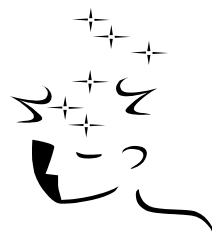
From September to December 2003, six half day sessions were held to explore some of the latest psychological therapies to help people experiencing psychosis. A survey carried out a few months before had indicated a large amount of interest from mental health staff across Shropshire and The Wrekin.

Limited funds only allowed us to hold six half days 'taster' sessions, and most of these had to be held in a small venue. Two of the most requested sessions, however, were made into larger events and this allowed us to open them to service users as well.

This report gives you a flavour of these sessions, plus quotes from people who attended them. We had an overwhelmingly positive response to all the sessions from those who were there, and many people contacted us to say they were disappointed not to be able to attend. We had a lot of requests to repeat them.

### Training organised by

Cailzie Dunn  
Helen Jones  
Anne Maclachlan  
Sue Porch



# The Recovery Approach to Psychosis

Sept 26th at The Gateway, Shrewsbury

**Rufus May** currently works as a Clinical Psychologist with Bradford's Assertive Outreach Team. He is also a writer and talks about his experiences of psychiatric treatment when he was 18, including being diagnosed with schizophrenia.

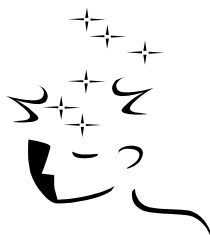
This workshop explored how people who hear voices or have alternative beliefs make sense of their world and rebuild their lives. It looked at the recovery process from the perspective of the service user, and explored how to create a safe space to cope with psychotic experiences and the different ways to understand alternative experience and how best we might support people finding valued social roles.

This was a presentation woven around a lot of discussion with the audience, including Rufus speaking openly and helpfully about his own experiences of Psychiatric treatment, his own recovery and how he now integrates his personal experience with his professional role as a Clinical Psychologist.

Included in Rufus' presentation was a video, made by Melissa Gunasena, called '**Evolving Minds**'. It covered a number of things that people have found helpful to their own recovery, including nutrition, meditation, and psychotherapy. To find out more, go to [www.undercurrents.org](http://www.undercurrents.org). Rufus also left a book chapter he's worked on, called '**Making Sense of Psychotic Experience and Working Towards Recovery**', that can be emailed to anyone wishing to read it. To get a copy, email [helen.jones@shropshirepct.nhs.uk](mailto:helen.jones@shropshirepct.nhs.uk)

"The abiding messages I took from his session have been about how the concept of recovery is still taking shape and, perhaps more importantly, the idea of protest as a necessary and valid way to go about talking about mental health practices"

Over 50 people attended, including at least 13 service users



I am a Clinical Psychologist who has been interested for several years in the Recovery Model. For me the model provides guidance, challenge and inspiration for my practice and I am keen to encourage and support others in looking at how they might use this model to enhance their work. Following on from the Rufus May talk in September, I would like to join with others in exploring ways of supporting mental health workers locally in bringing the Recovery Model into their practice.

**If you're interested, please contact me:**  
Rachel Lucas, Consultant Clinical Psychologist  
Tel: **01743 261000 Ext 63269**

# MindWork: An existential approach to voicework

17th Oct 2003, at Dawley Centre of Psychological Therapies, Telford

**Pete Hulme** is a Consultant Clinical Psychologist from Herefordshire. He wrote a chapter in **This is Madness** (PCCS Books) and has worked for many years with people experiencing psychosis, both as a clinician and as a manager of rehabilitation services.

Pete Hulme says that the Existential Approach emphasizes collaborative conversations, exploring experiences and helping people take ownership of their own internal processes. He refreshingly talked about his own experiences as a therapist and where he felt had made errors, as well as progress.

In addition to a presentation about the fundamental ideas of this approach, Pete presented a rare and moving opportunity to see and hear directly (via a video recording) work with a client who met with Pete over quite some time. This client had given permission for Pete to use their work together to be seen by others for training purposes.

### Some references:

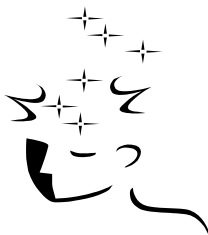
Hulme, P. (1999) Collaborative Conversation, in Newnes, C., Holmes, G. & Dunn, C. (Eds) **This is Madness**. PCCS Books

Spinelli, E. (1994) **Demystifying Therapy**. London: Constable

Warner, D. (1985) **Recovery from Schizophrenia: Psychiatry and political economy**. London: Routledge

"Pete's concept of a 'tent' consisting of many different ways to shelter a client has stayed with me and I have found it extremely helpful and for really the first time in a while I find myself working with someone and their voices and explanations in a way that I can call properly collaborative."

19 mental health staff  
attended



# Psychodynamic Psychotherapy and Schizophrenia

24th Oct 2003, at Dawley Centre of Psychological Therapies, Telford

**Lucy Johnstone** is a Clinical Psychologist and Academic Tutor on the Bristol Clinical Psychology Doctorate course. She is also the author of '**Users and Abusers of Psychiatry**' and has a chapter in **This is Madness** (PCCS Books) called "Do families cause 'schizophrenia'? Revisiting a taboo subject". She helped produce the BPS' report '**Recent Advances in understanding mental illness and psychotic experiences**' (2000) ([www.understandingpsychosis.com](http://www.understandingpsychosis.com))

Psychodynamic approaches are based on the belief that madness has meaning and can be understood as a response to relationship dilemmas and traumatic events. Although currently unfashionable, such approaches still have much to offer.

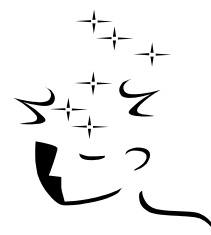
As well as presenting an accessible model of Psychodynamic therapy, and using real-life examples as a basis for formulation, Lucy also led a group discussion using the celebrated case study of the Genain quadruplets in the 1930s. This is classically used in Psychiatric training to make the case for a genetic cause for 'schizophrenia', but Lucy, using psychodynamic (and common sense) thinking, easily showed how painful or abusive life experiences, family struggles and dynamics, and social interests/pressures make sense of why we might breakdown and have psychotic experiences.

### Some references:

Johnstone, L. (2001) **Users and Abusers of Psychiatry**. London: Routledge  
Mace, C. and Margison, F. (1997) **Psychotherapy of Psychosis**. London: Gaskell  
Read, J. (1997) Child abuse and psychosis: a literature review and implications for practice, **Professional Psychology: research and practice**, **28**, 448-456

I found Lucy's rigorous approach to critically examining the foundations of the concept of 'schizophrenia' to be valuable and very supportive"

18 mental health staff attended



# Cognitive-Behavioural Therapy

28th Nov 2003 at Shelton Hospital, Shrewsbury

We had local speakers for this session—**Sharon Matthews**, therapist with our local CBT service, and **Kate Holmes**, who works at Dawley, both facilitate local groups, using CBT ideas, to help people who hear voices. They were accompanied by three members of their local support group, who spoke of their positive experiences of how CBT ideas and the group had helped them.

Sharon described that the principle aims of CBT to psychosis are to reduce the person's distress from symptoms and to provide strategies and skills to manage these symptoms in everyday life. CBT assumes that although psychosis may have an underlying biological origin, the symptoms are determined by environmental, cognitive, somatic and behavioural factors that can be modified. This session took us through assessment and formulation, and also presented some examples of everyday strategies that people have found helpful to cope with voices.

## Some references:

Birchwood, M., Fowler, D., Jackson, C. (Eds) (2000) **Early Intervention in Psychosis**. Chichester: Wiley

Morrison, A.P. (2002) **A Casebook of Cognitive Therapy for Psychosis** Hove, UK: Brunner-Routledge

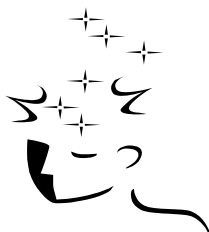
Steele, K. & Berman, C. (2002) **The Day the Voices Stopped: A schizophrenic's journey from madness to hope**. London: Basic Books

"It's realistic & makes sense. I feel I could 'have a go' and work on the cycle discussed under 'historical formulation' with elements of Coping Enhancement and Compensation strategies. I would like regular workshops to enhance skills"

"Great to hear about practical interventions—like use of earplugs and singing to help cope with unwanted voices"

"...a special thanks to the service users for coming and sharing their experiences"

40 people attended, including at least 5 service users



# Psychosis and Spirituality

5th Dec 2003, at Dawley Centre of Psychological Therapies, Telford

**Isabel Clarke** is a Clinical Psychologist working in the NHS in Southampton, both in community and inpatient rehabilitation services. She originally studied History at Cambridge, graduating in 1968. She is a lifelong practicing Anglican, and active in the Association for Creation Spirituality (*Greenspirit*). She has organised two conferences on this theme, both held in or near Winchester, in 2000 and 2001. She is also the Editor of **'Psychosis and Spirituality: exploring the new frontier'**

Psychosis as an episode in the spiritual journey of life? Spiritual episodes in the psychotic journey? Or different ways of encountering the same, universal human, area of experience?

This workshop raised these questions and presented thinking and research to put forward a challenging new perspective on this area of human experience. Isabel allowed ample opportunity for participants to reflect on their own experiences, as well as presenting current academic theories.

## Some references:

Chadwick, P. K. (1992) **Borderline: A psychological study of paranoia and delusional thinking**. Routledge, London and New York

Clarke, I. (Ed) (2001) **Psychosis and Spirituality: exploring the new frontier**. Whurr, London

Jackson, M. C. & Fulford, K. W. M. (1997) 'Spiritual experience and psychopathology', **Philosophy, Psychiatry and psychology**, 4 (1), 41-90

"I gained a deeper understanding of working with service users experiencing psychosis and the spiritual links which most people find difficult to accept (personally I don't)"

20 mental health staff attended

"Best session I've ever been to in my mental health career. Please repeat so colleagues can come along"



## Pre-therapy

12th Dec 2003, at Dawley Centre of Psychological Therapies, Telford

**Catherine Clarke** has nursing and counselling training. She is also the mother of a son diagnosed with schizophrenia with whom she has used Pre-therapy ideas.

**Mervyn Morris** is a Reader in Mental Health, UCE, Birmingham.

Pre-therapy aims at helping people, who are overwhelmed by psychotic experience, to be back in touch with their surroundings and other people, making the necessary 'psychological contact' that is the basis for engaging in daily activity and a helping relationship.

It was devised by Professor Gary Prouty in 1976 following many years of working with people who were struggling to have meaningful relationships with other people. It uses ideas similar to those of Carl Rogers, such as reflection and non-interpretation, but it applies these ideas to physical as well as verbal ways of reflecting back to someone your awareness of them, and emphasizes the importance of simple methods to help orientate someone to their surroundings, as a way of decreasing isolation.

### Some references:

Gendlin, E.T. (1996) **Focusing-Orientated Psychotherapy**. Guildford Press, New York

Kirschenbaum, H. & Henderson, V.L. (Eds) **The Carl Rogers Reader**. London: Constable

Prouty, G., van Werde, D., Portner, M. (2002) **'Pre-therapy: Reaching Contact Impaired Clients**. PCCS Books

"What I took away from this session was confirmation and affirmation that it's the relationship that heals. I really valued the sharing of personal stories to illustrate the depth of making contact in relationships"

"I learnt that the environment/milieu in which people talk is very important. I also learnt about the vulnerability of carers coming into a professional environment"



20 mental health staff attended

## Overall Feedback and The Future

"Ideally, staff from the wards could attend any future sessions—this isn't a criticism, just a heartfelt desire to open up some broader ways of working with people"

"Feel more confident to put knowledge/information into practice"

"Enjoyed—left with lots of thoughts"

"I learnt new ways of applying ideas in a practical way and the vital importance of recognizing that everyone is different and needs a different approach"

"This type of information and discussion should be available to staff working on the wards with acute psychiatric clients"

"I really liked and valued the sharing of personal experiences"

"Could we please have the whole of the course repeated? This is a request from S. Shropshire Mental Health Day Services and PATH House, Ludlow"

"More please!"

### Future training

If you would like further training in any of these approaches or wish for this series to be repeated, then please contact

**Helen Jones**

**01952 222725**

**[helen.jones@shropshirepct.nhs.uk](mailto:helen.jones@shropshirepct.nhs.uk)**

