

Trauma and Resistance: A witnessing approach to community work



Vikki Reynolds, PHD, RCC

Vikki is a therapist/activist whose experience includes clinical supervision and therapy with refugees and survivors of torture, mental health and substance abuse counsellors, anti-violence counsellors, and working alongside transgendered and queer communities. Vikki has been the Therapeutic Supervisor of Peak House since 2002, and was a Family Therapist at Peak for many years. Vikki's published work addresses social justice, sustainability, ethics, and trauma. She is an Instructor with VCC, UBC and City University where she received the Deans Award for Distinguished Instruction.
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February 15, 2011 8:30am - 4:30pm
City University, 789 W.Pender, Room #350, Vancouver, Cost \$120

space is limited, please register to secure your seat
peakhouse@telus.net or 604-253-2187

This workshop presents an alternative approach to work with trauma, which focuses on the resistance of victims of violence and oppression, as opposed to attending primarily to the details of the trauma, which can be re-traumatizing for both the person and the front-line worker. Honouring the wisdom of the people we work alongside in their responses to trauma brings forward their agency and wisdom. Locating sites of resistance, and witnessing the resistance capacities of the people we work alongside, can create identities of knowledge, autonomy and strength, as opposed to victim/survivor identities, or other spoiled identities.

Resistance is not only important if it can stop oppression, but the actual doing of resistance connects the person with humanity in situations outside of human understanding. Vikki will illustrate a witnessing approach to therapy with people who have been subjected to interpersonal and political violence, which honours the person's resistance to oppression and violence. Witnessing practices open our work in hope-filled and just directions. Resistance can be hidden in therapeutic talk, and we will address the political context of violence and resistance, moving the conversation from private pain to public issue.

This experiential workshop will outline:

- expansive understandings of "trauma" that challenge some of the taken for granted understandings of the medicalized term
- witnessing practices
- structures of safety as the foundation for the work
- acts of resistance which offer sites for negotiations of new meanings of traumatic past events in the relative safety of the present
- alternative understandings of the way trauma works, and ways to work with trauma, including a reconsideration of PTSD as a potential site of resistance
- the connection of private pain with public issues - naming and addressing the contexts of oppression in which the people we work alongside live and where we work
- the political responsibilities and ethical concerns of practitioners
- a 'supervision of solidarity', an approach to "clinical supervision" which engages collectively and with a particular ethic of resistance

The voices of the people we work alongside will be present through co-authored documents and poetry.

special thanks to City University