**Student Counsellor Magazine**

**May 2021**

**Text Only Version**

**A note from Meg, NCS CEO**

Thank you so much for taking the time to open up a copy of Student Counsellor Magazine!

I'm so thrilled to be sharing this second issue with you. We had such a great reception for our first issue, but I knew even then that the second one would be so much richer, and provide much more in the way of useful articles and resources for student counsellors - no matter where you're studying, or what stage you're at. I've even been told that long-qualified counsellors have enjoyed reading the first edition, which honestly gave me the warm-fuzzies.

If you haven't read the first edition yet then there's a link to do so in a couple of pages' time.

It's wonderful to be able to provide a platform for a variety of amazing organisations and groups to share what they're doing to grow and develop counselling and psychotherapy, and for student counsellors to talk about the things that really matter to them. I'm really proud of what this magazine has been able to achieve in that regard in such a short space of time.

We've even gone a bit further and created some free resources that you can use as a student counsellor that will also stand you in good stead for life after graduation - templates for client hours logs, CPD records & development plans, and supervision records. We've created them so that it's easy for you to see exactly what a professional body will look for if you're ever audited (a routine process, and not as daunting as you might think - especially if you're keeping good records from the start), or if you want to work towards a particular membership grade.

I truly hope that you enjoy reading this magazine as much as we've enjoyed putting it together, and if you have then please consider contributing to the next one! We love hearing from you.

Best wishes for your studies!

Meg

**Read the last edition of Student Counsellor Magazine here:**

<http://cm.nationalcounsellingsociety.org/books/rkps>

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**NCS Interview with Mick Cooper**

NCS Head of Engagement and Development speaks with [Mick Cooper](http://mick-cooper.squarespace.com) about the ETHOS project and the importance of research in the counselling/psychotherapy field.

Watch it here: <https://youtu.be/elQkUaodxIc>

**Free! Ethics CPD Course**

If you join NCS as a Student Member before 31/08/2021!

Find out more about joining below:

**Become a member:** [**https://nationalcounsellingsociety.org/become-a-member/individual**](https://nationalcounsellingsociety.org/become-a-member/individual)

**NCS Interview with Aashna**

Meg Moss, CEO of NCS, interviews Pretish Raja-Helm and Shammi Kohli of Aashna.

Aashna Counselling and Psychotherapy values the individual, embracing difference and acknowledging the power of belonging. At Aashna they have created a space where clients and therapists can work together in a calm and considered environment to nurture healing through the relationship.

Aashna also provide a wealth of resources in their Let's Get Uncomfortable Library. The [Let's Get Uncomfortable (LGU): Embedding explorations of race, ethnicity, culture and power resources library](https://www.zotero.org/groups/2515173/lets_get_uncomfortable_resources/item-list) is a growing library of resources growing out of the themes of LGU.

You can find out more about Aashna and their work [here](https://www.aashna.uk).

Watch it here: <https://youtu.be/hzhObO7vg7E>

**Why working with the imagination, and fostering a client's creativity can help with integration of painful material and healing from trauma**

*“If you bring forth that which is within you, then that which is within you will save you. If you do not bring forth that which is within you, then that which is within you will destroy you.”*

- Gospel according to St Thomas

**Written by Sarah Van Gogh – FNCS Fellow Accred, MBACP (Accred) and UKCP registered.**

There is a long and honourable tradition in therapeutic work of both recognising the links between therapeutic work and creative expression; and making an explicit space to foster creative self-expression as part of the therapy. Both of these aspects of therapy and creativity have been written about by leading clinicians over many decades, including in such seminal works as 'The Hands of the Living God', 'Dibs, In Search of Self', and 'Playing and Reality.'

Working with the imagination, (by, for example, drawing in sessions, making objects, playing in a sand tray, sharing and/or creating music and poetry, using photography, sewing, or sculpting) can give clients the freedom to effectively say, “This is not about me, this is about....” And once they are free to create something that is symbolic of some painful experience, they are often able to discover, in what they have imagined, vital new insights into and acceptance of these painful experiences. I have found, during over 20 years of clinical practice, that it was only by gently fostering some clients' capacity to be imaginative and creative that they could grow in their capacity to integrate their embodied, feeling, intuitive selves with their thinking, logical and language-based selves, which is, after all, the holy grail of so much therapy. Such integration tends to promote the development of an ego that is both resilient and somewhat permeable, rather than one which is either porous and prone to collapse, or tough in a brittle way and prone to shatter.

A way of working, that neither requires a client to speak directly of their trauma, nor risks leaving too much their trauma out of the work, is one that many in the therapeutic professions are now recognising as the most effective.

**“Imagination is from the first an attribute of the senses themselves; it is not a separate mental faculty...but is rather the way the senses have of throwing themselves beyond what is immediately given, in order to make tentative contact with the other side of things that we do not sense directly.”**

**- David Abram (1995)**

Imagination enables us to do something that individuals who have been traumatised are in particular need of – to keep the senses in some kind of contact with what actually has been or was, at the same time as allowing those senses to reach out beyond, or behind, or above the concrete experience. Helping a traumatised client to contact their powers of imagination in contained and structured ways allows them to find the middle way between a) staying only with what was, and can continue to be, traumatising or b) floating away from, or having to deny, the day-to-day reality of existence because such concrete reality includes so much of their own dreadful suffering. There needs to be a third or middle way, to help the client integrate painful experiences that does not run the risk of simply re-traumatising them.

The careful introduction of allowing the client's imagination to have a place in the work introduces a measure of safety in the process of exploring and sharing their experiences, and provides this middle way between being overwhelmed, or not working at sufficient depth. For rather than trying to speak about or actively recall the stark nature of having been traumatised, the client can be helped to find metaphors and symbols – in images, music, poetic language, created objects, etc. - that can convey something of how their experience was, without having to be stuck with the cold, terrifying reality of remembering or describing, for example, abusive, violent or shaming experiences.

In his brilliant book 'The Master & His Emissary'(2009) Mc Gilchrist unpacks in great detail the need for humans to access that which is 'complex and deep'in the context of an understanding of the structure and function of the brain, and in particular the differing roles of the brain's hemispheres. He outlines the complementary roles of the left hemisphere and the right hemisphere of the human brain, and highlights the importance of grasping that, although the ability to think and speak in straightforward, rational ways is certainly significant, humans are also in need of a deeper kind of wisdom and insight, which comes more from the feeling/intuitive/embodied side of our sense of self. He also clarifies how vital the part of the brain called the corpus callosum is, for it is this connecting structure that allows the hemispheres of the brain to exchange information and, in effect, communicate, so that each side can function as the complementary counterpart to the other. I think there is a case for seeing the imagination, and all that pertains to it, as performing the same function for humanity that the corpus callosum does for the human individual. I have tried to express this in the following image. (Included in the e-magazine.)

In the book “Portrait of the Artist as a Young Girl” (2007)Grayson Perry, the artist and social commentator, speaks movingly about the life-giving role that the imagination and creativity can have for troubled individuals. In one interview he describes the 'Outsider' artist Henry Darger, who fled from an abusive and miserable children's home at the age of 16 and thereafter lived an utterly secluded life as an adult. After his death an enormous body of art work was discovered in his flat, and his paintings are now keenly sought, each one selling for tens of thousands of pounds. Perry says, “Darger played himself through all the characters in his story which meant he was able to be whole in his imaginary world. It (his painting) was a repository for keeping his whole self alive. I too have used this survival mechanism...It was as if I was in a prison while my imagination was the exercise yard, and this allowed all the parts of myself to go out at least sometimes...to be themselves.”

Many people have understood that therapy and creativity, go hand in hand. I'd sum up the reason for this: they're both crucial in helping the emotional, unconscious self to come into a more balanced relationship with the cognitive, conscious self. This balanced relationship ensures that a vital kind of psychic equilibrium can be maintained – an equilibrium which is the sign of a resilient and secure sense of self, and of an individual who is no longer constantly at risk of being washed away in the stormy emotions and sensations of their past.

**You’re a therapist, but do you understand my background?**

**Written by Samia Shafiq - NCS Member.**

**My mum’s midlife Crisis**

So, it began years ago when my mum fell into her midlife crisis where she had gone into a state of premenopausal depression. At this point it was a very distressing point for me, holding together my life coaching company and managing the needs of my mother. I was battling alone as a carer as my brother had his own inner struggles, my sister lived out of the way and my dad was not equipped to deal with my mum’s emotions. A woman moving from a very independent state had now gotten into a state which not many people were aware of.

**One side being a carer and the other side listening to criticism**

Many people began to give their own reasonings of why my mum may have gotten into this state. They began to make us feel isolated and uncomfortable by questioning how it got to this point. It felt quite difficult to manage others jumping to conclusions as well as someone who needed support. I was very fortunate that I had this opportunity to give my mum strength as this was the field I was in, however to work in this area and have someone close to you who needs 24/7 attention is very different and emotionally draining. How do you detach from a loved one? What is the carer’s breaking point? What if people tell you there is no solution to your loved one getting better? How do you hold yourself?

At this time, my mum was referred to counselling and I went with her to her first session. There were a few gaps in services which I felt were missing and just in general. Over the course of the years, I have gathered knowledge and experience of the gaps when counselling people from different cultures.

1. People from different cultures can feel they need to explain their cultural norms to the counsellor. So instead of being open and having a trusting relationship, the client feels obliged to explain their cultural values, religious beliefs, and personal character. Almost feeling like they need to explain before they get judged.

**How can the therapist genuinely try to reassure the client before the client feels disconnected and obliged to explain themselves?**

2. People from different cultures are going through identity crisis so understanding this is important. For example, one person can carry Muslim beliefs, British values from their surroundings, Pakistani values from parents, social norms and expectations and their own personal identity of who they are in their own character. So, you may find a client:

* May pray within a religious context.
* May, according to Pakistani culture, believe that it is okay to accept abuse.
* In terms of British values may feel obliged to shake hands with the opposite gender in work situations even if it conflicts their own personal beliefs.
* Socially may take weed or drugs trying to fit in with their peers and conforming to what is around.
* May feel urges of wanting to get into physical relationships prior marriage due to their own personal struggle of identity and a journey of finding themselves even if it goes against their beliefs.
* May be ruthless in character as they may have gone through past traumas.

It is important that the therapist understands the complexity which comes when working with clients from different cultures who are going through their own inner journey of struggle to finding their higher self. Being born in a Muslim family does not mean that someone is in a perfect state, however it means that Muslims are going through a journey of finding their feet and working towards attaining to be a better Muslim constantly. They are continuously battling their inner desire, against what others want and their own conscious of what is right and wrong according to their beliefs. All they want is not to be judged and to be allowed to work through these struggles so they can attain their own true higher self.

**How can you as a therapist understand all these areas within a person? What research is the therapist doing prior to the session?**

3. What are the wrong ways to address people from different cultures?

* “It must be quite hard for you to fast long hours”.
* “You must be struggling with praying that many times a day”.
* “You must find that quite difficult to wear in warm weather”.

The above are some mistakes made when addressing people from different religions and cultures, as this assumes that the client’s religion or culture is difficult for them. This can again make clients explain themselves, so the best way instead of assuming is to ask how beneficial these acts must be for the client and how fascinating it is to know how different people fast, pray, wear religious clothing in different ways. Allow the client to know how open you are to welcoming the similarities and differences of religious and cultural values and beliefs.

4. In recent times, there has been a rise in people wanting to get counselling from people who understand their cultural background hence someone from their own community.

If being a counsellor is all about having core conditions, how can you increase your knowledge so you can relate to the client?

We are in a time where communities like Black Lives Matter, LGBT, and other inequalities have been addressed and any insult or non-acceptance has been challenged. Do we not think that people from different cultures and beliefs should also feel the same level of acceptance and given the opportunity to stand firm in what they believe without being judged, even if it may clash with what other communities believe? There should be respect and acceptance for people to carry their own personal beliefs, as long as it’s not imposed on anyone else, or it does not break any human rights laws.

**You can be that difference and you can be that change to allow people to feel accepted no matter what community they come from.**

**Free video learning resources from CPCAB**

**As part of CPCAB’s commitment to support future practitioners, we provide a rich collection of free training resource videos. Our Digital Content team and sister organisation The Counselling Channel make this content in-house for our learners to access on our website and YouTube channels.**

For trainee practitioners at Levels 4 and above, The Counselling Channel features over 100 free videos. Topics include specific therapeutic approaches, bereavement and loss, relationships, addiction, emotions, self-development and neurodiversity.

We have interviews and example therapy sessions from leading therapists including Les Greenberg, Robert Elliott, Mick Cooper and Ladislav Timulak. To access all of this free content visit [The Counselling Channel](https://www.youtube.com/c/TheCounsellingChannel) on YouTube.

For trainees at Levels 2 and above, CPCAB has over 90 videos on its website and YouTube Channel. These cover topics from beginning training through to guides on understanding some of the concepts that underpin our qualifications. All the videos are free to watch and we’ve categorised them into playlists to make it easy to find the content you’re interested in. Check the [CPCAB website](https://www.cpcab.co.uk/videos) for access.

Most recently we recorded an interview with Dr John Norcross and Dr Mick Cooper on the topic of their new book Personalizing Psychotherapy. The conversation explored their approach to client preferences and how trainees can start incorporating them into their work with clients. The video is due to be released by the end of May so be sure to look out for it. A great way to keep up to date with our latest videos is to subscribe to [CPCAB on YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/c/CPCABvideos) to receive notifications of new releases.

**Boundaries, Cashdan, and Awareness**

**Written by Giedre Dian - NCS Student member.**

Lockdown, boredom, and the finish of a long working day with emails and suppliers’ communications. Time for a hot cocoa on a cold night and to relax in front of the TV. It’s 9pm and something new started: a series called Too Close, with just three episodes about a forensic psychiatrist, who has to assess a woman accused of an atrocious crime of which she claims she can't remember a thing. Dr Emma Robertson (Emily Watson) is assigned to work with Connie Mortensen (Denise Cough). It rapidly transpires that Connie isn’t the only one whose life is beginning to unravel.

I had a revealing experience following the story as it unfolded and would like to share it. I would also like to use my insights as an example of a series of mistakes that could be addressed in a better way, as well as internal thoughts about what to be aware of as future new practitioners; a list of things that we need to keep in mind, that could happen between a therapist and a client.

This experience reminds me of Sheldon Cashdan (an American author of Object Relations Therapy) and his book ‘The Witch Must Die’. In this book, he discovers the way fairy tales (initially written to amuse adults, including ghastly tales, containing incest) support children dealing with psychological conflicts by projecting their own internal struggles between good and evil onto battles enacted by the characters in the stories, and how to deal with difficulties in the future. (By then, matricide and patricide had already been extinguished from the tales, as a code of ethics). By extension, the same benefit can be applied to films and series, to possibly help self-awareness, firstly to future practitioners and even for specific clients.

I had used educational films before, as a Health Trainer for people living with dyslexia and dyspraxia supporting to empower them towards employment. It was a success, and lots of clients have found and sustained jobs since then. But the benefit in terms of self-esteem boosting was the great bonus. It assisted clients to take part in a group discussion. It was extremely positive and rewarding to be seen by me, as the facilitator. The project went along for a year and a half and received an award. Therefore, I do believe that creativity, trust from the client, and thinking outside the box can support us within the new challenges that we will face. Especially if a theorist like Sheldon Cashdan already tried it and worked well.

Along the chapters of the series Too Close, it is firstly possible to notice the breach of confidentiality when during a dinner at the house of the psychiatrist, Emma’s husband and friends started to refer to the case and talk about it (due to it becoming famous from media coverage). Referring to the mother, Connie as ‘yummy mummy’, is noticeably extremely disrespectful.

Secondly, it shows the breach of boundaries (which gives the name of the series – Too Close) between patient and forensic psychiatrist, focusing on the danger of it. In addition, when self-disclosure is used not in benefit of the client, but as a self-relief, it is not appropriate and needs to be avoided. Only at the end, the self-disclosure became authentic and truly beneficial, when Connie was threatening to take her own life.

Thirdly, due to her own grief, Dr Emma clearly should have made an ethical referral and not assume she would be able to cope with it. When aware of the problem and trying to make a referral for another psychiatrist, the therapeutic alliance was already present, and Connie refused it.

Fourthly, it shows a process of countertransference that the psychiatrist cannot integrate, compromising the case - where Dr Emma needs to define if Connie is under a dissociative memory loss and her needs to go to a normal prison or be in a psychiatric prison, after Dr Emma is cross-examined in Court.

Fifthly, the breach of health, safety, and security, showing the client being able to gain access to the psychiatrist’s mobile, even checking some messages on it. Then gaining access to a lighter, further using to set fire in the mental health facility, all intriguing and serious.

Finally, a psychiatrist who had drank so much the previous night and ended up vomiting in front of the client.

Altogether, these things are exaggerated; after all it is a series. But being aware and paying attention can give us, as future practitioners, an idea of how things can escalate and eventually compromise the therapeutic process. It also emphasises the importance to work ethically and respecting an ethical framework, regarding a code of conduct of the practice of counselling. Ultimately, these are things to keep in mind and becoming aware of when working. Embedding these procedures needs to be a second nature for a future counsellor.

To sum up, let’s work seriously respecting confidentiality, to gently but firmly assure the boundaries that will protect both counsellor and client; do not feel overpowered and consider an ethical referral in complex cases and if something resonates with our lives at that moment; only use self-disclosure in benefit of the client; to make sure health and safety are present and addressed all times, to assure we can manage transference and counter-transferences; and discuss it in supervision, to assure we are ok. Good luck to us all.

**With thanks to Giedre Dian - NCS Student Member.**

**A Journey of Self-Discovery**

**Written by Catherine Moore - NCS Student Member.**

We learn so much about ourselves when embarking on our journey to becoming counsellors. We have to examine our own thoughts and feelings in order to ensure these don’t impede on our work with our clients in the future. Everyone’s reasons for beginning this journey are different. For some it will just be a passion for wanting to guide and help those that are struggling in some way, for some it will be a passion due to something that has happened to them or a loved one that has spurred them along, and for some it will be a combination of the two. Whatever the reasons for deciding to do this, rest assured you will change, you will grow, you will evolve. There is no escaping it, embrace it.

I at the tender age of 43… yes 43 years young, I decided it was time. I had long had an interest in people and how they tick. This included having seen friends and family suffer from self-doubt, anxiety, and a myriad of other unhelpful thought processes. But until a few years ago I was not ready to address myself… what made me tick, my fears, my flaws… oh my gosh was that an eyeopener! Yes, it can be quite nerve wracking, owning our flaws, our mistakes, our insecurities, admitting them. Especially to ourselves, funnily, but it is so liberating and empowering, and guess what? Once you do that and you then start on this journey, it is amazing how much more open you are to what others have to say. We are all hoping to make someone else’s life better but that is so much more difficult if we are carrying our own burdens.

I think we can all agree that Covid 19 has had an impact on pretty much everyone’s mental health in some way. As students this has affected our learning experience; we would most likely have met all our classmates by now, have built natural study partners/groups. This will be true for those of you who, like me, are in their first year. For those of you that are further along, the routine of being in class and/or meeting with your study partners/groups will have been affected. Would our learning be different? Would we know or understand more or less if the situation was different? We will never know so really, we need to look at the positives. Everyone, including us as students, have learned to adjust and adapt. It may have been tricky at first but here we are Zooming here there and everywhere, whilst never actually going anywhere. How crazy is that?

We have learned new ways of studying, meaning that we have the knowledge and technology to reach anyone, anywhere. Yes, that has its disadvantages, but also its perks. Let’s talk about the pros and cons:

**Pros** - we are using technology on a much larger scale than we would have considered before. This increases our ability to communicate with mentors, other students, like- minded people, family, friends… even those that might be on the other side of the world! It has also brought about the concept of being able to help clients remotely, work on volunteers remotely, and so everything goes on.

**Cons** - the advancement of technology means we could have a tendency to always be “on”, making ourselves available to everyone 24/7. We know this is unhealthy, but we do it. Especially when leaving the house other than for a walk wasn’t an option. Learning to establish healthy boundaries is a necessity, one that we need to learn for when we qualify. We cannot (as much as we might like to be) available to our clients 24/7. But it is also necessary with family and friends. Notice I say healthy boundaries - I’m not saying build a wall and don’t let anyone in past 6 o’clock! Understanding your own limits is important in maintaining the relationships around you, it ensures you get enough time to renew and be your best self.

**So that’s my two cents worth (or is it my two pennies’ worth?) As long as we are doing the best that we can at any given time then we are doing great! Good luck.**

**NCS Student Membership**

**- Affordable membership costs & reduced fees for students.**

**- Access to a directory of discounted supervision and/or personal counselling for student counsellors.**

**- Monthly digital magazine that members can contribute to.**

**- Discounts on insurance.**

**- Student members of the Society can apply for a TOTUM card.**

**- 20% discount on titles from PCCS Books, Routledge’s products, and Jessica Kingsley Publishers' books.**

**- 30% discount on selected titles with SAGE.**

**- Free online CPD courses available to members.**

**...and much more!**

Find out more: <https://nationalcounsellingsociety.org/student-membership>

**Student Member of NCS** **Looking for a Placement?**

Check the members' area for our list of placement providers: <https://nationalcounsellingsociety.org/members/placements-for-students>

**NCS Members' Poetry Anthology**

For World Poetry Day 2021, we asked our members to send in their poetry, and we had an incredible amount of submissions from talented writers.

We compiled 100 of these submitted poems into an anthology, which you can read by clicking on the link below. We hope you enjoy reading it as much as we enjoyed putting it all together!

**Read the Anthology!** [**http://cm.nationalcounsellingsociety.org/books/npct**](http://cm.nationalcounsellingsociety.org/books/npct)

**Campaigning for Counsellors**

One of the responsibilities that we feel we have as a professional body for counselling and psychotherapy is in raising awareness of the profession to a broader audience, and making sure that the profession is respected and seen positively by those outside of it, for example members of the public, the Government, and those who employ or may one day choose to employ counsellors and psychotherapists.

The Society therefore actively campaigns for the counselling and psychotherapy profession, for the Accredited Register programme, and for the recognition of our members.

In Westminster we sit on an All Party Parliamentary Group on a Fit and Healthy Childhood, and our [Child Ambassador, Kate Day,](https://nationalcounsellingsociety.org/about-us/ambassadors/kate-day-children-and-young-people-mental-health) contributes to the reports that are produced and subsequently circulated to all MPs and Lords. Our most recent published report was [The Covid Generation: A Mental Health Pandemic in the Making](https://fhcappg.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/THE-COVID-GENERATION-REPORT-April2021.pdf), but we have contributed to a number of others over the years, including [Wellbeing and Nurture: Physical and Emotional Security in Childhood](https://fhcappg.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/ReportWellbeingandNurtureFinal140720.pdf), [Children’s Mental Health Beyond the Green Paper: The Role of Practice Based](https://fhcappg.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/practice-based-evidence-report-300119.pdf) [Evidence](https://fhcappg.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/practice-based-evidence-report-300119.pdf), and [Mental Health in Childhood](https://fhcappg.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/mh_report_june2018.pdf) (also sponsored by the Society).

We also sit on the All Party Group for Mental Health in the Northern Ireland Assembly, and are in the process of joining similar groups in the devolved governments of Scotland and Wales. We’ve recently held productive meetings with Rosena Allin-Kahn MP, Labour’s Shadow Mental Health Minister, and Lisa Cameron, SNP’s Mental Health Spokesperson. Both have kindly asked questions on our behalf in the House of Commons, and we continue to build positive working relationships with both Rosena and Lisa, as well as a number of other MPs across the UK.

Another initiative within Government of which we’re proud to be a part is a House of Lords group which focuses on Children’s issues. Through this group the NCS recently attended a worldwide event to celebrate the adoption of General Comment No. 25, which sets out how the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child applies in the digital world.

We have also held meetings with the Office of the Children’s Commissioner and with the Mental Health Champion for Northern Ireland. A large part of our active campaigning on behalf of our members and the counselling profession is done by producing written submissions to parliamentary committees. We’ve made submissions to the Health and Social Care Select Committee on Children’s Mental Health, where we called for all schools to have a paid counsellor who is on an Accredited Register, and another to the Health and Social Care Select Committee to address issues of the availability of counselling in the community, calling for counselling to be made available in all GP surgeries. You can find copies of these letters in the [Important News](https://nationalcounsellingsociety.org/about-us/important-news) section of our website.

Yet another part of our campaign work is with employers, where we strive to make sure that all roles for counselling and psychotherapy are based on skills and ability as opposed to a choice of membership body. We have had great success with many of the largest EAP and PMI providers in the UK.

We also champion the [Professional Standards Authority’s Accredited Register programme](https://www.professionalstandards.org.uk/what-we-do/accredited-registers) as a tool for employers to use when recruiting, and attempt to shift the prevalent thinking around BACP Accreditation (or equivalent) to one of understanding and appreciating the qualifications and experience of all those who have worked hard to be included on an Accredited Register.

**With thanks to Jyles Robillard-Day - Head of Engagement & Development.**

**What’s it like to change career in your forties?**

**Written by Kirsty Ritchie - MNCS Accred.**

That head tilted look of confusion when I explain I’m a chartered accountant turned psychotherapeutic counsellor is a common occurrence. I still “do accounting” but in a much different way than previously, it’s on my own terms.

To be honest, I really didn’t relish another three years training, it was hard enough the first time round trying to work and study. But somehow, I stumbled upon something which really resonated. It didn’t even start out as a career; it was self-development, but I realised that all my experiences, and new training could be put to good use.

But that’s now, how did I get here?

I'd lost my passion for my career in finance, which to that point had spanned 25 years.

After going back to work from maternity leave, I thought the ‘break’ was all I needed, and it would all be great once I was back. It wasn't. Nothing had changed. The same old corporate politics I’d spent 25 years rebelling against still existed and a deep niggle was not going away. Why do I have to change myself so fundamentally just to “fit in”, “be accepted”, or worse to “get ahead”?

Strategic projects nearly made me stay, but I was disillusioned by leadership. It hit me! They wanted change but were not prepared to change themselves. That was why my passion had gone, I realised it was a different kind of break I needed.

I decided to join another part of the group on something new as my last attempt to find happiness again. But it transpired the role pitched was entirely different in reality. I raised this several times, but nothing was done. Something did change though. I started being undermined in front of my peers and my own staff.

Hindsight being a wonderful thing of course. All the signs were there, I just didn't know what they were. Gaslighting, it’s called now. When someone at work is deliberately making you believe you are over-reacting, confused, defensive, imagining things or remembering things incorrectly.

I consulted HR, who told me I could try to resolve the issues or raise a formal grievance. I continued to try to resolve it for many weeks and was told that I should “just find another job”.

It affected my mental health. I was signed off work. My mind went through every possible thought; How could I let this happen? What did I do wrong? Why didn’t I see it coming? What’s wrong with me? Why couldn’t I fix it? What do I tell people? You get the idea.

I had some therapy sessions to work things through. I didn’t go back.

Why did it happen to me? There is no answer. It’s difficult to stomach, an accountant who needs everything to be balanced had no answers. But it’s the fact of so many cases, circumstances that combine to attack your mind when you least expect it. It was, however, my turning point.

Getting well involved researching all I could on mental health and enrolling on an advanced diploma in psychotherapeutic counselling. I had been physically and mentally depleted and needed to put the jigsaw pieces of wellbeing back together; eat well, sleep well, get plenty exercise. What it actually did for me was give me my passion back; one that I realise I’ve had all throughout my career, helping others.

One thing I know, is that I have built resilience. I didn’t know what it was when I was doing it, and I don’t think I would have come out the other end stronger and more passionate for my new career without it. It’s an exciting and scary time, a tough mountain to climb, but I’ve got good boots now!

So, what’s it like to radically change career in your forties? Answer…. unbelievably scary and utterly rewarding all at once. Why? Starting a second career is no small feat, especially when it’s your own business.

Some of the main worries I had/have:

* Being every department, sometimes all in the same day.
* Realising you have a distinct lack of experience in some areas and having to find the right help.
* It’s all on you, there’s no passing the buck or waiting for someone else to pick something up.
* Accepting there’s stuff you don’t know you don’t know.
* Coping with a fear of failure almost every day.

So, if that’s the scary part what’s the reward?

* Finding wonderful, likeminded and helpful people who gave me advice and support when I really needed it.
* Counselling those is crisis is a privilege.
* Knowing that what I can do for others really means something.

I was a typical accountant, I needed structure, balance, certainty and rules. None of which I have now by the way, but it’s totally ok. I’ve learned completely new skills, found balance and learned to help others in a way I would never have thought possible. I still love accountancy (yes really, I do). I teach accounting and coach Financial Services Professional Apprentices but my focus and passion has shifted.

The morale of my story is, that from life changing difficulty something positive can emerge. If you’re thinking about changing career, starting again or just learning something totally different, face your fear and go for it, if I can do it…

**Looking for a way to organise your CPD, Supervision, and Client Hours?**

Download our log templates below!

[CPD Log](https://nationalcounsellingsociety.org/assets/uploads/docs/CPD-Record-Development-Plan-Fillable.pdf)

[Supervision Log](https://nationalcounsellingsociety.org/assets/uploads/docs/cs/Record-of-Supervision.pdf)

[Client Hours Log](https://nationalcounsellingsociety.org/assets/uploads/docs/Client-Hours-Log.pdf)

**Deliberate Practice Podcast from CPCAB in collaboration with Counselling Tutor**

**CPCAB would like to support learners on their counselling training journey and are pleased to have collaborated with Counselling Tutor to include a 10-minute section 'Check-in with CPCAB' within their weekly podcast.**

In this podcast Rory talks to Kelly Budd (Head of Qualifications) at CPCAB (Counselling & Psychotherapy Central Awarding Body) about what deliberate practice is, and how to use this concept yourself in your counselling practice.

Deliberate practice refers to practice that is purposeful, systematic and aimed at ongoing improvement in your skills.

This could be about improving the skills you already have, or it could focus on extending the reach and range of your skills – in other words, about growing in depth or in breadth.

Kelly outlines key elements of deliberate practice in counselling, which include:

* determining your baseline position
* identifying any deficits in your skills
* analysing feedback from tutors, supervisors and clients
* measuring client outcomes
* recording sessions, and evaluating these in detail
* planning for how you will plug any gaps
* working to improve your skills.

Just as athletes strive constantly to out-perform their personal best, so counsellors can work to improve continually how they service their clients.

In defining deliberate practice, Kelly uses the phrase ‘causing yourself a manageable level of strain to stimulate growth and adaptation’. She and Rory agree that this succinctly sums up the nature of this important professional value.

Listen to the podcast [here](https://www.cpcab.co.uk/learners/podcast).

**Don't Forget - NCS Student Members** **can sign up for a Totum Pro card!**

**#TherapistsConnect**

#TherapistsConnect is a community of therapists, set up with the aim of bringing people together in an inclusive way. We advocate for respect and acceptance of diversity, and recognise and celebrate difference in people. Run by Dr. Peter Blundell and Caz Binstead, and, supported by a team of volunteers, we connect through a multiple of different ways on our social media platforms (twitter: [@Therapists\_C](https://twitter.com/Therapists_C) ; Insta: [therapistsconnect](https://www.instagram.com/therapistsconnect/) ) - chatting, sharing resources, projects, musings and mutual support. We also focus on providing a respectful space for professional debate and seek to create and hold a safe space for the therapist community.

In addition, we run community ‘networking’/support spaces, our book club, a podcast, and, have a plethora of ongoing broadcasts (available to watch on our YouTube Channel). This includes recordings from our week-long first birthday in January 2021. Check out our debates, discussions, and interviews, featuring a variety of people, ranging from high profile therapists to ‘on the ground’ working professionals - our community represents all, and we hope to showcase this through our various mediums. We are UK based, but are a Worldwide Community of Therapists, striving to learn the differences in therapy across the world, but also celebrating our similarities and working on behalf of our clients and future clients to raise the profile of the therapy and its importance.

Come and [connect with us](https://linktr.ee/TherapistsConnect), and let’s empower each other as the professionals and human beings we are!

**#TherapistsConnect student** **wing - #traineetalk**

#Traineetalk is an innovative platform for all students of any level, studying counselling/psychotherapy. Running every Monday 2pm-3pm on Twitter, we hold hourly discussions with a set theme and starter questions, for students to engage with. These facilitated sessions focus on a wide range of different learnings, subjects and issues relevant to the study of counselling and psychotherapy. We seek to support the development of students, whilst also providing a unique safe space, to meet and connect together. For any students who cannot attend during that hour, we still encourage engagement, by searching our two hashtags above to view the discussion, and, we continually support the students of #TherapistsConnect community via other means - search #traineetalk and get involved!

#Traineetalk facilitators during that hour are currently Caz Binstead, Dr. Peter Blundell and Zekiye Kartal. Following the facilitated session, the #TherapistsConnect community at large may add to the discussions, providing working, ‘on the ground’ therapists views on topics. Zekiye, our newest addition to the team says, “this is a rare space where trainees can engage with experienced facilitators, and connect with qualified therapists, sharing opinions and knowledge, which might not be given in therapy training”. Peter adds: “we are an inclusive community and invite anyone to come along; we value the diversity of our professional community, and provide a safe space for all to engage”. Finally, Caz emphasises the importance of the student community: ”Peter and I as TC leads have been, and always are, strong advocates for students - we believe in giving them a platform, a voice, and a place for support. I hope the space compliments and enriches what students are already learning in their training schools/Universities, and thank the NCS for allowing us to reach out to students - we really look forward to welcoming you”.

We have a guidance sheet for #traineetalk to explain about how we use the space, and this is posted every week for students to read and follow. In addition, our email is open to anyone who would like to get involved but may feel nervous, or, if you’d just like more info, email us.

**Would you like to contribute to the next issue of Student Counsellor Magazine?**

**We'd like to hear about your placements! You can write about things such as:**

- who your placement is with

- what you've enjoyed

- what challenges you've faced

- what you've learned and how it's developed your practice

**Please email any submissions to** **elaine@nationalcounsellingsociety.org** **for a chance to be featured** **in the next magazine!**

**Moving your practice online**

a brief course for counsellors, psychotherapists and mental health practitioners

**Online Quality Checked CPD from** **Online Therapy Institute**

[**Find out more**](https://nationalcounsellingsociety.org/training-providers/moving-your-practice-online-a-brief-course-for-counsellors-psychotherapists-and-mental-health-practitioners)

**Book Giveaway Plus Exclusive Interview with Paula J Williams & Andy Rogers**

For May's edition of Student Counsellor Magazine in collaboration with PCCS Books, we are giving away a copy of 'First Steps in Counselling' by Pete Sanders, Paula J Williams and Andy Rogers.

First Steps in Counselling is essentially a book about helping and this fifth edition has been updated and revised with the help of two co-authors; Paula J Williams and Andy Rogers. It is for anyone thinking of becoming a counsellor, working or volunteering in a role that requires helping and listening skills, or simply caring for someone. It explains in clear language what counselling is, the theories on which it is based, how it works and how it is positioned in relation to contemporary debates about culture, politics, language, race and power.

This is not a ‘how to help’ manual; rather it is a questioning, curious, explorative and challenging companion. It aims to be your guide along whichever route you are taking, answer your questions and help you decide if you want to take your interest in counselling to the next steps. First Steps in Counselling remains the text of choice for students and tutors of introductory courses.

'First Steps in Counselling has been, for many years, one of those key go-to books for any trainee finding their way. This fifth edition builds on the many strengths of the previous editions, drawing on the additional expertise of Paula Williams and Andy Rogers, both of whom bring their own rich heritage as counsellors to the table. This seminal text continues to be an essential purchase for anyone embarking on their training and will provide them key insight, navigation and richness of detail, as it has done the many thousands who have travelled that road previously.'

- Dr Andrew Reeves, associate professor in the counselling professions and mental health, University of Chester

**You can purchase the book** [**here**](https://www.pccs-books.co.uk/products/first-steps-in-counselling-5th-edition)**, or keep reading to find out how you can win a copy!**

**Exclusive Interview with Paula J Williams & Andy Rogers**

**Tell us more about the book**

**Paula:** The new edition of First Steps in Counselling updates a deeply influential book to bring it into the third decade of the 21st century, reflecting changes in the profession and in life, making it more representative of the diversity of the profession, whilst keeping it straightforward, informative and accessible. It showcases the value of counselling skills in all walks of life and helps readers develop the confidence to be a helper by using those skills. And all without losing any of the spirit of the previous editions that make it such a well-loved book.

**Andy:** One of the central themes I see in the book is that it advocates for a deep respect for the experiences of people in distress and for us as listeners/helpers/counsellors not to impose our own meanings or pretensions of ‘expertise’ on that experience. This sounds simple but as most of us who attempt this work know, it’s not so straight forward! The book is a supportive companion in exploring this territory – both for those new to counselling, and for those of us revisiting core therapeutic values after years of practice. Crucially, the book also places the activity of counselling and ‘counselling-informed helping’ in the context of the power dynamics of not just our relationships, but our social, cultural, economic and political worlds too. So it also advocates for critical thinking and personal reflection on these areas, but in an inviting and accessible way.

**How long have you been involved as a co-author?**

**Paula:** I had had an initial meeting with Pete in September 2019 to discuss getting involved and my ideas for the book. We had our first joint meeting about the book in November 2019. We worked on it from then on, but it really gathered pace around the time of the first lockdown, so altogether about 18 months, possibly a little more.

**Andy:** I guess the book’s been in the making since the mid-90s when Pete wrote the first edition – the new fifth edition is very much in the tradition and spirit of that book and wouldn’t exist without it. Like Paula, though, I’ve been involved since 2019, so it’s been a feature of my life for the best part of two years. With everything that’s happened globally and personally over that time, life before First Steps feels a long time ago!

**Have you done any other work with Pete Sanders?**

**Paula**: I have met Pete before, but never worked with him. I didn’t know Andy at all and hadn’t worked with him or met him. That seemed like it might have been a challenge, to work together as co-authors when we hadn’t worked together before, but we made a really good team, and it was easier than I had expected – in fact it was a really good experience and I’m grateful to have had the chance to work with two people I really like and respect.

**Andy**: I’d never worked with Pete directly but we seemed to be writing about some of the same things over the years and had been in touch by email a couple of times. We met properly for the first time at a conference in 2019 for the launch of a book of critical perspectives on IAPT, which I had a chapter in and, like First Steps, was published by PCCS Books. It was a bit strange meeting in the flesh after only knowing each other’s writing, but it felt very natural once we got chatting. I didn’t know Paula before this project but the three of us really connected during the writing and editing process, particularly for me as the book and our regular Zoom calls met a need during the pandemic. – sometimes that was a just to have a rant or a good laugh.

**What was the main goal when writing this book?**

**Paula:** We had a shared goal in writing the book which was to create a book that was a substantial revision/update of the previous edition, but that retained the spirit of the previous editions, the elements of it that we all loved and valued. That is to say we wanted to create something informative, welcoming, and challenging, something that would reflect the journey of learning to be a counsellor in an interactive way, inviting the reader to enter into a relationship with us in which it would feel safe and open enough to be able to learn both about counselling and about yourself. We wanted the book to be inclusive and for people interested in learning about counselling to see themselves represented in these pages – something I think we achieved, which I’m proud of. When I was reading books early on in my training, I didn’t see myself (a politically vocal, working class, queer white woman) represented in them beyond the white and cis woman aspects of my identity, and it was only when I read First and Next Steps that I felt that perhaps there was a place for me in the counselling world after all, and so it was really important to me that we not only retained that in this edition, but went further with it. I think that things have changed a bit since my training, but I think many of my students still do not see themselves represented in text books – books still largely centre white, straight, cisgender, able-bodied middle-class people as counsellors and therapists, and many People of Colour, LGBTQ, disabled and/or working class students and counsellors only see themselves represented in books specifically about those issues, or even only mentioned as “client groups”. That’s really othering, and it felt really important that we did our best to represent the diversity of the profession, whilst acknowledging that we three are white university-educated writers with the privileges those things confer, and that we might not have got it right in places.

**Andy:** My personal goal as a writer was to honour this much-loved book’s heritage whilst bringing something of myself to it and, with Paula and Pete as co-authors, to refresh it, which among other things challenged me to adapt my writing style. As an experienced therapist I was also determined that the book was honest about the controversial issues that surround and weave through the field of counselling, which are as relevant to the new trainee as they are to seasoned practitioners. The book already did this to an extent not matched by other introductory books but, as Paula says above, it still needed updating around issues of power, privilege, discrimination and diversity. Writing and editing the book coincided with my own personal exploration of race and whiteness, so I was learning along the way and was able to bring some of that to the project too.

**Do you have a favourite quote from this book?**

**Paula:** My favourite quote from this book from the first time I bought it – the second edition, I think – was, and perhaps remains, “There is only one minority: rich white men.” (p155) I also love Clare Shaw’s comment on p163 that “One of the most crucial tasks of the counsellor is helping people come to language” – perhaps because before therapy training, my background was in languages and everything I’ve done has always been about communication.

**Andy:** ‘Is counselling too white? The short answer to this is, “Yes!”’ (p.247). Elsewhere, the ‘Self-development’ and ‘Counselling Attitudes and Skills’ chapters are as rich a resource as you’ll find anywhere on learning about psychological helping being rooted in the person of the helper and their values – as one of the sub-headings puts, this is ‘helping from the heart’. I also love the contributions from other therapists who write about becoming a counsellor and their experiences of power and oppression.

**What has been the most influential book you’ve read?**

**Paula:** I can’t answer which book is the most influential I’ve read – it’s like Desert Island Discs, trying to choose is so hard! I find influence in all sorts of places, from counselling books like Peggy Natiello’s A Passionate Presence or Politicising the Person-Centred Approach or Gill Proctor’s work on power, to poetry from John Donne to Maya Angelou and Audre Lorde to Mary Oliver, to fairy tales and fables like The Little Prince, or Sheldon Kopp’s If you meet the Buddha on the Road, Kill Him!, to non-fiction following real experiences, such as people walking in the British countryside or The Philosopher and the Wolf by Mark Rowlands, or Lonely City by Olivia Laing, exploring loneliness through art. And then there’s all the fiction… But perhaps the book that has had the most influence over my whole life, strangely, is Jane Eyre, which I first read when I was 9.

**Andy:** I’ve always been drawn to angsty existential literature (for some strange reason!), so William Golding’s Pincher Martin, Albert Camus’ The Outsider and Haruki Murakami’s Wind-Up Bird Chronicle all spring immediately to mind as books that knocked me sideways as a young man. Person-Centred Counselling in Action had a huge impact on me in the late 1990s when I started training, along with First Steps in Counselling obviously, both of which were trusty companions in my own journey to becoming a therapist. More recently, Denise Riley’s autobiographical and philosophical essay Time Lived Without Its Flow might be the best thing I’ve read on grief.

**What other book(s) would you recommend to trainee counsellors?**

**Paula:** I would recommend trainee counsellors read all they can, but not just books about counselling! Reading biography and fiction increases our understanding and empathy, and poetry is good for the soul. In counselling books, though, naturally, I’d suggest Next Steps in Counselling (Sanders, Frankland and Wilkins) is a good way to follow First Steps. Peggy Natiello’s A Passionate Presence and Brian Levitt’s Questioning Psychology are beautiful books about the soul of therapy.

**Andy:** I’d agree with Paula about non-counselling books – a rich resource for empathy to inhabit other people’s worlds in this way. Of therapy books, there’s such an abundance it can be hard to know where to start. I’d say follow your heart, not just the reading list, and consider exploring some of the critical literature – lots of places to start here but Richard House and Nick Totton’s Implausible Professions is as good a place as any. It’s never too early to be challenged on your assumptions about therapy as a completely benign activity.

**What book is currently on your bedside table?**

**Paula:** On my bedside table currently in progress are How to Read Water by Tristan Gooley, My Grandmother Sends her Regards and Apologises by Fredrik Backman, Poverty Safari by Darren McGarvey, Carrying the Elephant by Michael Rosen, The Heart and the Bottle by Oliver Jeffers, The Art of Rest by Claudia Hammond (which I’ve been too busy to read…!), Why I’m No Longer Talking to White People about Race by Reni Eddo-Lodge, Devotions by Mary Oliver, and my guilty pleasure, Seven Scamps (Who Are Not All Boys) by Elinor M Brent-Dyer.

**Andy:** I usually have a stack but the ones I’m actually reading are a biography of the 1970s German electronic band Kraftwerk, and Dr Dwight Turner’s Intersections of Privilege & Otherness in Counselling & Psychotherapy. I love fiction and most recently read Max Porter’s Lanny; next up might be Kazuo Ishiguro’s Klara and the Sun.

**What do you like to do when you’re not writing?**

**Paula:** When I’m not writing (and supervising and counselling and teaching), in non-Covid times I sing. I used to be the vocalist in a folk band, I sing with a small community choir in the next town and in a Russian Choir. I also love to dance, having been an amateur bellydancer in the past, I knit and crochet, I bake, and like to walk. I have a tendency to get into odd things because I like new experiences, so I performed in the opening ceremony for the Edinburgh International Festival a few years ago and in a “Complaints Choir” for the art festival before that. That all sounds very busy – I also do sometimes just lie on the sofa watching bad TV and playing with the dog, of course.

**Andy:** Other than working in my private practice, I spend time with my family – I have a 12 year old daughter and I’m trying to savour the times we have before she no longer wants me around! I’m drawn to walks in the countryside and Iove being at the coast. Under lockdown I missed having a meal with friends, but as an introvert I can get by on a diet of films, books and particularly music. I play guitar a little but really I’m more of a concentrated listener. At the moment I’m obsessing about Brian Eno’s golden ambient period from the mid-1970s to the mid-80s. Perhaps in another life I would’ve been a music critic.

**With thanks to Paula J Williams & Andy Rogers for their interview.**

Paula (she/her) is a white British Person-Centred Counsellor, Supervisor, Lecturer and writer based in Edinburgh. As well as maintaining a busy private practice, she works for four universities, including delivering guest lectures for Roehampton, and in addition to this book has written chapters for various books including a book on LGBTQ mental health. She is a member of PCT Scotland, Rainbow Therapy in Scotland, and is a Fellow of the NCS.

Andy (he/him) is a white British counsellor and supervisor in private practice in Basingstoke, Hampshire. He trained in the late 1990s at the University of East Anglia and has worked in and written about counselling and psychotherapy ever since.

Want to win a copy of **'First Steps in Counselling'**?

**Sign up below to receive future editions of Student Counsellor Magazine to be in with a chance to win!**

[**Sign up**](https://email.nationalcounsellingsociety.org/h/r/31D89A37B6577C532540EF23F30FEDED)

**Book Recommendations from NCS Members**

**Counselling for Toads - A Psychological Adventure by Robert de Board**

**From Hayley Vaughan-Smith - MNCS Accred:**

I gave some considered thought about what book I might recommend to a trainee counsellor – a trainee counsellor needs support and space to prioritise self-care and balance particularly when studying and there are so many books that help with this. But, I then thought to myself, what book did I really connect with, what book made sense to me? So, the book I would recommend to a trainee counsellor would be ‘Counselling For Toads’ – a Psychological Adventure by Robert de Board.

I read this, (what I call), pocket book quite early on in my counselling training and whilst it has a TA (transactional analysis emphasis), it follows a Person (or Toad!) Centred framework and holding at its core something that I firmly believe is the foundation of what counselling is about…….relationships. Relationships with yourself, with your counsellor, the experiences that shape you, the environment in which you exist and of course the people in your life. I was given a plethora of book recommendations and essential reading throughout my training and could have picked any number of these to recommend to current trainees. Quite rightly, most of the books that I read covered theory, use of modalities, evidence and research. But ….. training can be pretty consuming at times and I needed something a little lighter, a book that I could dip in and out of when I put my feet up (this was rare at the time!), a book that was enjoyable yet still held meaning and had principles in learning.

Kenneth Grahame authored ‘The Wind in the Willows’ which was published in 1908 and Counselling for Toads centres around the characters he created. In my little pocket book, Toad is in destress, he is depressed and rudderless and is questioning his worth in the world, unsure of where he fits in and why his experiences of the past are shaping his thinking in the present and making him feel so hopeless. With the help of Heron, (the Counsellor) and his friends Badger, Mole and Rat, he learns who he is, what his beliefs are and how they fit into the context of his present circumstances. He resets his compass and starts to heal by challenging and changing his mindset and self-language. And while Toad is supported along his therapy journey, he soon learns that neither Heron or his faithful friends can ‘fix him’ or ‘sort him out’! Toad learns that he can learn to know himself better through explorations, understanding and self-questioning. There are so many clever references to realisations and revelations that Toad experiences along the therapy journey with Heron. They are really easy to reimagine them in our real world with our own real clients.

I loved this book – it’s just 153 pages long and is relevant at any stage of counselling training or practice, whatever your age or stage. It’s fun, it shows pathos and empathy and shows that even if we are a Toad, we still need love and understanding!

**Working at Relational Depth in Counselling & Psychotherapy by Dave Mearns and Mick Cooper**

**From Nicola Ryall - NCS Associate Member:**

I am delighted to recommend this book which gave me a really unexpected insight when I was half-way through my Level 4 Diploma and helped when I was exploring my supervision and especially my relationships with clients. It was given to me by my placement provider after attendance at a CPD session and we as trainees were asked to choose a book from a list, what a great idea I have to say.

The book gave me a deep insight into the key aspect of the relationship we build with clients, exploring its importance and using case studies to show how we can work at significant, congruent depth with clients, bringing ourselves wholly to the therapy space whilst at the same time following the client's lead and sometimes even questioning whether what we have done in a session was, with hindsight, in true service of the client.

The honesty from the authors when reflecting on working with clients allowed me, as a trainee, to accept that there are not necessarily any 'right' or 'wrong' answers in the therapeutic process and that being congruent and creating an honest and deep empathetic relationship is the key to exploring client presenting issues and non-judgementally reflecting to ensure that we work at the pace of the client and follow their lead.

The case studies involving very complex presentations were fascinating for me as a relatively inexperienced practitioner. I was especially struck by the fact that a client who had an alcohol misuse issue was not sent away from the therapy space when he attended drunk. This went against some of the things I had learned in my studies and gave me a new perspective on the potential of bringing awareness to the client of this different facet of himself.

The book also explores the use of supervision and self-reflection which are essentials in the process and which also provide us with a way to develop our self-awareness and allow us to constantly refine our abilities and develop our practice in an honest and congruent manner. The book has also allowed me to reflect on the necessary relationship and honesty which should be involved in reflection and supervision as well as therapy.

It was always clear to me that therapy was based on a foundation of Rogers’ core conditions but this book allowed me to explore this at a deeper level and allowed me to have more confidence and be less judgemental of my own skills as a therapist/counsellor, giving me encouragement to keep learning and developing throughout my journey as both of the authors of this book are still doing and as they have honestly portrayed in the text.

A must read, in my opinion, for all trainees.

**From Andrew Allan – MNCS Accred:**

I read this book during my training soon after starting to work with real clients and it had a profound effect upon me. I had begun to feel anxious that I was not really utilising the skills that I had practised over and over again during training. Moreover, I wondered whether my client sessions had sufficient structure and clear objectives. Reading this liberated me. Mearns and Cooper define relating at depth as an encounter “in which two human beings meet each other in a full and intense way, all the time holding on to their uniqueness and individuality”. They go on to describe how some therapists experience this as something of an altered state of consciousness when relating at depth. This really chimed with me and helped explain those fleeting moments early on when working with clients where sensations seemed to be heightened and time briefly stopped. Perhaps I was on the right track after all.

The authors write with a warmth and humanity all too rare in academic works. They achieve this firstly by bringing to life the struggles of Dominic, a “partial” drunk and Rick, a traumatised war veteran, and how, seemingly against the odds, working at relational depth offers hope for their recovery. At the same time, they candidly lay bare the mistakes that they make during the therapeutic process and the emotional impact working with these clients had upon them. Reading these accounts was genuinely moving and reminded me why I had wanted to train as a counsellor in the first place.

Although training as an integrative counsellor, I had been strongly drawn to the person- centred approach. There is sometimes a tendency to see this form of therapy as being less intellectually rigorous than, say, psychodynamic and CBT models. As a student I began to think that perhaps I was taking the easy option. This book disabused me of this fear. The authors describe with real clarity some complex notions such as multidirectional partiality, the concept of presence and existential questioning at depth. This book succeeds in being scholarly and theoretical as well as being accessible and personal.

Most fundamentally, the authors emphasise the importance of being real and not simply passively reflecting back what the client has said. They exhort the counsellor to let go of aims and actually focus upon the individual before them. I was encouraged to be authentic, to hold tools and techniques lightly in order to be fully present. Indeed, I could allow myself to be emotionally impacted by the client, in the same way as the authors had been in their relationships with Dominic and Rick, as this in itself could help to facilitate a deep encounter. Reading this book led me to return with fresh eyes to the words of Carl Rogers himself: “I find I am more effective when I can….. be myself”.

**Jonathan Livingston Seagull by Richard Bach**

**From Paul Cullen - MNCS Accred:**

There are hundreds of counselling books, about becoming a therapist, about particular therapeutic styles and approaches and about the personal development as a therapist.

However when thinking of a book I would recommend to a new trainee therapist, this was the first book that came into my mind.

This little book, I warn you, is about a seagull called Jonathan.

A friend lent me this book back in the mid nineties. I was at a particular low time in my life and severely lacking direction in my own life. I started reading it hesitantly at first, and then completed it in about three hours at one sitting.

The authors inscription reads, “To the real Jonathan Seagull, who lives within us all”

Reading a story about a seagull, which was my first surprise, followed by the fact that he was called Jonathan, seemed a very strange starting point, and yet this book.

However, the writing is incredible, and completely circumvents the seemingly ludicrous setting, however the fact that this Seagull was different and saw himself as standing apart from the crowd really drew me in.

Seagull recognises that he different from others, and chooses to step outside from the crowd, to go away from the norm, in order to pursue this innate drive to improve his flying.

Fundamentally, this little book is about a seagull seeking to improve himself, to follow his dream at all costs, including being cast out of his flock.

Jonathan Seagull seeks freedom, he seeks to develop his own path and pushes himself to the very limit.

I realise now, as I first enrolled some years later on my introductory 10 week counselling course, that I too was stepping out of my flock and travelling my own path and pushing myself to my own limits and beyond throughout the following training courses to my eventual diploma.

Counselling training, like life, is a difficult process and sometimes a painful journey, an exploration into yourself, I think this parallels Jonathan Seagulls own journey to develop himself. In the book he also inspires another younger seagull, called Fletcher to follow his own path and becomes almost like Fletcher Seagulls counsellor, helping him to find himself and break free from his shackles.

This little book taught me that it was okay to reach for dreams and to eventually soar. It's a simple story that reflects both the therapeutic relationship and therapeutic training, a fable of determination and growth.

Throughout your counselling training, you will pour and dip in and out of thousands of academic texts, this book however tells you about how to be yourself, and to grow in authenticity in less than 90 pages!

“No limits Jonathan? He thought, and he smiled. His race to learn had begun.” (Jonathan Livingston Seagull, Richard Bach, 1972)

**Why Therapy Works by Louis Cozolino**

**From Rachel Hawkins-Crockford - MNCS Accred:**

I would recommend Why Therapy Works by Louis Cozolino because it is such a helpful thing to understand as a therapist what it is about therapy that makes it helpful for people. He approaches this from a few different angles and writes in an honest and engaging way about his own journey into understanding the mechanisms of therapeutic change.

Often we begin with an assumption that therapy works, but it is really important for our own confidence and that also for our clients, that we truly understand what is going on in this relationship. I wish I had read it at the start of my training journey.

**Why do we contract our clients: Thoughts from a Trainee Counsellor**

**Written by Ciaran Hurley (MNCS Accred) for** [**The Counsellor's Café**](https://www.thecounsellorscafe.co.uk/single-post/2017/11/24/Why-do-we-contract-our-clients?utm_campaign=meetedgar&utm_medium=social&utm_source=meetedgar.com)**.**

Recently I began working with a new client and I had the first two sessions with a counsellor, so I've been on both sides of the contacting process, and by coincidence, the counselling school has set an assessment task that included writing a draft contract. It’s no surprise that I now feel like sharing my thoughts about contracting with counselling clients.

My day job often puts me in touch with nurses and other healthcare practitioners who have been whisked into a paranoid frenzy in relation to anything legal, but many people meet nurses through the NHS or a private healthcare provider. This means that most of the people I’ve worked with don’t make a contract with a nurse as an individual practitioner in the same way that they do with counselling clients. Over the coming months and years I’ll be curious to hear other counsellors’ thoughts and experiences about contracting and I anticipate that their attitude will be very different from the one I’m most used to hearing; that a clear statement of expectations will keep the practitioner ‘out of trouble’, prevent disciplinary measures or avoid litigation.

As a nurse, I have a different take on the legal elements of my practice: a clear and explicit statement of expectations can enhance the relationship between a caregiver and the person they treat; which is not to say that legal issues are irrelevant, more that if we get the relationship right, legal action is less likely. What I’ve learned so far suggests that this is transferable to the counselling room, so here's my take on how I think a contract might help me and my clients.

**All expectations great and small**

I think the first thing that a clear contract offers is an opportunity for both client and counsellor to state what they are offering and what they want from the relationship. That gives us both the chance to consider how that sits with our expectations. If there's a mismatch we can ask questions and the answers may help us to decide to continue, or the client may decide to seek help elsewhere. Either way, the contract is helping us both to avoid disappointment.

**Valuing client autonomy**

The contracting stage is often the first opportunity the counsellor gets get to be clear about their attitude towards the client's autonomy. Clients who are new to counselling may be surprised by how free they are in the relationship with their counsellor. This may be especially so if they've been using medically led services such as GPs and NHS hospitals, where many relationships (though by no means all) are conducted along some degree of transactional, hegemonic and paternalistic lines. While consent is a regular feature of medically led care, my experience suggests that much greater attention is paid to ensuring the client understands and accepts the balance of risks and benefits in the counselling room rather than in the consulting room.

This approach helps both client and counsellor to avoid unpleasant surprises.

**A Supporting partnership**

I think that the tendency toward transactional, hegemonic and paternalistic relationships in healthcare institutions can be traced along a number of avenues, all of which lead to one origin: power. Many column inches are written about the asymmetry of power in healthcare and how it operates as a barrier to achieving true partnership with the people we treat. The process of reducing the asymmetry is slow. I've been a nurse for 25 years, it was there when I started and it's still there now.

It seems to me that there are two reasons for counselling to have a different approach to partnership. One is that the work of counselling is the relationship. Counselling is about forming and conducting a relationship and not what we do to the client. You might even say that the client does the work while the counsellor facilitates and actively listens to the client’s stories of the work they've done.

**Ready? Steady? Go!**

I imagine most counsellors have some experience of working in organisations where demand exceeds supply, with a list of clients who are waiting for a counsellor to be available. I gather from conversations and blog posts that the same is true in private practice. Many counsellors report that they need to mindfully and carefully balance work with leisure because the number of clients and associated work they could take exceeds the healthy working week . These are two examples of how counselling work begins only when the counsellor is ready.

On the flip side, there's the idea that the client might start a series of sessions but not be ready. Anne Crisp has researched the experience of working with unprepared clients. Her work suggests a range of reasons why a person might not be ready for counselling.

As a novice counsellor, I get a lot from reading her work. Whatever the reason, there's plenty of evidence that the therapeutic effect of counselling will only begin when the relationship develops, so it seems worth taking the time to check that clients understand what they’re signing up to.

For now, I’m trying to keep in mind that counselling is a relationship with a purpose, and where there are expectations, it’s good to make sure they are clear...and I hope that’s where contracting can help.

Counsellor’s Café Magazine: <http://www.thecounsellorscafe.co.uk>

**What is the Accredited Register?**

The Professional Standards Authority for Health and Social Care promotes the health, safety and wellbeing of patients, service users and the public by raising standards of regulation and voluntary registration of people working in health and care. They are an independent body, accountable to the UK Parliament.

They oversee the work of nine statutory bodies that regulate health professionals in the UK and social workers in England.

They review the regulators’ performance and audit and scrutinisetheir decisions about whether people on their registers are fit to practise.

The Authority also sets standards for organisations that hold registers for those who work in unregulated health and care occupations and accredits the registers of those organisations that meet the Authority’s standards.

There are three things organisations must show in order to be eligible to apply to have their Registers Accredited by the Authority:

* They must hold a register for people in health and care occupations that are not regulated by the state.
* They must demonstrate to us that they are focussed on public protection.
* They must be able to afford the accreditation fee.

The Authority deliberately set the bar for accreditation high, at the level of good practice, so that gaining accreditation is a significant achievement and registers are proud to display the Accredited Register Quality Mark.

[**Read more about the Accredited Register Programme**](http://www.professionalstandards.org.uk/accredited-registers)**.**

[**Read the Accredited Register 2015 Report**](https://www.professionalstandards.org.uk/docs/default-source/accredited-registers/accredited-registers/reports/accredited-registers-report-2015.pdf?sfvrsn=2)**.**

The National Counselling Society’s register is accredited by the Accredited Register programme and this means that our organisation meets all eleven of the Authority’s standards which include being committed to public protection, risk management, education and training, governance, providing information, managing complaints and managing the register effectively.

The Society in turn sets standards for our registrants, which include committing to codes of conduct, competence and ethical frameworks and meeting entry level education requirements. Our Register sets requirements for registrants’ personal behaviour, technical competence and, where relevant, business practice.

This means that when clients choose a counsellor from an Accredited Register, they have the assurance that the counsellor has met the high standards required to be listed on the register.

**National Counsellors’ Day 2021 Online Conference**

**Saturday 19th June**

**Find out more:** [**www.nationalcounsellorsday.co.uk**](http://www.nationalcounsellorsday.co.uk)

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