



Presentation Title: Treating Chronic Shame

Presentation Time: 4:30 PM - 6:00 PM US Eastern Time

Content Level: Intermediate

Abstract: Complex interpersonal trauma and dissociative defenses result in a pervasive sense of powerlessness and profound sense of shame. Dysfunctional dynamics of childhood abuse lead to a sense of innate “badness”. Secrecy, isolation, and neglect, combined with the inability to stop abuse triggers internalized blame; resulting in self-destructive behaviors, re-victimization, and on-going interpersonal difficulties. These same dysfunctional patterns of shame and powerlessness complicate and confound the therapeutic process.

Dissociation, while protecting from psychic pain, interrupts the development of mastery and affect modulation. Developing genuine interpersonal power, balancing control and vulnerability, and other hallmarks of healthy relationships are impaired. A cyclical relationship between powerlessness and shame and the double-bind of responsibility without authority keep the client trapped; alternating between failed attempts at dependence and dominance.

This workshop delineates etiological and conceptual dynamics underlying the formation and maintenance of shame. General strategies and specific interventions to reduce the impact of shame and to facilitate client growth are presented. Areas covered include; the relational aspects of healing within the therapeutic relationship, developing and expressing empathic attunement, teaching containment and affect modulation skills, using mindfulness to aid in self-acceptance, and challenging the shame-based messages to provide means to empower the client.

Learning Objectives:

At the conclusion of this presentation, participants will be able to:

- Identify the psychological underpinnings of shame
- Delineate how shame impairs personal and relational functioning
- Apply clinical tools to reduce shame in their clients and promote empowerment that leads to client recovery.

Presenter(s)

Kevin J. Connors, MS, MFT

Kevin J. Connors, MS, MFT is a licensed Marriage & Family Therapist in private practice in Long Beach, California and a frequent national and international presenter on complex trauma and dissociative disorders. He is co-author of *Treating Complex Trauma and Dissociation: A practical guide to navigating therapeutic challenges*.

Kevin is Senior Vice President at California Southern University in Costa Mesa, California directing the Hecht Trauma Institute, a global academic institution dedicated to advancing the education of clinicians treating interpersonal trauma,

He is a Fellow and Past President of the International Society for the Study of Trauma and Dissociation (ISSTD) and served as Chair of their Annual Conference Committee for 8 years. Kevin also serves as Chair of the Institute on Violence, Abuse, & Trauma's International Summit Planning Committee's Adult Survivors of Childhood Maltreatment Track and as an Advisory Board Member to the National Partnership to End Interpersonal Violence.

Kevin is currently exploring the role of shame and powerlessness in clients with complex trauma and dissociative disorders as well as in investigating the prevalence of dissociation among the general psychiatric population.

Teri M. Pokrajac, PsyD

Dr. Teri Pokrajac is a licensed Psychologist in California who received her doctorate in Clinical Psychology from Pepperdine University in 1994, a Master's Degree in Counseling from Loyola Marymount University in 1989, and BA in Psychology and Speech Communication from Pepperdine University in 1984. Dr. Pokrajac completed her internship at Tufts Medical School and the Boston V.A. Medical Center where she received specialized training at the National Center for PTSD. She also completed an advanced fellowship in Behavioral Medicine at Harvard Medical School's Cambridge Hospital. Dr. Pokrajac completed her dissertation research on "Dissociation and Childhood Abuse in Multiple Personality and Borderline Personality". Dr. Pokrajac previously directed Trauma and Dissociative Disorders Programs inpatient programs. For the past 20 years, Dr. Pokrajac has been in private practice where she has specialized in the assessment and psychotherapy treatment of trauma-based disorders and serves as an expert witness for civil and criminal cases with PTSD, sexual trauma, and dissociative disorders. Dr. Pokrajac is also an adjunct professor at Pepperdine University Graduate School of Education and Psychology where she has taught Trauma in Diverse Populations and Counseling theories & techniques to graduate psychology students.

Continuing Education

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