



# Trauma

A Person-Centred Perspective

Anne Smith - [anne.smith@abdn.ac.uk](mailto:anne.smith@abdn.ac.uk)

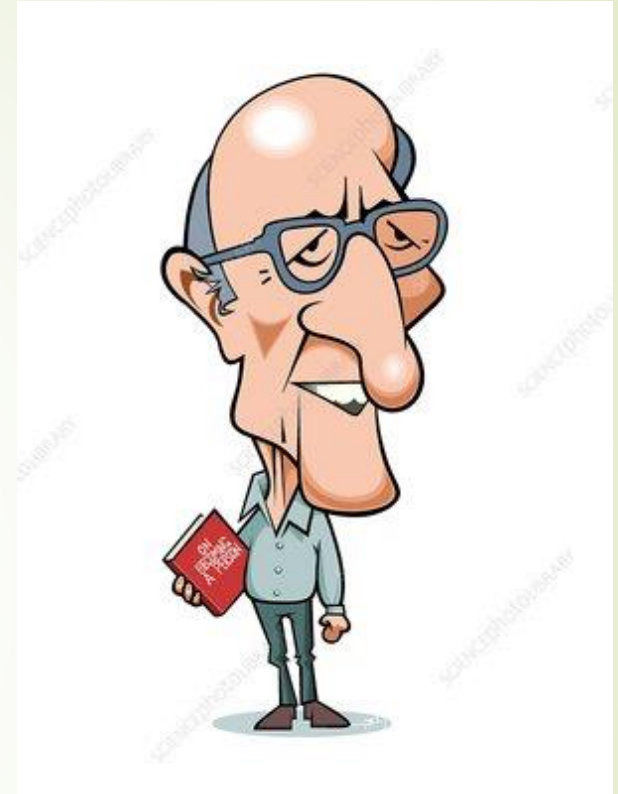




# Aim for today

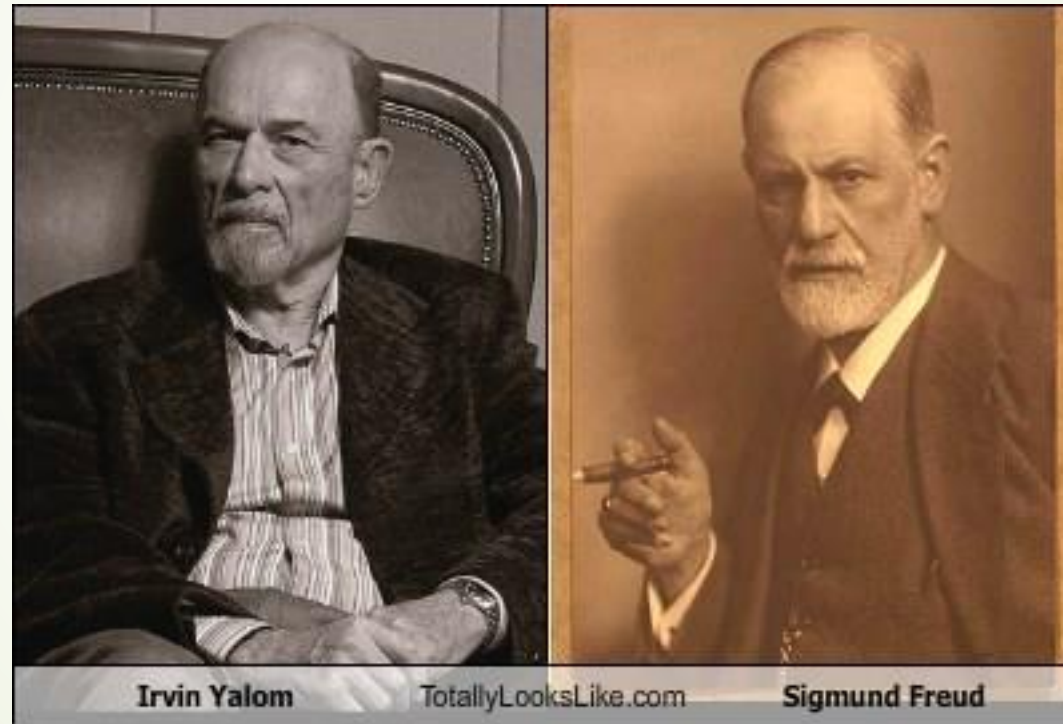
- Outline my understanding of the Person-Centered Approach in relation to Trauma
- Look at the fit when working alongside the medical model
- Particular focus on the impact of trauma on the student counsellor and their effective use supervision

Person-Centred!



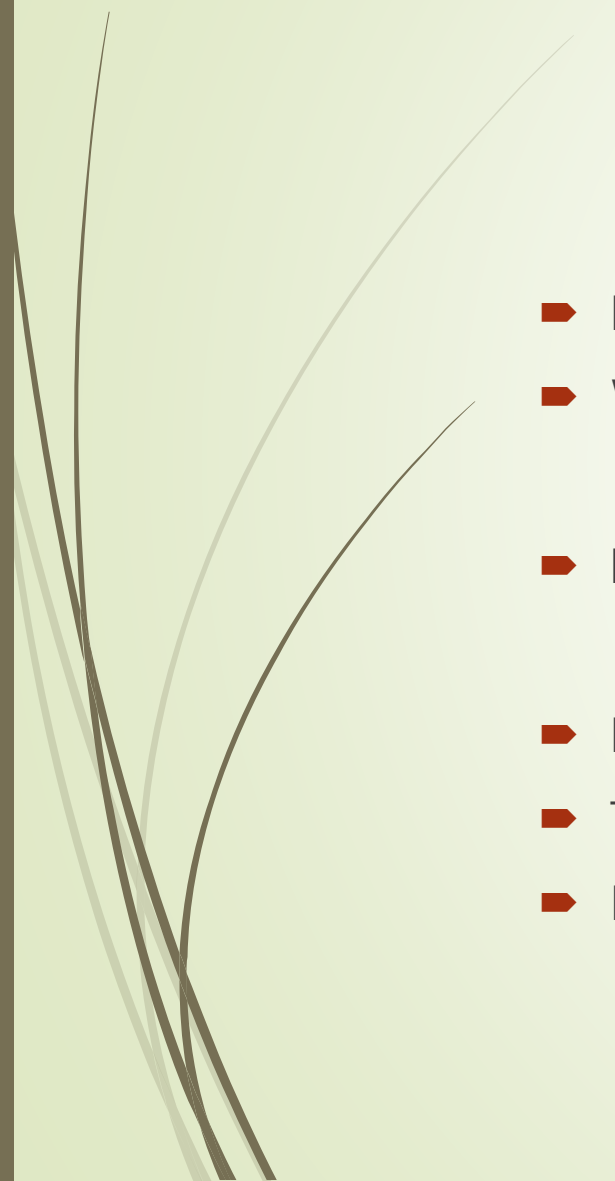
*So many caricatures in the world of Counselling and Psychotherapy : proceed with caution*

Master Therapist – As we develop mastery, we became very alike!





# Definition of person-centred therapy

- 
- Deeply valuing the others subjective experience
  - Without losing yourself in the process
  - In training, 30% is focused on personal development
  - Potential model
  - The actualizing tendency
  - Relational approach



# The Divide

- Medical Model v Relational Model
- Treatment of illness v Helping the worried well
- Self-fulfilling prophecy
- Can we find a common language – understand the other language and bring in our language?





# Diagnosis

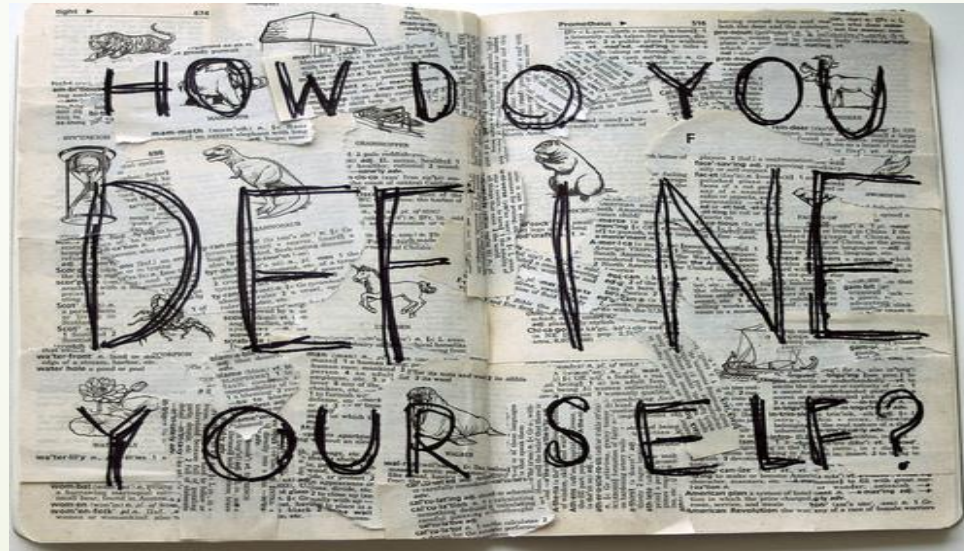
- From Rogers (1951)
- *In a very meaningful sense, Therapy is diagnosis, and this diagnosis is a process which goes on in the experience of the client, rather than in the intellect of the therapist.*
- Disturbance is seen as a process not a state
- A thought : Illness is a metaphor for distress : in the past disability was seen as illness

# Theory of Trauma

Confidence in our theories;

- ▶ 'A theory of therapy, personality and interpersonal relationships, as developed in the person –centred framework' (1959)

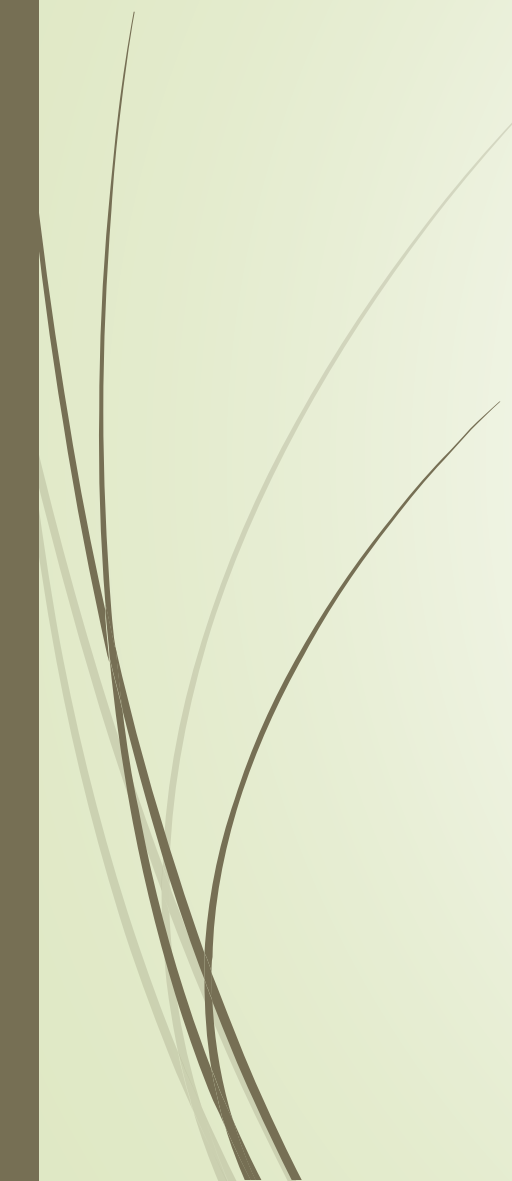
Written after working with WW2 veterans – before the term PTSD existed.







# So what does this research say?

- At its heart – Trauma
  - Threatening experiences that are incongruent with the self structure
  - The more obvious and sudden the threat, the greater the degree of anxiety
  - The denial of awareness of the experience is an attempt to keep its perception consistent with the self –structure
  - Result in the the break down and disorganisation of the self-structure
- 



# Trauma experience

- Rogers - self and experience - state of incongruence
- Fits with Trauma Literature
- *Threat to self structure*
- *Shattered assumptions*
- *Re-experiencing and avoidance phenomena – PTSD*



# What do we do in therapy?

- Aim - Reintegration
- *Offer a safe place, trust - the relationship*
- *We believe the client is intrinsically motivated to increase congruence*
- *Will want to accurately symbolise their experience, move forward to reconfigure and integrate their experiences*

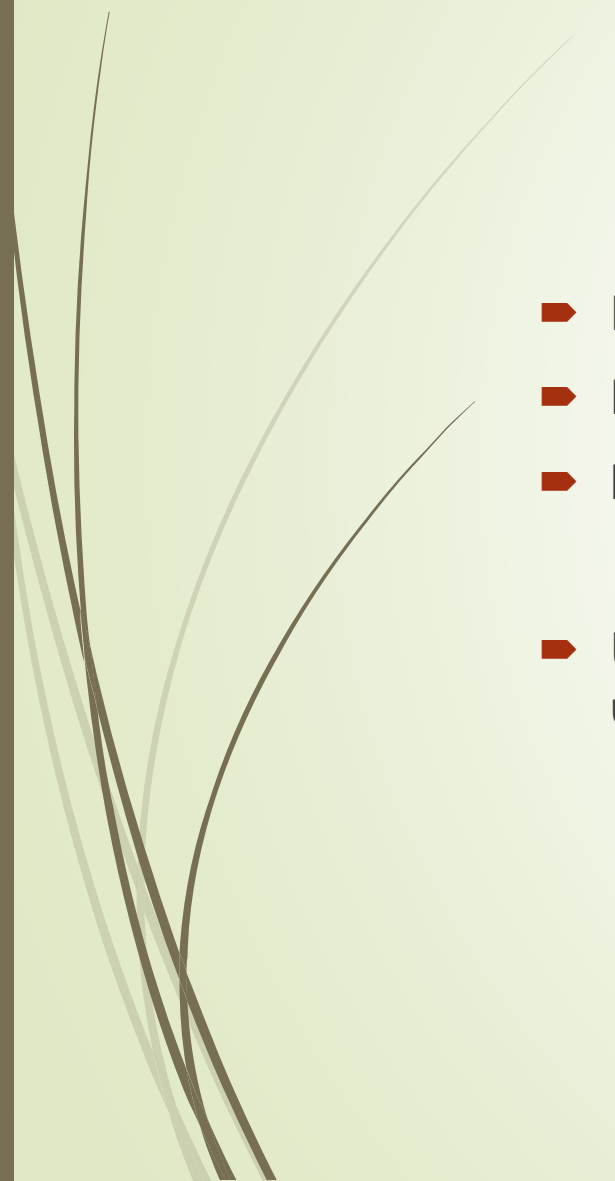


# Advantages

- *follow the client*
- *deep empathic understanding*
- *relational depth*
- *pace slows down*
- *providing a sense of holding and accompaniment*



# Post Traumatic Growth

- 
- Research from PCT
  - Person going beyond previous levels of functioning
  - Intrinsically motivated towards growth
  - Unconditional positive regard – resulting in the client developing unconditional positive self – regard

# Student Counsellors

- What do we do?



- My response is always the same - the relationship, value their experience.



# Risk

- Over and under involvement
- Existential touchstones
- Vicarious trauma





# Supervision



- The relationship once again, safety
- Confidence in the approach
- Trainees in particular, need to see the potential for growth



# Conclusions

- Bring the languages together and engage in dialogue
- Confidence to move away from the caricature
- Apply this in training!
- More research!



# References



- Cooper, M, O'Hara, M. Schmid, P. & Bohart, A. (Ed) (2013) *The Handbook of Person-Centred Psychotherapy and Counselling*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Palgrave Macmillian. Hampshire.
- Joseph, J. (2017) *The Handbook of Person-Centred Therapy and Mental Health*. PCCS Books. Monmouth.
- Mearns, D. (2003) *Developing Person-Centred Counselling*. SAGE. London