**AGPA Connect 2023 Presenter Information**

**Course Code:** 1a

**Course Title:** Longing to Belong: Exploring Barriers to Connection and Closeness

**Course Times:** 10:00 AM - 12:30 PM & 2:30 – 5:00 PM

**Course Dates:** Thursday, March 9

**Instructors:** Joan-Dianne Smith

 Allan Sheps

**Course Description:** Our polarized social milieu has exacerbated our pre-existing hesitancies to connection and belonging and heightened our sense of vulnerability. We will explore our internal barriers, interpersonal and systemic blind spots, and reactions to issues of diversity and inequity. After providing a didactic framework, we will use experiential exercises to help participants heighten self- awareness, explore barriers and yearnings, and consider how the convergence of these factors impacts us in our therapeutic work.

**Learning Objectives**

The attendee will be able to:‎

1. List three examples of personal barriers that members might use to sabotage intimacy in groups.‎
2. Identify personal countertransference themes intensified by our current social milieu and explain ‎how those responses might inhibit group intimacy.‎
3. Describe how group member fears can hold them back from reaching for connection in spite of their ‎stated desire to do so.‎
4. Identify the impact our polarized culture and social climate has on our relationships.‎
5. Describe the dynamics of difference and polarization and identify potential strategies to assist the ‎group in working through these issues

**Significant Articles:**

1. Alpert, R.M. (2001) Barriers to Intimacy: An Object Relations Perspective. Psychoanalytic Psychology, ‎‎18, 137-156.‎
2. Liebman M. (2001) Some Aspects of Intimacy in Analytic Groups, Journal of Psychotherapy and ‎Independent Practice, 1(2) 13-19.‎
3. Ormont, L. (1988). The Leader's Role in Resolving Resistances to Intimacy in the Group Setting, ‎International Journal of Group Psychotherapy, 38(1) 29-46.‎
4. Perel, E. (2020). How to Adjust to Your Entire Relational World Being in One Place \_ Parts 1 & 2 ‎https://www.youtube. com/watch?v=NKtMnVha\_PA&t=10s
5. Yalom, I.& Leszcz, M. (2020) Theory and Practice of Group Psychotherapy, 6th ed,. chap. 12, Basic ‎Books, New York.‎

**Agenda:**

1.Facilitators’ Introductions / Review course description / contextualizing the issues within our current circumstances; Outline Agenda /learning objectives/ intended use of technology (AS / JDS10 min.)

2. Introduction of participants / reasons for attending (JDS/AS 15 min.)

3. Journaling Self-awareness exercise --- How are we connecting these days? (JDS 15 min.) Obj #2 & Obj #3

4. Dyad experiential exercise, with two statements: wanting and not wanting to be known (AS 15 min.) Obj #2

5. Exercise: Join another dyad, share imagined projections (JDS 15 min.) Obj #2

6. Debrief in large group, differences between the 2 exercises (JDS & AS, 15 min.) Obj #1, #3 & #5

7. Barriers to intimacy: Fear, Privilege & Polarization: Didactic and discussion (JDS 15 min.) OBj #1 & #5

8. Foursome projection exercise around systemic barriers. (10 min. AS) Obj #4 & #5

9. Diversity Barriers: Didactic piece (10 min. AS) Obj #5

10. Leadership Strategies for working through member fears. (AS and JDS 10 min.) Obj #5

11. Sum up and self- awareness observations (AS/ JDS 5 min.) Obj #2 & #3

12. Set up for fishbowl: Exploring issues of equity and inequity (AS & JDS 15 min.) Obj #2

Afternoon Outline:

13. Fishbowl exercise; Pursuit of Intimacy and belonging (AS & JDS, 90 min.) Obj #2 & #3

14. Debrief fishbowl (AS & JDS, 10 min.)

15. Distilling and integrating, (AS & JDS 35 min.)

a) Journaling page: 3 take-aways

b) Members return to their original groups of four to share learning and wishes for one another Obj #2, #4

16. Debrief Integration Experience (AS & JDS 10 min.)

17. Evaluations (5 min.)

**Assessment Questions:**

Question 1 (include possible answers)

Which effects have people experienced as a result of the pandemic? A) increased isolation B) heightened anxiety C) opportunity for increased connection through technology D) all of the above

Correct Answer 1

D

Question 2 (include possible answers)

Polarization emerges in groups by- A) increased mistrust B) reactions to differences C) political differences D) A & B E ) A & C

Correct Answer 2

D

Question 3 (include possible answers)

For some people the experience of intimacy during the pandemic was challenged by A) enforced social distancing B) depression experienced through lockdowns C) limited stimulation D) all of the above

Correct Answer 3

D

Question 4 (include possible answers)

Group therapists have faced countertransference challenges recently by A) not being able to attend AGPA Connect in person B) struggling with personal losses C) Struggling with ZOOM technology D) depression E) B, C, D Identifying countertransference themes is critical in assisting group members to engage intimately.

Correct Answer 4

E

Question 5 (include possible answers)

Features of the working group include: A) acceptance and challenging of one another’s defenses B) greater sense of belonging and openness to input from one another C) increased identification and belonging with the group D) all of the above

Correct Answer 5

D

Question 6 (include possible answers)

Which of the following could be considered as a barrier to intimacy? A) advice giving B) problem solving C) setting pre-conditions for closeness D) inauthentic niceness E) All of the above

Correct Answer 6

E

Question 7 (include possible answers)

People can achieve closeness in spite of significant mistrust of one another. T/F

Correct Answer 7

False

Question 8 (include possible answers)

Name a strategy that leaders can use in engaging in conversation about race and privilege.

Correct Answer 8

Naming the fear of engaging and normalizing the universality of this feeling can be helpful.

Question 9 (include possible answers)

Name two ways that can inhibit members in reaching out for intimacy.

Correct Answer 9

1) Feelings of shame 2) fear of judgement

Question 10 (include possible answers)

How can the group therapist encourage the healing of shame and its barriers to intimacy? Name two ways.

Correct Answer 10

1) Encourage the honest expression of affect 2) Modelling appropriate attunement.