

Using the Brain for a Change: Neuroscience and Narrative Therapy

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This workshop will be divided into three sections.

The first section will describe a present client of the presenter. A number of years ago she was referred for inpatient treatment for depression and a borderline personality disorder. The identifying issue at that time was her “cutting herself.” A number of years after discharge from the hospital she continued cutting herself. She also continued to struggle with depression. In January 2006 she came for individual therapy to address the issues of depression and the personality disorder. She wanted to understand the self mutilating behavior and to discontinue it.

During the past two and a half years there have been a number of unfolding transitional events in our work. The client cut herself in one counseling session. She has hit the walls in the office and the bathroom on several occasions. She has described herself as “dead inside.” The first section of the workshop will explore the unfolding of the therapeutic process.

The second section of the workshop will explore some of the insights of neuroscience and their implications for therapy with this client. First, we will identify the implications from neuroscience for the therapist. In the fields of spiritual/pastoral care and counseling we have often quoted, “It is the relationship that heals.” With insights from neuroscience we can now understand much more fully what this means to us as caregivers. Second, this client came to therapy with a need to evolve a clearer “sense of self.” We will explore how Affective Theory and Attachment Theory from neuroscience can better focus our interventions and how they can guide us to assist the client to “re-story” her life.

The third section will be a theological response by Dr. Frank Woggon. He will focus on theological implications and theological reflection on the case. The group will also have an opportunity to identify and explore some of the spiritual/pastoral implications of the case.

It is not necessary for the participants to be acquainted with the field of neuroscience, Affective Theory or Attachment Theory. However, for those who are unacquainted with the field of neuroscience reading of some of the following resources could help prepare the participants for the discussion.

Cozolino, Louis. The Neuroscience of Psychotherapy, especially chapter 8, “The Construction of the Narrative Self.”

----- **The Neuroscience of Human Relationships: Attachment and the Developing Social Brain.**

----- **“It’s a Jungle in There,” Psychotherapy Networker, Sept./Oct. 2008, pages 20-27.**

Panksepp, Jaak. Affective Neuroscience.

Siegel, Daniel The Developing Mind, especially chapter 3, “Attachment” and pages 323-337.