

# **Sexuality and sexuality in psychotherapy**

## **Relational work through erotic fire**

With Asaf Rolef Ben-Shahar

The therapeutic relationship is one of the most intimate connections, at times we more open and honest there than we dare to be in our romantic relationships. What do we do then when erotic material surfaces for our clients and ourselves?

Sexual energy is the energy of life wanting to manifest itself, calling forth continuation and connection. It integrates the desire to merge with the need to individuate and separate; it amalgamates love, passion and hate. The balanced flow of sexual energy has been considered a sign of health in both Western therapeutic disciplines (Freud, Reich) as well as in Eastern practices (like Tantra).

How can we work with adult sexuality in psychotherapy (not just the regressive one)? What might allow us to step into the core of erotic dynamics without abandoning ourselves, our clients and the safe boundaries, while at the same time permit us to use erotic energy, to play with it and utilize it therapeutically? What can support us in naming eroticism and allowing it space in the therapeutic space, and perhaps to even celebrate the erotic charge as indication for growth and connectedness? How can we be there, together, with our own sexuality and sexual wounds as well as our client's without acting out or fleeing?

The oedipal and post-oedipal erotic dynamics in therapy require an altogether different language, of noticing and working with our own attractions and our clients', with the terror and shame that emerge, the yearnings and passions, with the fire and charge of erotic energy and not just sweet compensated orality. By opening ourselves to receiving and tolerating such levels of excitation and charge, we may expand the scope of our clients' growth as well as of our own.

This workshop will start with two days of safely and confidentially exploring the boundaries of our own sexuality. We will identify the threshold of tolerance, excitation and plethora of erotic strands in our development – through the preoedipal all through post-oedipal sexuality. Claiming and de-shaming what feels right and what doesn't, dancing around our boundaries, and finding our sexual selves as people. Hopefully, we will have a chance to attend to our sexual wounds and shame.

Then, for three further days we will explore place of erotic dynamics in therapy: erotic transference and countertransference, developmental sexuality, charge, power, touch, gender and other issues. Using theory and practices from relational psychoanalysis, attachment theory, body-psychotherapy, self-relations and hypnosis, we will plunge into the dance with fire and aspire to take calculated risks while maintaining the safety of the frame, and our own.

**Limited spaces. Booking essential. If you have never worked with me before, please contact me to check for suitability.**

Asaf Rolef Ben-Shahar (UKCP, EABP) is a relational psychotherapist, working in Israel and teaching in Israel and Europe. He integrates body psychotherapy and hypnosis into his relational practice.

When: Friday-Tuesday 19-23 February 2010 (10:00-18:00 each day, 10:00-17:00 Tuesday)

Where: The Open Centre, London EC1V

Fee: £435