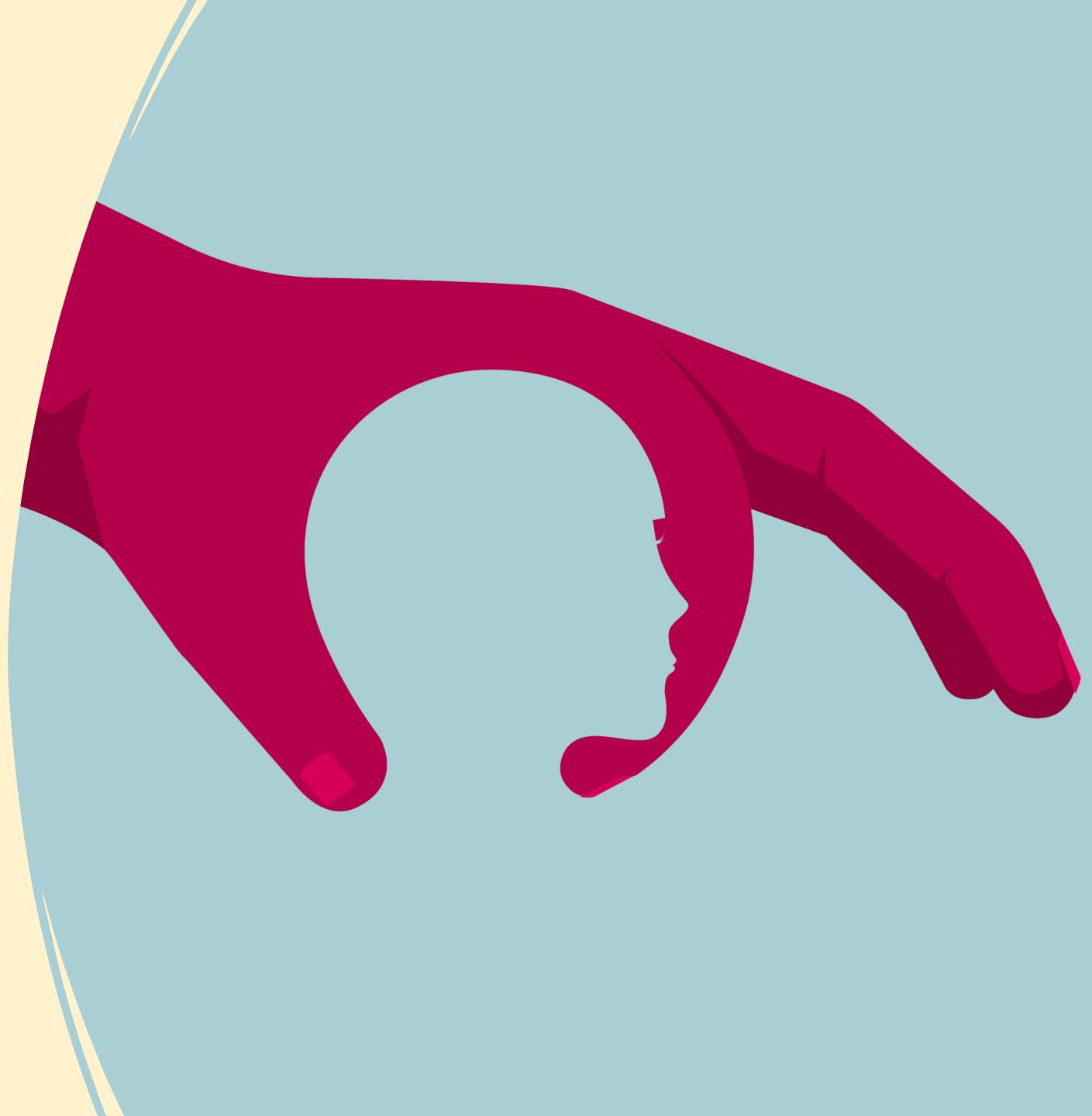

The Subtle Power of Toxic Relationships

**Pauline Andrew
with Carolyn Spring**



“Overt”

- Done or shown openly or publicly
- Physical harm to the body
- It is easier to identify as abuse
- You can see the bruises

“Subtle”

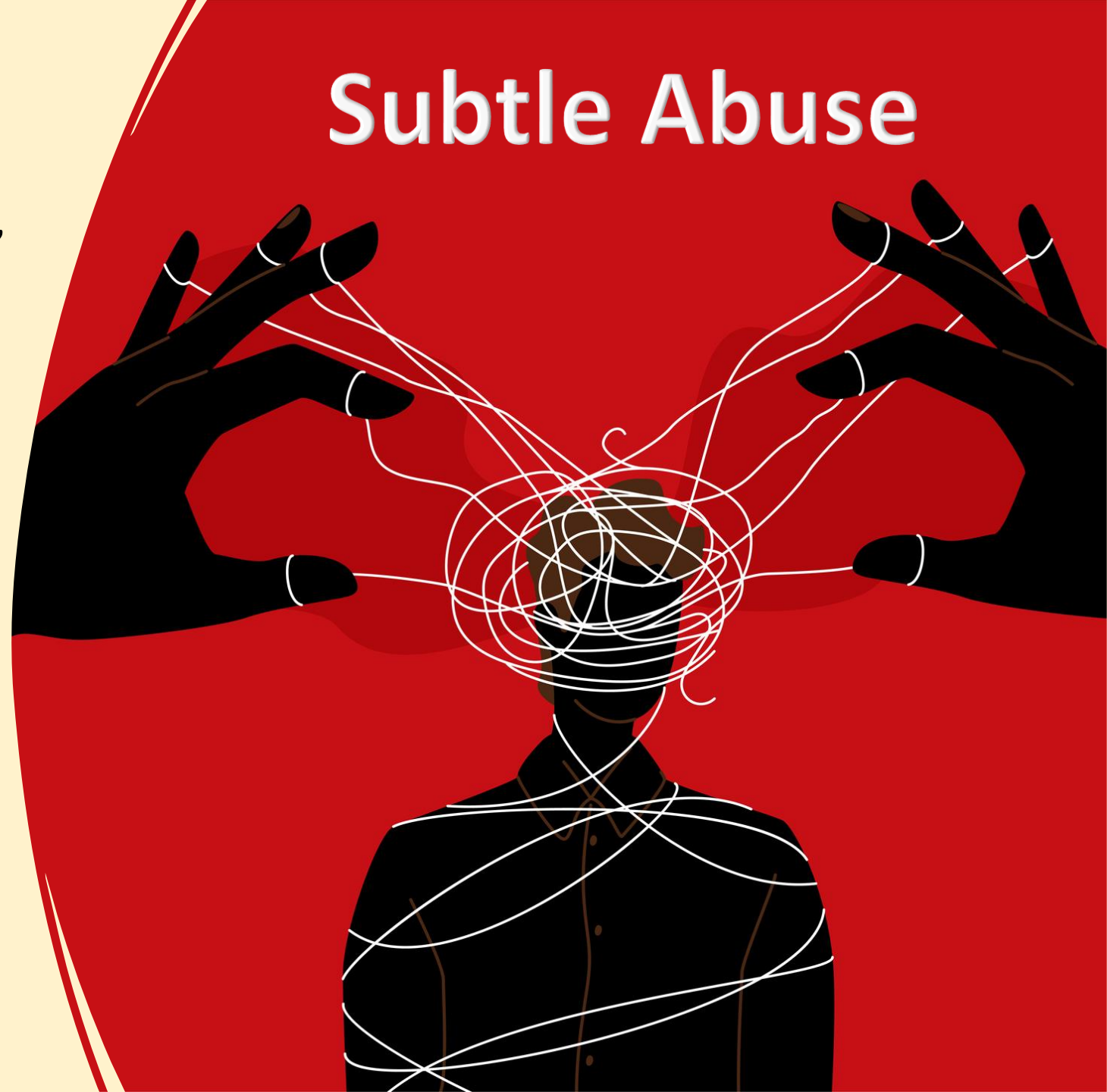
- Clever use of indirect methods to achieve something
- Difficult to analyse or describe
- Don't quite know what's happening



A form of psychological manipulation and mistreatment, often unnoticed by both the victim and those around them

Subtle abuse operates in the shadows, making it challenging to identify and address

Subtle Abuse



“Power”

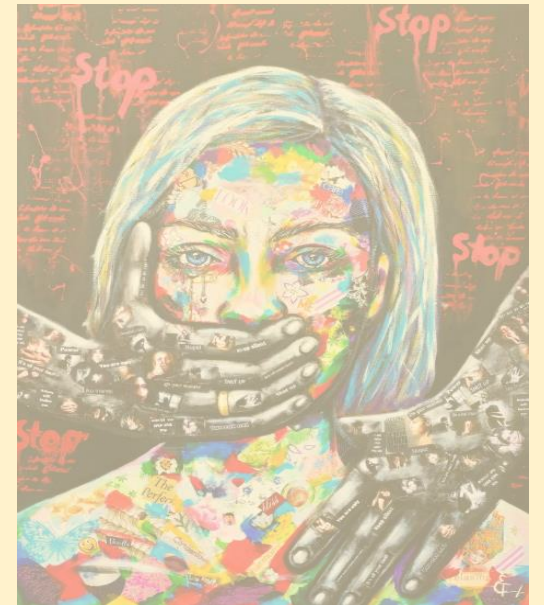
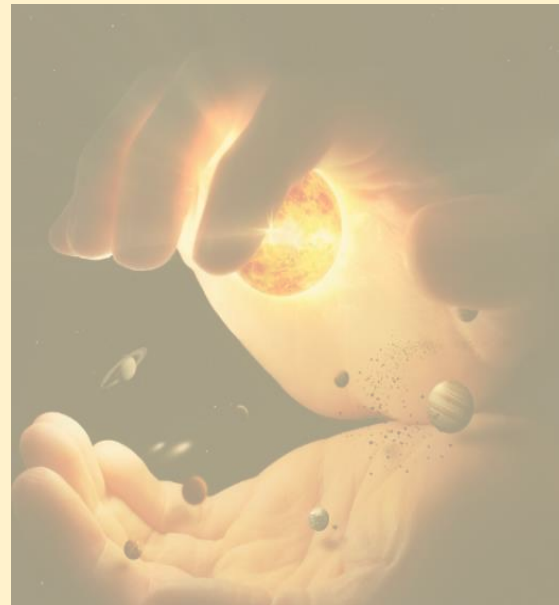
- The ability or capacity to do something or act in a particular way
- The ability or capacity to direct or influence the behaviour of others or the course of events
- Legal or official authority or right
- Possession of control, authority or influence over others



Creator: Benjavisa



Painter: Leona-Norten



Painter: Tatsiana Yelistratava

“Toxic”

- Poisonous
- Very harmful or unpleasant in a pervasive or insidious way
- *“A person who is tainted by a **subconscious malevolence or psychosis** that affects the lives of those who come into contact with them...” (Google)*
- Is this always true?

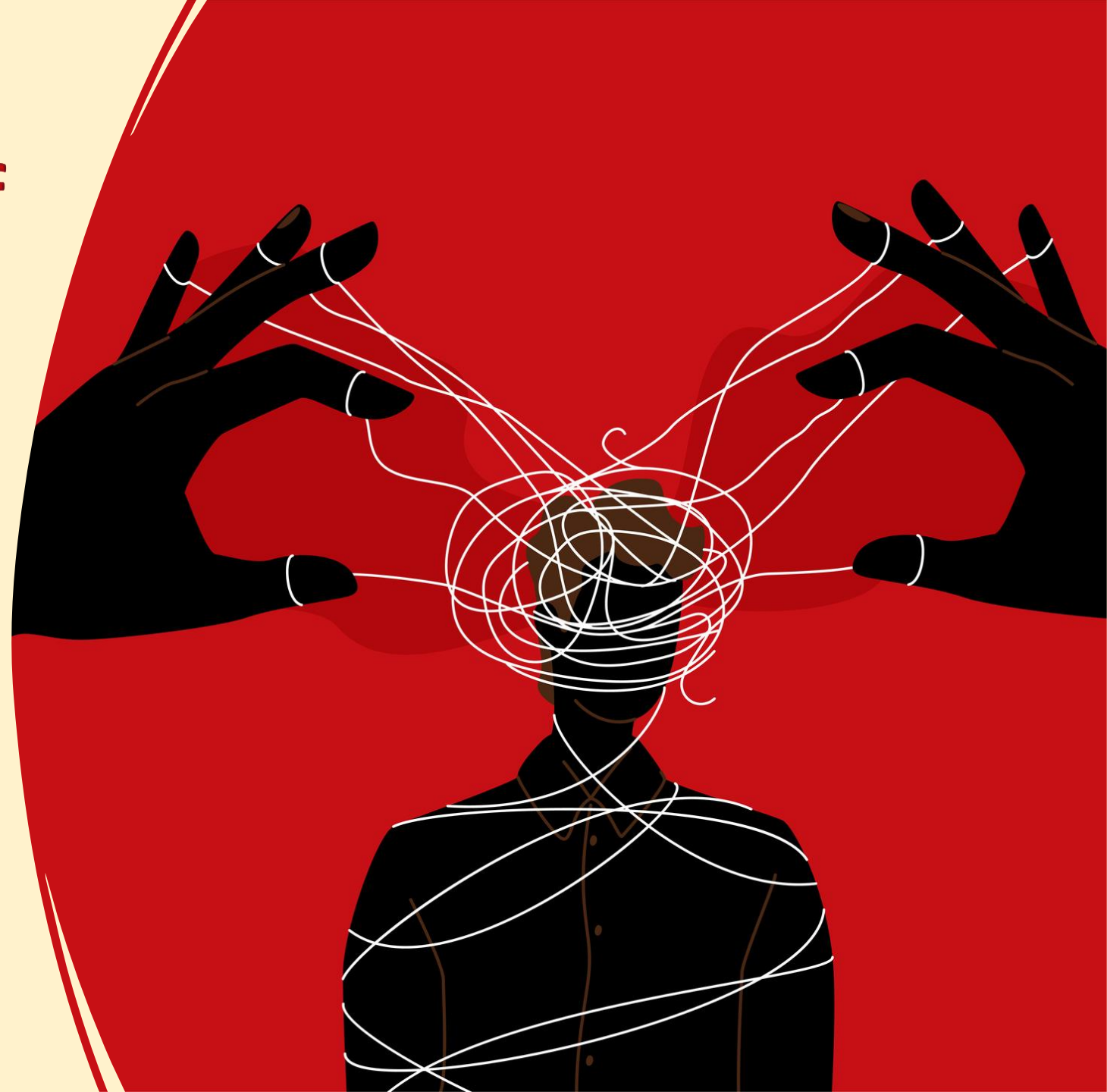


Source: Rowan Jordan / Getty

Who is the subtly toxic person?

The Subtle Power of Toxic Relationships

Toxic relationships are insidious because they erode a person's self-esteem, confidence, and sense of reality over time, leaving them feeling confused, isolated and powerless



Types of abuse

Physical

Sexual

Stalking

Bullying

Neglect

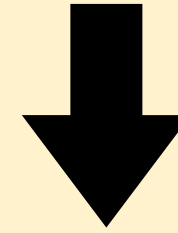
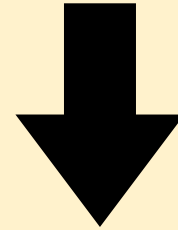
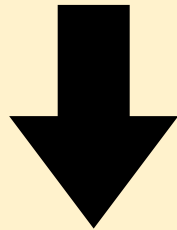
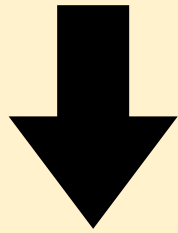
Verbal

Financial

Psychological

Emotional

Gaslighting



Fear Shame Shock Terror Denial Guilt Depression
Powerlessness Anxiety Anger Low self-worth
Helplessness Self-blame Self-doubt Trauma bonds

“Whether adult children of toxic parents were beaten when little or left alone too much, sexually abused or treated like fools, overprotected or overburdened by guilt, they almost all suffer surprisingly similar symptoms:

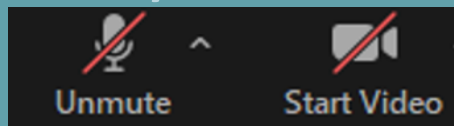
damaged self-esteem, leading to self-destructive behaviour. In one way or another, they almost all feel worthless, unlovable, and inadequate.”

Susan Forward, “Toxic Parents”



In Conversation with Carolyn Spring Part 1

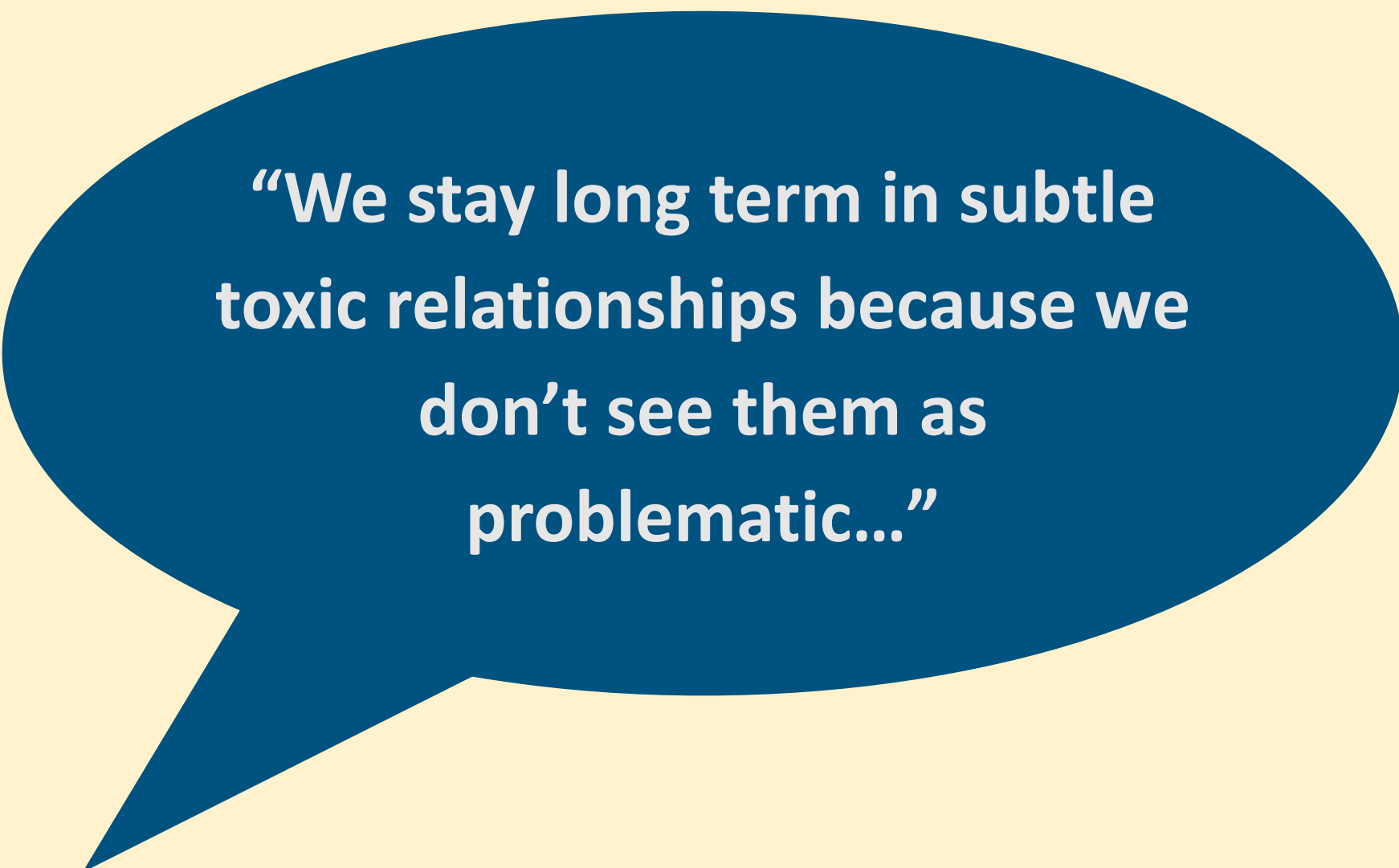
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Pause and Think....

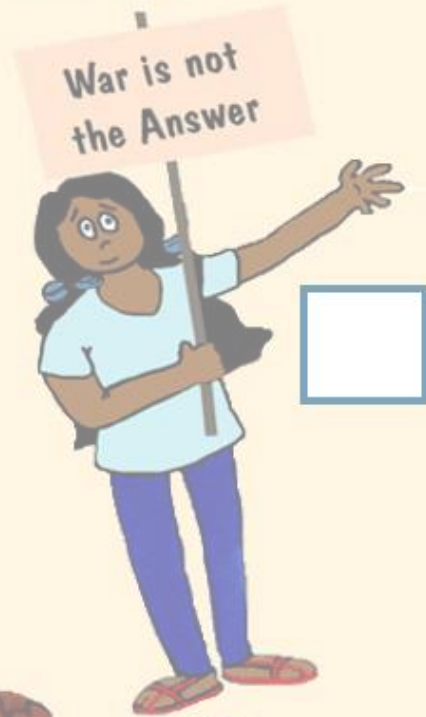
- Striving to make the relationship work
- *“It must somehow be my fault”*
- *“Don’t be critical or judgemental”*
- Have a data-driven approach
- Blaming ourselves or blaming others leaves us stuck
- Translate feelings into actions



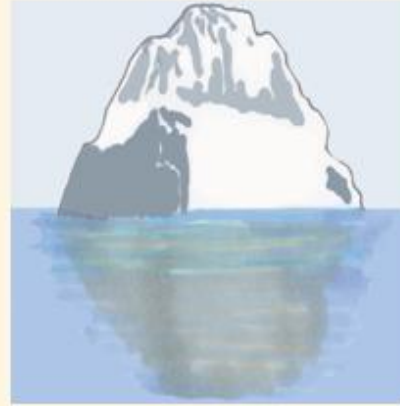


**“We stay long term in subtle
toxic relationships because we
don’t see them as
problematic...”**

The Conditioning of Family Roles



The Conditioning of Family Roles



“The risk is one normalises the abnormal and becomes accustomed to living in the madness, and that’s when things really go wrong...”

Advice for Princess Diana in “The Crown”

Buddy Group

Share your own experiences, and your responses to the training so far

15 minutes





Take a 5-minute break

A central dark blue square contains the text "Any Questions or Comments?". It is surrounded by a cluster of other squares in light blue, orange, and white, each featuring a question mark. The squares are arranged in a roughly circular pattern around the center, with some overlapping. The background is a solid dark blue.

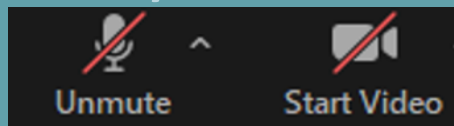
Any
Questions
or
Comments?

The Counsellor's Feelings

- *Can I cope with this?*
- *I don't have the skills to help them!*
- *They want answers and I don't have any!*
- *What if I make it worse?*
- *This is touching my own stuff – do I share that with them?*
- *I want them to get out!*
- *I think they should change their approach and stay in!*
- *What is my position on this? What if I don't agree with their choice of action / non-action?*
- *Am I genuinely creating the space for them to work on this?*

In Conversation with Carolyn Spring Part 2

Please Stop your
Video for better
sound and sync –
thank you



Pause and Think....

- Most people don't mean to harm others
- The power dynamic in the counselling room
- Do we have an open relationship with our clients, checking to see if we are getting it right for them?
- Are we able to sit with the client's distress, or do we close them down to 'rescue them from their feelings'?
- How do we cope when it 'gets worse'?



“You can end up with a situation where a client is trying to get out of toxic relationships where they’ve been coerced, they’ve been shamed, they’ve been told who to be, what to think, what to do, and they end up in another relationship with a counsellor where they are being told what to think, how to feel and what to want.”

“Therapists have been to therapy school, but clients haven’t been to client school – we don’t know what the rules are...”

Let's be careful with our wording....

*What might you
do differently
next time?*

*Why do you let
them treat you
like that?*

I never liked them

*Why don't you
leave?*

*This is an
Attachment need
to be loved....*

*Were there any
red flags?*

Let's be careful with our wording....

*I can hear how
difficult this is
(was) for you...*

*I can hear how
distressing this is
for you...*

~~*I never liked them*~~

*I feel so concerned
for you.. So many
thoughts must go
through your
mind...*

*Where would you
say this all
began?*

*I think maybe,
deep down, we
all long to be
loved...*

You weren't abused
because you wanted to
be loved. You were
abused because your
abusers chose to abuse
you. It wasn't your fault.

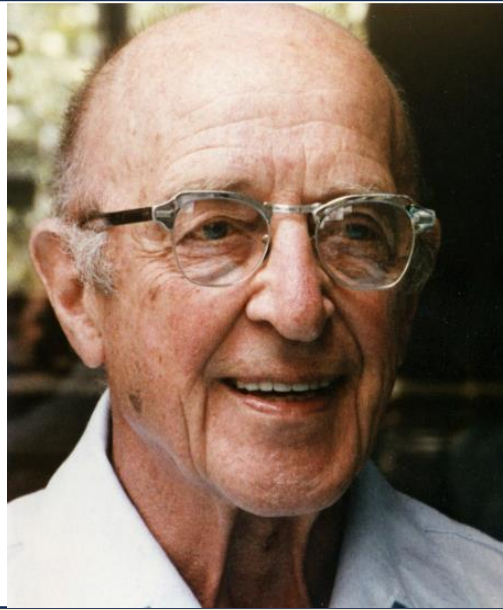
CAROLYN SPRING



UNSHAME: HEALING TRAUMA-BASED
SHAME THROUGH PSYCHOTHERAPY

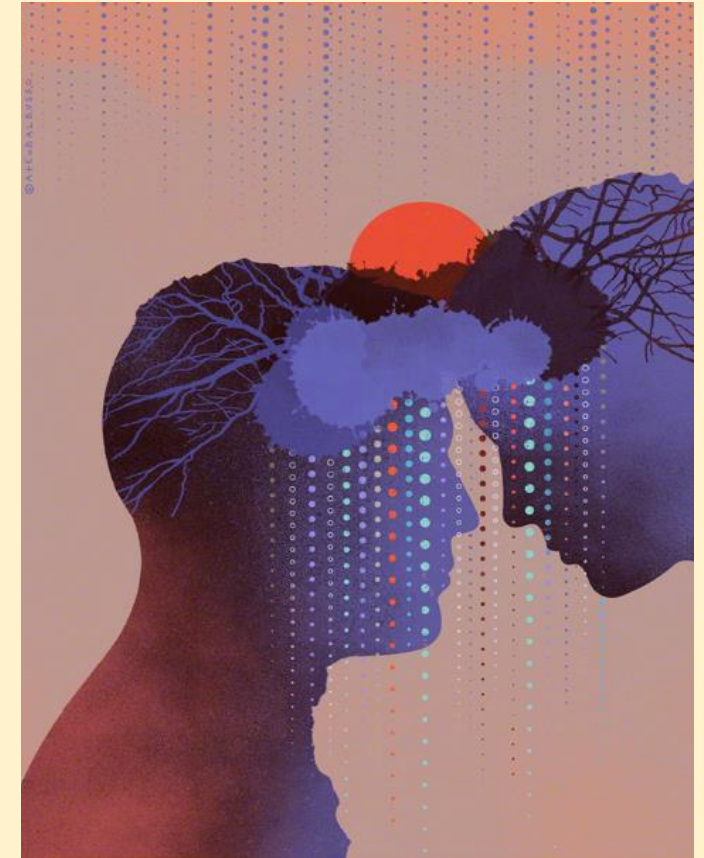
www.carolynspring.com/books

"In my early professional years, I was asking the question: How can I treat, or cure, or change this person? Now I would phrase the question in this way: how can I provide a relationship which this person may use for his own personal growth?"



“Empathy has no script.
There is no right way or
wrong way to do it.
It’s simply listening, holding
space, withholding judgment,
emotionally connecting, and
communicating that incredibly
healing message of
“You’re not alone.”

-Brene Brown



- Over-empathising
- Empathic Strain
- Empathic Failure

Why People don't leave Toxic Relationships

- | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| 1. "It would upset them..." | <i>Fear of being unkind</i> |
| 2. "They have been so good to me..." | <i>Selective memory</i> |
| 3. "I really believe that they will change..." | <i>Magical thinking</i> |
| 4. "They're going through a bad time..." | <i>Rescuing</i> |
| 5. "They don't mean to upset me..." | <i>Denial</i> |
| 6. "It's my fault – I'm to blame..." | <i>Shame, embarrassment, failure</i> |
| 7. "I'm scared of confronting them..." | <i>Anxiety, fear of the come-back</i> |
| 8. "It's God's will for me to stay..." | <i>Religious pressure</i> |
| 9. "Being with them is better than being alone..." | <i>Isolation</i> |
| 10. "It would upset the children..." | <i>Fear of damaging the family</i> |
- system*

- Finances
- Survival

Toxic Groups

Our Need
to Belong



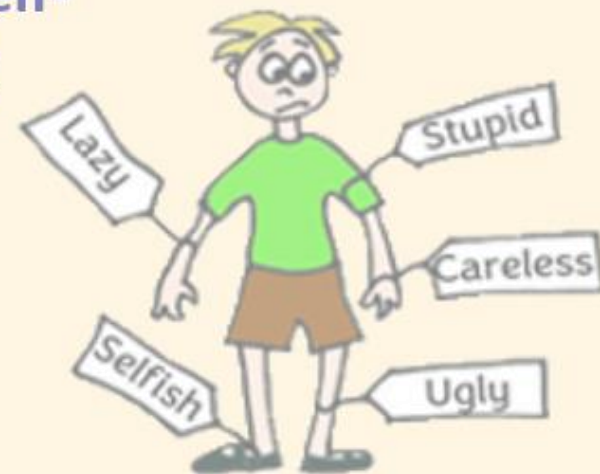
1

Shame and
Humiliation
- family
- school
- church



2

Low Self-
Worth



5

I'll never
belong to a
group again



3

Torn apart



4

Why didn't I
stand up to
them?



Spiritual Abuse

“It’s the fear of being alone, an ‘outsider’, that prevents many people from getting out and getting safe, even when their church has become cult-like and oppressive, and they themselves are deeply unhappy.

It’s the same patterns we see in domestic abuse situations, and although they are hopefully not actually being physically hurt in church, emotional and spiritual batterings cause hidden bruises which are profoundly damaging.”

Toxic Emotional and Psychological Behaviour

- **Intimidation and Threats** *“Know your place”*
 - Making you feel small
 - Making you feel scared
 - Stopping you from standing up for yourself
- **Criticism** *“You’re a disappointment to me”*
 - Name-calling
 - Nitpicking
 - Sarcasm
- **Undermining** *“You’re incapable of doing life”*
 - Dismissing your opinion
 - Making you doubt yourself
 - Saying you are oversensitive
 - Gaslighting

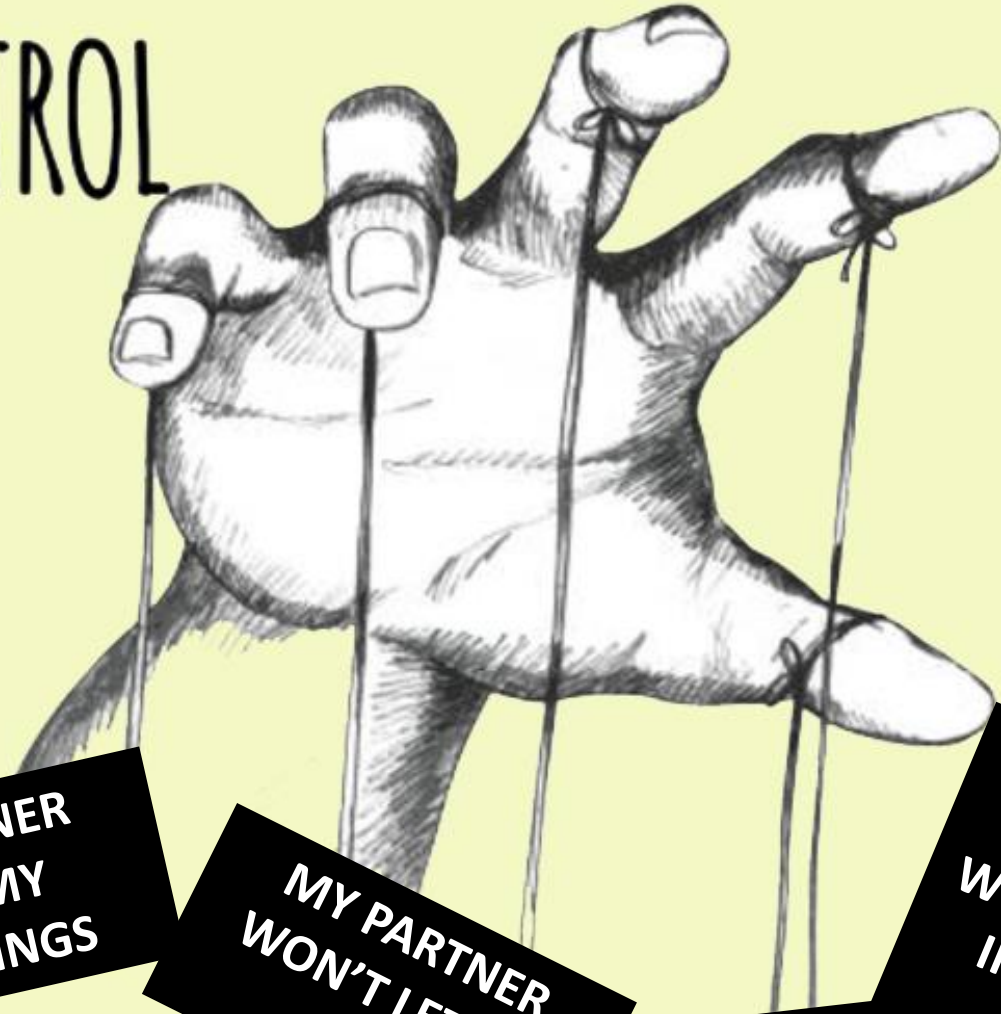
Toxic Emotional and Psychological Behaviour

- **Guilt-tripping** *“You’re spoiling our relationship”*
 - Saying you are being unfair or unkind if you complain
 - Being hurt
 - Withdrawing / Silent Treatment / Blanking
- **Economic Control** *“I’ll take care of you”*
 - Withholding money
 - Preventing you from getting a job
 - Demanding money
- **Coercive control** *“I know what’s best for you”*
 - Telling you what you can and can’t do
 - Telling where you can and can’t go
 - Stopping you from seeing other people
 - Controlling your appearance

COERCIVE CONTROL IS A CRIME

(29th December 2015)

Punishable by a
prison term of up to
five years.



MY PARTNER
HIDES MY
BELONGINGS

MY PARTNER
WON'T LET ME
SLEEP

MY PARTNER
TELLS ME MY
FRIENDS DON'T
WANT TO SEE ME

MY PARTNER
WON'T LET ME
WORK

MY PARTNER
PROMISES I
WON'T GET HURT
IF I DO WHAT
THEY SAY

Toxic Emotional and Psychological Behaviour



Buddy Group

Share your own experiences, and your responses to the training so far

15 minutes





Take a 10-minute break



Ways of Working with Clients in Toxic Relationships

Empathy

Our own touchstones

Unconditional

Acceptance

Non-judgemental

Genuineness

Showing our workings

A safe space to unpack

The ability to understand and express emotions

Psychoeducation

*Cards, Attachment,
T.A.*

Chair Work

*Dialoguing with the
person / group*

Decision Mat Work

*Should I stay or should
I go?*

Permission to leave

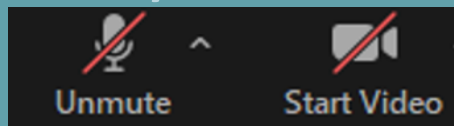
Permission to stay

Support for their Decision



In Conversation with Carolyn Spring Part 3

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thank you

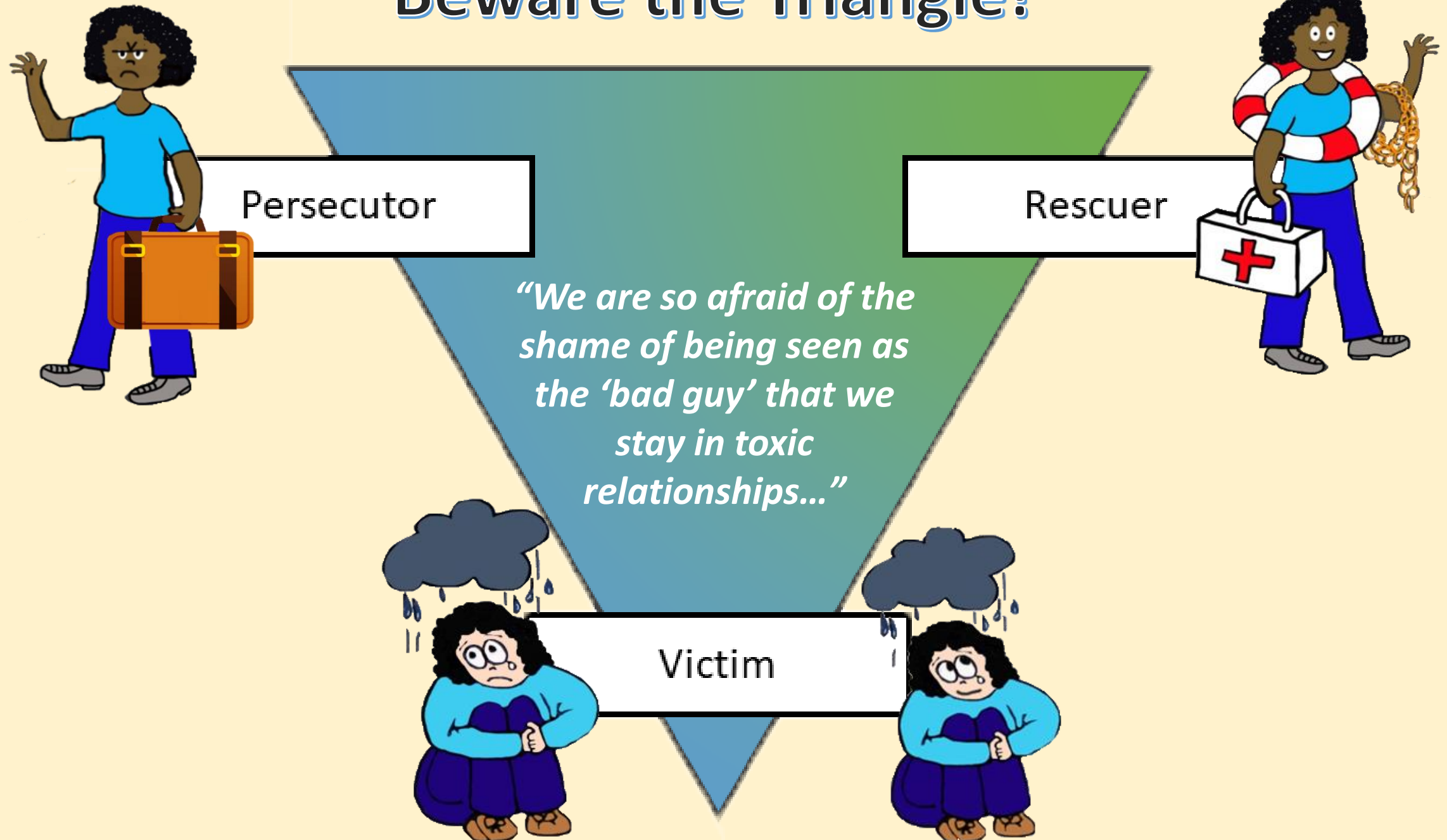


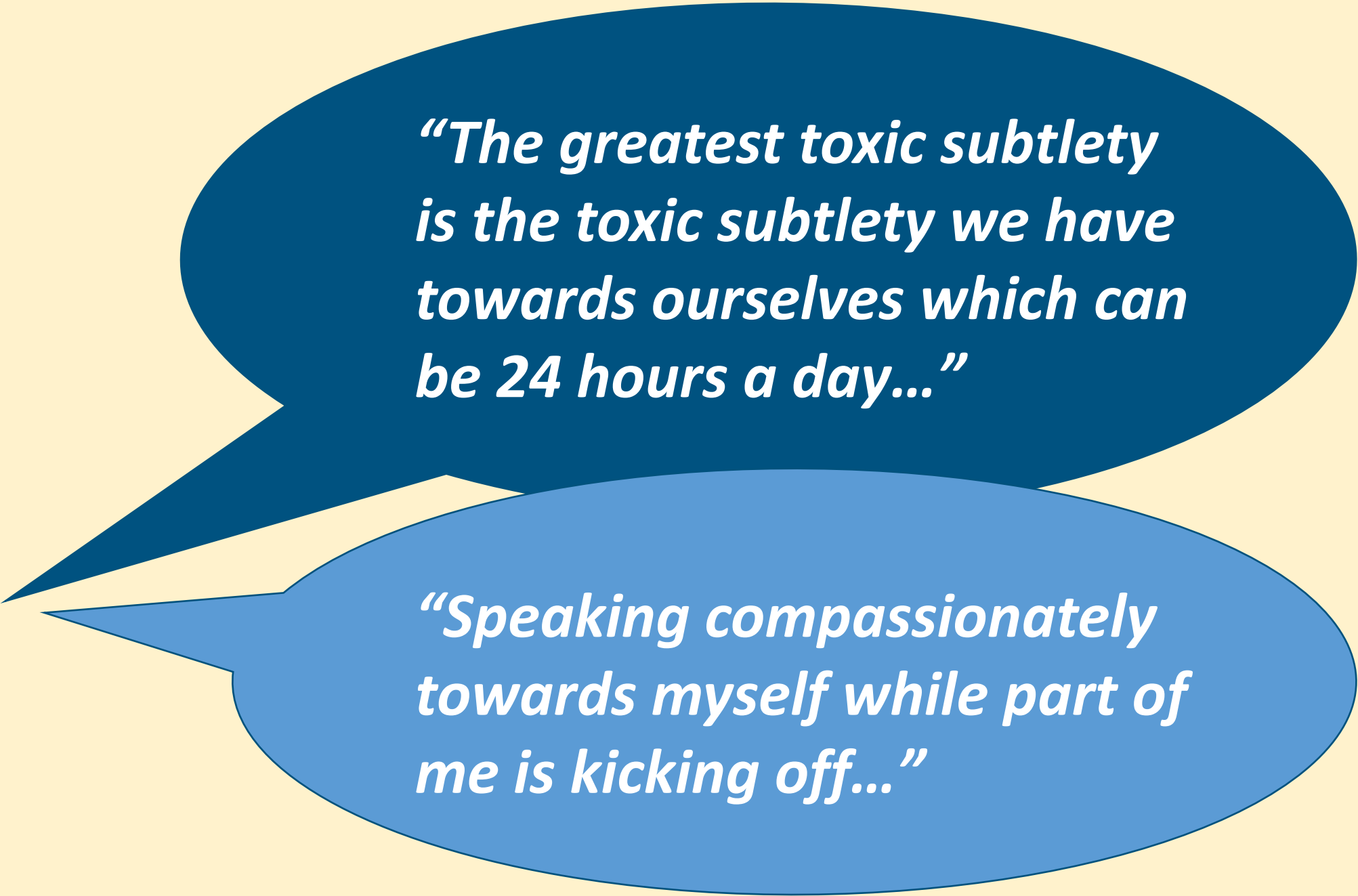
Pause and Think....

- Why people hurt people – seeing them differently
- Recognising Adult-Child dynamics in all of us
- How easy do we find it to be compassionate towards ourselves?
- *“I’m better off on my own compared to being in a toxic relationship.”*
- Being a born rescuer



Beware the Triangle!





“The greatest toxic subtlety is the toxic subtlety we have towards ourselves which can be 24 hours a day...”

“Speaking compassionately towards myself while part of me is kicking off...”

Transforming Tolerance into Capacity

Cathy Malchiodi : The Circle of Capacity

Most practitioners would agree that trauma survivors have tolerated too much for far too long... abuse, neglect, assault... multiple traumatic events since childhood, disrupted attachment and repetitive incidents of interpersonal violence, resulting in deep shame and guilt...

It's time that survivors hear that recovery extends beyond simply expanding our ability to cope with distress.

It is about instilling experiences of resilience, joy, and pleasure that ultimately replace suffering and pain with wholeness and well-being.



When I talk about recovery, I'm talking about resolving our trauma, not pretending it didn't happen. I'm talking about resolving the effects of trauma on our lives, not erasing traumatic events from our history. I'm talking about a life where we're able to experience increasing moments of joy even in amongst the pain.



CAROLYN
SPRING



PODCAST #12: WHAT DOES RECOVERY FROM TRAUMA LOOK LIKE?

www.carolynspring.com/podcasts/what-does-recovery-from-trauma-look-like

**I am teaching myself how to take up space
How to not apologise constantly for the way I live and breathe
How an apology isn't something I am supposed to say before I speak in a conversation**

**I am teaching myself that I am allowed to exist on
this planet without thinking of myself as a
burden**

**How to not apologise for things that are out of
my control**

**How to identify when people are trying to
manipulate me into thinking the worst of myself**

**And most of all how to stop myself thinking the
very worst of myself:**

I deserve better than that from myself.

Nikita Gill, Poet & Playwright
Wild Embers <https://amzn.to/3Re3nmP>



Artist: Mary Long

I am teaching myself how to not apologise when someone bumps into me, and I immediately assume it is my fault

How to not apologise when I ask a question because I think others will think I am stupid

How to love myself for these flawed bits of me no one has ever wanted to love before

I am teaching myself that all the lies my abusers told me about myself were so very wrong

How I am allowed to make mistakes

How not everything that has ever gone wrong in every relationship is my fault

Nikita Gill, Poet & Playwright

Wild Embers <https://amzn.to/3Re3nmP>



I am finally learning how to take up space
as a human being.
It's taken a long, long road to get here.

And I still have a very long way to go
before I am done understanding that it is
my job to take up space,
that I am not just an afterthought or a
secondary character in this gift of life I
have been given,
that who I am is not an apology,
that who I am is not wrong.

Nikita Gill, Poet & Playwright
Wild Embers <https://amzn.to/3Re3nmP>



“Let your light shine”, by Deborah Nell



Any
Questions
or
Comments?



refuge.org.uk

lawhive

lawhive.co.uk/knowledge-hub/family/controlling-and-coercive-behaviour/

SPRINGER LINK

Counselling and Psychotherapy after Domestic Violence

A Client View of What Helps Recovery

<https://link.springer.com/book/>

'The Freedom Programme' run by Women's Aid.

women's aid

until women & children are safe

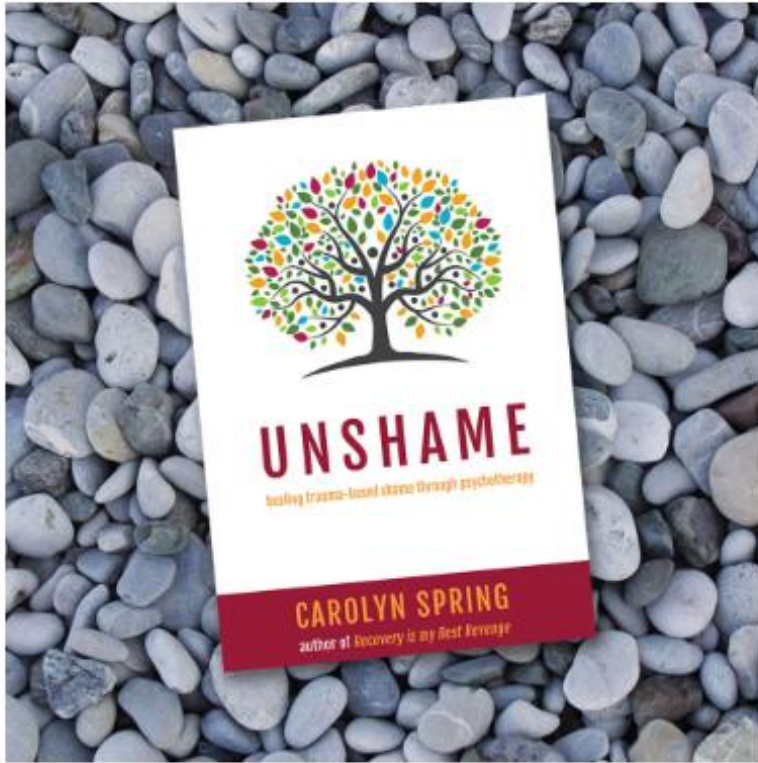
womensaid.org.uk



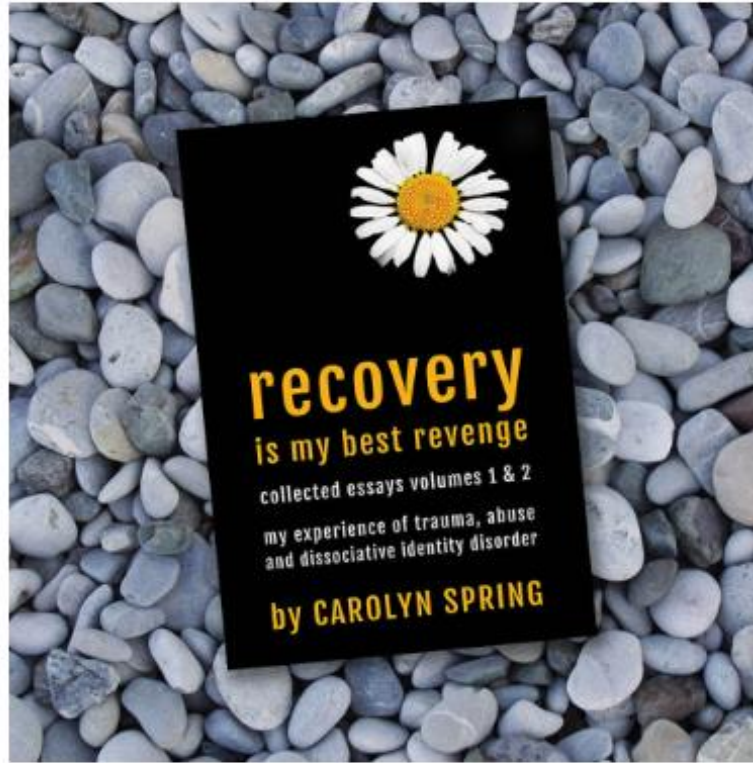
safelives.org.uk



mankind.org.uk



Unshame: healing trauma-based shame through psychotherapy



Recovery is my best revenge

What is it like to live with dissociative identity disorder? How does the brain respond to chronic, extreme trauma? Is recovery possible from such suffering?



I don't feel real: a brief guide to depersonalisation / derealisation disorder (Kindle)



Resources

[PACT-RESOURCES.CO.UK](https://pact-resources.co.uk)

ORIGINAL & CREATIVE
COUNSELLING RESOURCES

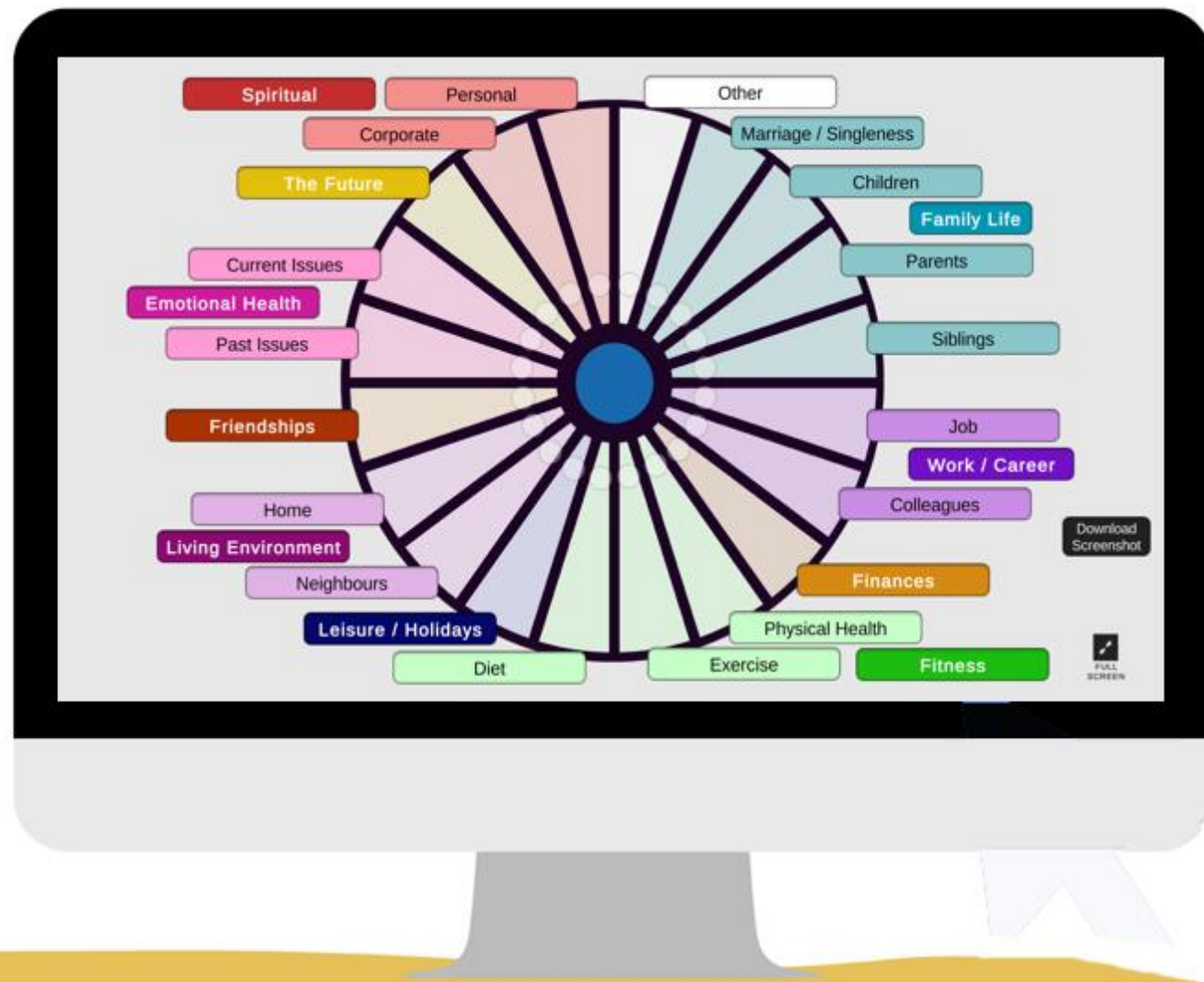
Now
Available!

Use the Roles
Played in Families
& other cards
online!



pact-resources-online.co.uk

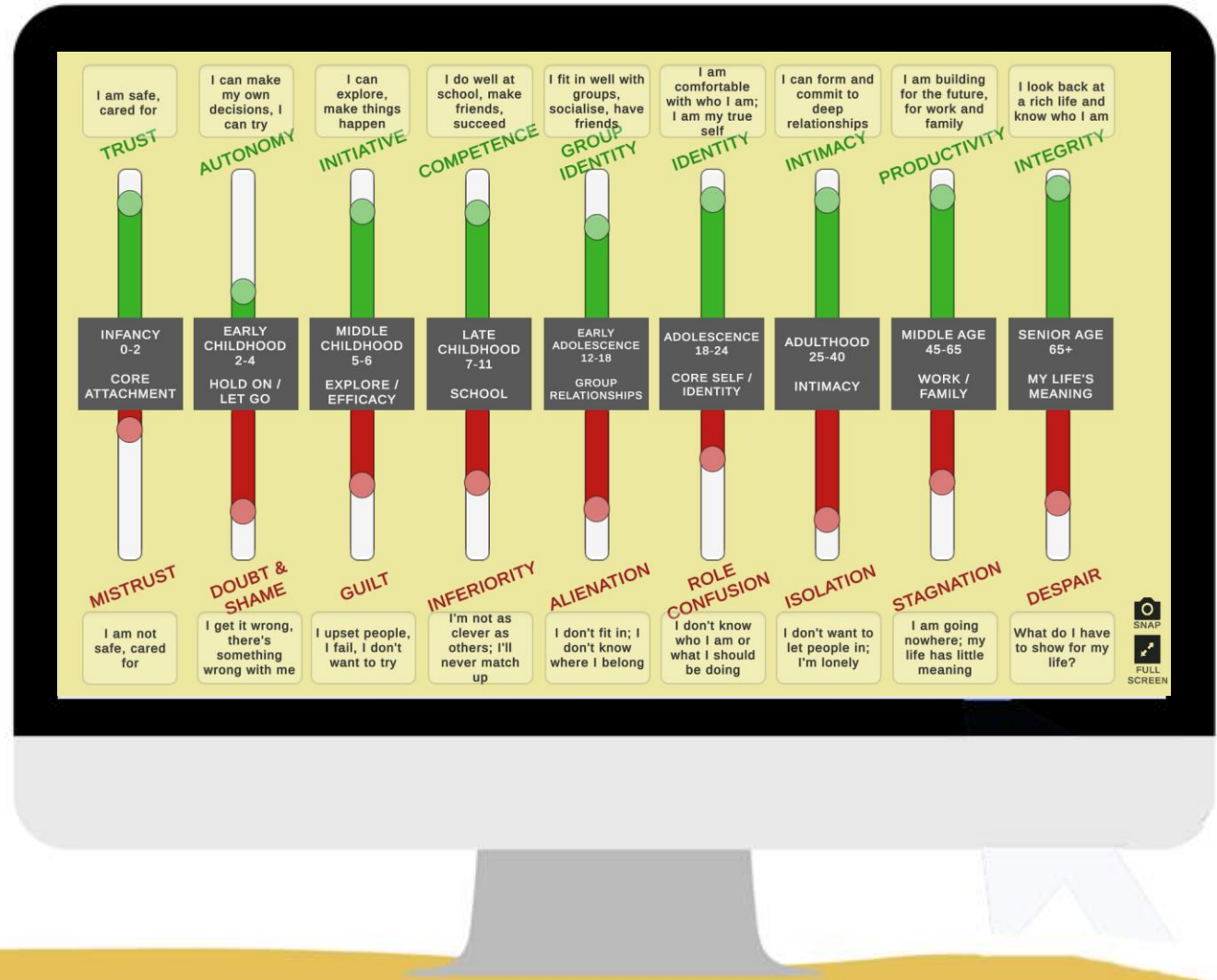
The Wheel of Life
Web App will soon
be available for you
to use!



pact-resources-online.co.uk

Coming soon!

Erikson's Life Stages Web App!



pact-resources-online.co.uk

My Web Apps

Please note that you are only able to access the web apps that you have purchased.



**Roles Played in
Families**



**Core Needs in
Families**



**Roles Played in
Anger**



**Roles Played in
Groups**



**The Wheel of
Life**



**Erikson's Life
Stages**



**The In-Out
Model**



Cards



e-Resources



Erikson's Life Stages



Wheel of Life



Working with Animal
Figures Online Pack



Therapeutic Sandscapes™
Online Pack

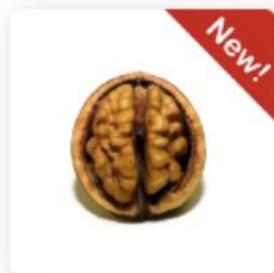
pact-resources.co.uk

3 for 2 on all videos

Missed a course?

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Neuroscience in a Nutshell
£30.00



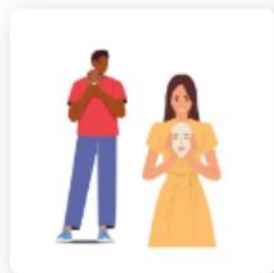
Using Erikson's Life Stages
in Counselling
£30.00



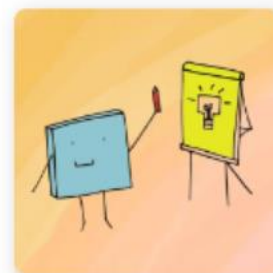
6 Ways of Working with
the Inner Child - Training
Video
£30.00



Building Boundaries
Breaking Barriers -
Training Video
£30.00



Imposter Syndrome -
Training Video
£30.00



Psycho-integration for
Counsellors - Training
Video
£30.00



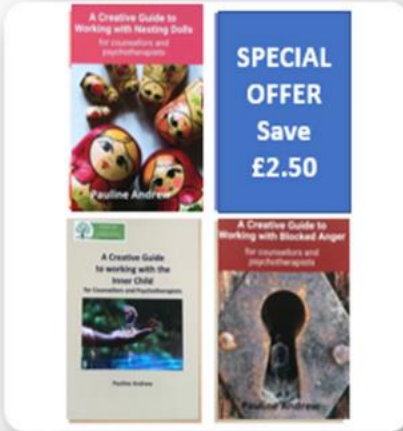
Trust and Betrayal -
Training Video
£30.00



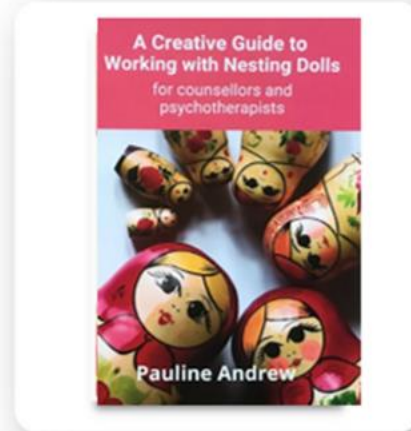
Attachment and Shame -
Training Video
£30.00

pact-resources.co.uk

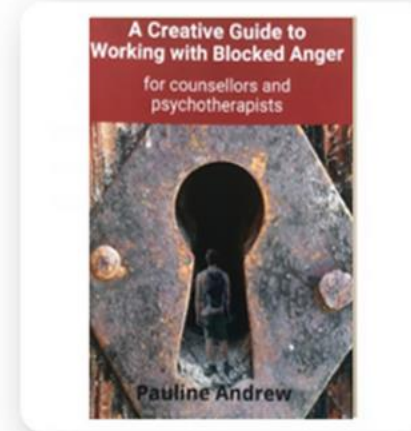
Books



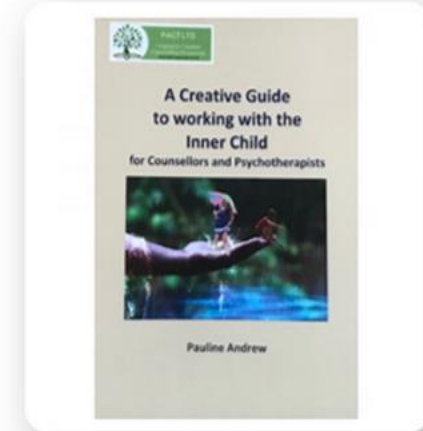
Special offer – save
£2.50 when you buy
all 3 books
£32.00



A Creative Guide to
Working with Nesting
Dolls
£11.50



A Creative Guide to
Working with
Blocked Anger
£11.50



A Creative Guide to
Working with the
Inner Child
£11.50

Also available on Kindle

pact-resources.co.uk

What's up next?

02
DEC



Online Event

Working Creatively with Blocked Anger -
Sat Dec 2

26
APR



Working Creatively with the Inner Child
in Counselling Weekend
Fri Apr 26 – Sun Apr 28, 2024
Moor Hall Conference Centre, Cookham

SAVE THE DATE!
DEEP RELEASE ANNUAL COUNSELLORS CONFERENCE
MOOR HALL, COOKHAM
SEPTEMBER 27TH – 29TH 2024

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**Search on Facebook:
'Deep Release Ltd'**

- A closed group for counsellors & trainee counsellors
- Please answer the joining questions!



Deep Release Online
Professional Training for Counsellors

deeprelease.org.uk

YouTube

Search 'Pauline Andrew Creative Counselling'

- Lots of videos on working creatively
- Please subscribe!



Search 'Brain, Body & Beyond'

- Videos on Life, the Brain and Relationships
- Please subscribe!



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Thank you!



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