



# PSYCHOENERGETICS

A BODY-MIND APPROACH TO DEPTH WORK AND PROCESS FACILITATION

## **What Just Happened? Working with Countertransference Issues: Reacting vs. Being Informed by What We Feel Happening**

**Transcription taken from a live teaching format.**

*Michael Mervosh*

### **Teaching Point #1 – Countertransference Is Inevitable**

Sooner or later, if you're going to commit yourself to doing this kind of depth work as a practitioner, you have to understand power and the potential of countertransference forces. Countertransference is inevitable, and it's really important to experience to have, and it is a vehicle from which to make meaning.

Countertransference involves the feelings we have about what is happening between ourselves and our clients, that we wouldn't be having prior to what happens in our sessions. This is why we practice embodiment and grounded-ness; we make ourselves available for a felt exchange. In these particular 'felt exchanges' during sessions, you'll notice how 'the body of the world' starts moving through you, and your inner life is accordingly animated, or it's not.

What many of us end up doing is judging our inner experiences, and getting overly concerned about the fact that something is (or is not) happening inside of you when you are interacting with your client, rather than simply being informed by it.

When we are able to utilize our countertransference feelings, we become informed by what is moving through us – or we become informed by what is *not* moving in us. This is simply data to have, then you're free to have the subtle thoughts, images and feelings moving through you at some point, and you can let them shape you.

As we sit with our clients, we will tend to either be reactive to or be informed by our interior lives. When you feel reactive to your inner feelings, any use of those feelings will be limited or of no use. If you are reactive, on a good day you won't bother to make use of your inner feelings. On a bad day, you'll just muddy the waters further with them.

When you can tolerate the time and space needed to feel what's moving through you or not moving through you, you'll become aware that your client is talking about hate, and you are suddenly feeling mean, and noticing that you have hostile thoughts. Well, you're in the field. You're cooking. How can you just notice that you feel mean? What do you do with that?

It is likely you won't know what to do with those initial thoughts and feelings coming into you. So just tolerate feeling mean for a while. There is no hurrying with this way of working. We use 'the chickpea in the cooking pot' analogy for a reason. We're cooking ourselves down gradually.

We respect the fact that we don't know exactly how to respond to our client yet. We don't know because 'the chickpeas aren't soft enough to eat' yet, not ready enough to make use of yet. As the process unfolds, it might be that we're just still feeling mean and thinking harsh thoughts, and that's about it. Stay curious. Keep noticing them. When the chickpeas are still hard, they have to cook longer. *It takes time to cook down into deeper awareness.* There is no rushing the process, only the tendency to prematurely foreclose the deepening.

In your process work, you can see that when a strong and embodied container is established, it opens up a sense of spaciousness at the same time. There is enough time and space in the present moment experience, and so there's no sense of hurrying at all. There is no delay and there is no emergency. The paradox is the slower you go, the faster to get there.

Our embodied presence provides an active witnessing and waiting function, and we wait for the inevitable entry point, or notice how one never seems to arrive. There should also be no avoidance or no disconnecting happening with the practitioner due to impatience, or due to countertransference reactions.

There was a question about how to manage the countertransference reaction to when you start to feel things strongly. You're going to feel shaped, nonverbally, by how your client is or is not taking up your presence. It will shape your level of interest in them, and you'll begin to notice when you feel a distinct lack of interest as well. It will shape how you feel pulled towards them, and shape how you feel averse or distance as well. Rather than become alarmed by how we are being shaped, we learn to become curious about it. For example, when we find ourselves losing interest in our clients, we ask ourselves: "*What just happened?*"

*KM: Can both interest and a lack of interest in our client coexist at the same time?*

*MM: Yes, they can coexist. You have to tolerate feeling this weird tension of both things.*

*KM: I could feel space for what's happening, and also I could feel my tightness.*

*MM: That's what your job is, to stay curious with such a strange contradiction. Maybe that's something your client is feeling, too. You'll notice you are able to enter the experience of strange and unexpected feelings because you are available.*

Sometimes you are present and available for your client, and you can really feel how available you are, but there is nothing happening in them to join with and enter into yet. And so you are hanging out, just noticing that.

At some point in every session, you come to realize, *'It's the felt unknown once again, every time. I just don't know anything very clearly right now.'* But, we can still feel what that feels like. Well that's about it. That's where you want to be. It might not be pleasant or comfortable, but it doesn't have to be. You just ride it out.



## **Teaching Point #2 - Stop Being Helpful**

Please, do not try not to help in those moments where things are not yet clear, developed or ripe. Actively making a space to witness and learning to wait is everything. It is not at all helpful to interrupt or foreclose a developing process simply because you cannot tolerate it. Otherwise you're just counseling someone along or advice giving, to feel useful and to comfort yourself.

Notice where and how you can feel joined with your client, and notice that you can't yet. Notice how you're always never quite sure what to do. Who the hell really knows what to do, most of the time? Wait it out. Wait it out more. Then wonder about it, and wait it out more. Wait until something arises in the client or in you, which also is inevitable. When you don't feel interested, just be interested in how you're not interested. And wonder about it more.

Because if you're really there, your embodied presence is being felt, both by you and by your client. There must be a vulnerability that is not yet ready for exposure, there is not yet a place for a felt sense of exchange to take place. You can't force your way prematurely into a technique, this would be just imposing something on your client.

You really have to wait it out which is what I was doing most of the time in my own sessions. I am just waiting out the tension I am feeling inside, or noticing the lack of energy available for anything to move. When you trust the process, it is eventually inevitable that you will land at something that hits you. Sometimes it takes a half an hour. So what. That's real work rather than a drive-through fast-food.

Over and over again you'll notice how you'll have to move beyond what I would call a 'transactional space'. Process work is not about mechanistic transactions. *'Here's my money; where's my burger? Here's my question; where's my answer?'* Simple back and forth interactions do not make the space we need for something to surface from our depths. That's simply transactional, an unconscious manipulation designed to stay at the surface of things.

So even though we might feel internally troubled by what we are feeling especially when we don't yet have a clear sense of what to do, it is important to tolerate these feelings. Because that's most likely the trouble you *should* be having inside.

You should be able to withstand being properly troubled. If not, you will have to push things to the surface, just like your client is likely to do.

- *When you stay at the surface content of your conversation, coaching and helping, both you and your client might feel good about accomplishing something in the moment, but it unlikely to lead to deeper shifts in consciousness, or lasting changes in one's mind or in one's behavior.*

This is very different from dropping below the surface of what is being spoken, and wondering about something that I don't yet know if I want to speak; or something I would want to speak, but don't have adequate language yet for what is being felt. 'Not-yet-ness.' Something inside is telling you that something really important is happening, and you just don't know what it is yet, exactly. This is a typical feeling for the practitioner in depth process work.

Can you see why I might not let someone do what they might always do, and follow their reflexive impulse right away? How I would instead be more interested in what the client's more un-natural posture or unfamiliar tendency towards something might be? I try not to allow the client to just go with whatever comes first, because that might just be the easiest thing to do.

*FH: Following the first impulse the client had would not have been helpful for her. It would not have been helpful for her in the long run. I have a feeling that your demo client was going to collapse into that feeling of needing to be loved, and that was not helpful to her understanding of what it takes to be with all of us.*

*DK: I kept feeling like how much I felt like she had to do it herself her whole life. Orchestrate her whole life and how she really needed to let that old story go. That's more important than her orchestrating her process, and then thinking about where she had to go or how she had to be. Perhaps learn how she could receive from others. I felt it was so crucial when you said "Wait a minute not so fast. "This allowed for the space to open for her to have a different experience.*

*AC: There was a clear disturbing force to my habitual way of being. I would go to a place of 'Okay, now I'm a poor thing. Now take care of me.'*

*MM: Yes. As if that old caretaking pattern was the gold standard. Yet when you are in that familiar place, that's what the gold looks like. When we feel deprived, we'll take what we can get, whenever we can get it. We don't think to look for something other or better.*

*JG: "Following your body in that moment was going to what you already know. It wasn't going to a new place."*

*AW: And you kept you holding her to this new idea - to truly not be alone. And the old and familiar process was just an escape for her. I'm just going to go do this, because it is what I know.*

*MM: It would've met a young need. That young place needs to be mourned, and not indulged.*

*KM: Is that similar to what you're talking about how it can be regressive, not experiencing anything new?*

*MM: It might feel great, in fact. Something can feel good but that's all there is, and that's just a low aim. How would she know if it's a low aim? It's easy to give in to the client's first impulse. It feels good to them.*

*SS: My client had shared that I wasn't engaged enough, not asking enough questions. They said it triggered feeling unseen and unwanted as a child. People would walk by and not necessarily engage with them. As the practitioner, I doubted myself quite a bit. I was sitting with things and trying not to talk. Because that is what I would normally do just fill that space. I was trying to be more in my body. I didn't feel always connected. We talked about a boundary. I'm connecting all of this a lot more now. There's always this fear of saying or doing the wrong thing, and not wanting to make things worse for whoever I'm with.*

*MM: This is very good ground to practice with for you. What happens in you when things appear to be going wrong for somebody?*

*SS: I panic.*

*MM: Great. You are aware of the panic. Okay, so now you get to look at that. What's the panic for? What function does it serve? That's the part you get to look at, and in order to become a better and more effective practitioner, it is important that you do. You can do that here.*



### **Teaching Point #3 - Bringing the Trouble Into the Room**

In depth work, the trouble for the client needs to come into the room at some point, so the client can have the trouble in more useful ways, by being with someone who can really withstand the trouble. As practitioners, we're attuning to the client's experience first, but then we're differentiating ourselves from it as well, at the same time.

We get an empathic feeling for what the client is going through, and then we back up - we get 'a thoughtful distance' from their experience. You accommodate to the client's experience

first; that's all right for a while. You establish safety, and make a connection to where they are. You attune to them. You accommodate for a time, to create safety and support.

You do this so you can eventually *not* accommodate, and you become 'other than' where your client is. This may create trouble for your client, and may unintentionally elicit an emotional trigger, and touch upon a place where it is going to be hard for them – at least, at the start.

This is when you need to also have a 'non-accommodating' presence. This type of work is not simply 'service providing'. Depth work is not simply about making the client feel good. We are not here to find out where it hurts, and make the pain go away.



#### **Teaching Point #4 – The Importance of Differentiation – Moving Beyond Accommodation**

The depth work begins when you're not simply accommodating, but when you're holding another space, a more differentiated space that can take someone where they would not typically go. Depth work means you are going to gradually guide someone to a space they don't bear well. That's where their greatest unrealized potential is; that is where they can grow from, and where they wouldn't go to on their own or by themselves.

*KM: My inclination was to ask my client "What do you want to tell your father"? That doesn't take her deeper?*

*MM: No. The question itself is not wrong. But it depends. What kind of fishing are you doing? If you're trying to get a little fish, just go ahead and catch that first one that comes to the surface immediately. Now you've directed her into an interactive dynamic with her father. Why? Just because it looks like an interesting fish to catch in that moment, rather than staying in the felt unknown. This is the hard part. I'm waiting and just underneath this dynamic, something else even bigger is waiting. Trust yourself, and trust the waiting, and trust the unfolding process.*

*The active waiting and being present does all the work.*

*JG: And staying in the room.*

*MM: Yes, staying right there with what she is bringing. You're always asking yourself 'Why is this happening now? Why this? Why now? What has this happening?'*

*KP: I really loved when you said, 'Can you feel the competency in the room?' I felt that freshly both in the group and in myself. That felt really good. I feel like an adult who can handle this.*

MM: *Sometimes it is important to ask yourself, whenever you are sitting with your client, and especially when they seem to be doing just fine with their process, and they are doing all the talking – ask yourself this question. ‘What’s my job? What am I needed for, that they won’t be able to do by themselves? Feel into that. Your client needs your ‘otherness’, even if it might appear threatening to them. They need a differentiated other to accompany into the darker territories of their troubles.*

Another question to think about on behalf of your client: What if there are competent people around them? And who are they, in relation to competent, available help? Is that a reality they can tolerate? Do they become invulnerable? Or do they suddenly become the helpless child in the midst of available others?

What kind of child do they become? Are they afraid to be a needy child? A hungry child? Are they a child that wants to grow, or a child that wants to stay a child? Are they willing and ready to become a more competent adult? The only way you're going to know you're a lion is by the kind of pack you're in. How does the client orient towards a 'competent other'? Does it help them to be more empowered, or do they disempower themselves?



### **Teaching Point #5 – Bearing the Unbearable – Tolerating Dynamic Tension in a Session**

I like that one of you named that you could recognize an ongoing tension inside, and you were thinking about how you're going to intervene, and you could see the way you were self-organizing probably wouldn't work, and where you'd tend to go would not be useful. So, you didn't do something just to discharge the tension. That is so important.

So you waited. Exactly. You stayed on the edge of this tension. At some point, something occurs to you. For example, in my session, it was occurring to me how hard the client was working. Well, I wonder to myself, *‘Why is she working so hard in front of me? What am I to be doing, that she is not making space for yet?’*

Now I wonder if it occurs to her to ask for or to want something from me or with me, or with us as a group. I'm assuming this is foreign territory to her in the moment. So she's going to do what she knows how to do, what is most familiar – not what would work best.

The hardest thing to identify are the gaps in one's life experience, the deprivations in someone's life, because it is hard to identify what has never happened. Here am sitting with my client, I don't really know what to do right now. Inevitable, as we've said. But there is a particular quality of my not knowing what to do right now.

Maybe I am feeling all of her deprivations, the lack of help in her life. Maybe that is a part of what's inside of her, underneath it all, that she's not yet feeling. *That's how you use a*

*countertransference*. But you never know for sure. If you're trying to know for sure, you're in the wrong business. If it's for sure, you're not really fishing, you're not really exploring the depths of things. You're kind of trapping things instead, and you're going to get trapped in little things. You've got to be willing to be uncertain. You got to go to the felt unknown. That's the hard part.

KM: *We tend to go to fixing, when we can't go fishing.*

MM: When we can't tolerate uncertainty, when we are panicked by not knowing what to do, we go quickly to what we know, simply because we can't bear the not knowing. The hardest work is staying in the unknown, tolerating it, and knowing that is the container for a rich depth of experience that has not surfaced yet. That is actually what is holding the whole process in place! Don't pull the plug on that. When you jump to premature knowing, you let all the water out of the depth pool, a depth that you might not have believed was there all along.

With focused attention and embodied presence, you gradually allow the water in the cooking pot to heat up, and you trust the process of heating things up, and you wait. And if it's a really good intervention, a key observation or an important question - nothing is going to happen right away, because your client will not have a clue what to do with it at the start. And she shouldn't have to.

This failure to let the cooking happen is so big in this group, this tendency to panic when you don't know what to do. Not for everybody but for a number of you. That's the obsessive-compulsive character in us freaking out when we're finally on the verge of letting go into something deeper or more. Or making a new space for something to begin happening.



### **De-briefing a Depth Process Session – An Ongoing Group Dialogue**

HB: *I feel like I just wait. Then I feel like I waited too long and think 'Well, I could've used that opportunity. But now it's five minutes ago.'*

MM: *As if there is only one opportunity that we get, and only moment in time afforded to us. All we have to do is patiently and actively wait, and in doing so, we can facilitate the inevitable. Something is going to happen no matter what. It's just a matter of which way it's going to go down.*

FH: *I have a session with a client where I felt I had missed opportunity. But I recognized that it popped up again.*

JG: *Yes, if it needs to be addressed, it will come back around again.*



*MM: If there is a big fish in the ocean, it eventually surfaces. Of course, if there's really no big thing there, it won't surface. But if we miss it the first time, and it's under there, it comes back to the surface again. All you have to do is wait, and pay attention. Again - that's the hard part.*

*AC: I was waiting to be assigned a role. That's what it felt like to me. I didn't know how to insert myself with my client. It felt like I would be too much. I didn't know how to intervene without being harsh.*

*JG: I'm struck by your language 'insert myself'.*

*AC: I felt like I wasn't being brought in to my client's interior. There was a watching quality to it, like being in the audience. I was waiting in that tension. And you said something that brought her deeper. That's where I'd like to have gone in that moment.*

*MM: Here's a great illustration here right now. I don't know how to insert myself. Great! Stay with this feeling, anyway you can.*

*AC: Even if it is harsh?*

*MM: Yes, even you feel harsh, or you appear to be harsh in your own mind. The image of harshness is what will stop you every time. Something like saying, 'Get over it!' That's not actually all that harsh. No? Okay, I felt harsh saying that. But the interaction seemed to go okay. We're getting over it, we're withstanding each other. We're getting our harshness out of the way. Now you're not concerned about being harsh – what do you suppose will be happening next?*

*Now you get to do almost anything. Now you can be a bit playful, once you can be less careful. Lighten up. Play. 'Hmmm. I'm going to insert myself.' It might not yet occur to you how you want to insert yourself. Do you know the ways you want to insert yourself?*

*AC: There are things that I want to say. I didn't know for sure.*

*MM: Okay. So before you say anything, practice repositioning yourself. Fantasize about how you're going to position yourself for what you're going to say. Put a step in between. Don't worry about what you going to say. Get worried about where inside you are going to say it from. Get interested in that. He's saying I want to insert myself. If I were you, I'd follow up on that. For him that might work, but maybe not for others.*

*AC: You mean like positionally in the room?*

*MM: That's one way.*

*CS: Did you ever think of getting up and moving closer to your client?*

AC: *I thought you meant staying in the chair.*

JG: *So now two possibilities so far can live inside of you.*



### **Teaching Point #6 – How to Share the Practitioner’s Fantasy on Behalf of the Client**

MM: *A third possibility might be. ‘Hey, I’m giving you fair warning. I’m thinking about inserting myself with you in some way. I think I might go for it. Then ask your client, how are you doing with hearing my thoughts?’*

*Now we all can have fantasies about now Alex might be going in. Wouldn’t that be fun? On your behalf, for all of us, and on behalf of your client. You have to position yourself internally and bodily first. You have to internally posture yourself for the possibility of approach.*

*You do this the same way you would as if you’re going off the leap of faith pole. You want to be in the right posture for a good leap forward. Same thing here. ‘I’m going in.’ Just hold that thought in mind, and at some point, decide you’re going to take action. And now it’s about timing; you’re just waiting for the chance to go in. Think about sitting at the edge of your seat, maybe leaning in. Is this a struggle for any of you - inserting yourself with your client?’*

KM: *How do you fantasize about going in towards your client, Alex?*

AC: *How? It would not have been with proximity. It would have been verbally. I would say something different. Like it feels like I’m watching someone eat the menu.*

MM: *Let’s wonder. Would this be useful?*

AC: *Now looking back I am thinking of different things to say. Like the moment she wanted to curl up, or there were other moments where she wanted to have a cathartic moment like positioning Barbara’s foot on you.*

MM: *What is your fantasy of what would you have done?*

AC: *It felt like an easy door or a small fish. Maybe say, ‘Let’s hold on for a second’. I don’t know how I would have said that. But that’s what I wanted. Like maybe ‘Let’s not do that. I really don’t want to do watch you do that.’*

MM: *It takes a while. I didn’t have the right words for a long time.*

DK: *You know Alex, as you’re speaking I keep going to this place where you struggled with the same thing with taking up people that are around you, and the meanness that you felt toward*

*your own self-hatred, and how that was hard for you to make use of those people standing right next to you as well.*

*AC: I don't feel bad about not stepping. I just feel unpracticed.*

*MM: The question is what is my authentic contribution to the client's process. You don't have to know it. But that question is your compass heading. You have to contribute something new. Otherwise, you're just a Greek chorus chiming in about something, that's not a contribution.*

*You're asking the right questions. I'm thinking this, but I don't think it's going to be helpful. Well, great - you have impulse control. That helps a lot. Rule #1 - Don't make things worse!*

*And don't take that easy door, don't always just answer your client's question. That's why that 'yes or no' question moment was important. You have to wonder to yourself, 'What has her asking that question right now?'.*



### **Teaching Point #7 – The Dilemma of 'Yes or No' Questions**

*When a client says to you, 'Is it okay that I'm doing what I am doing right now? I don't know if this is okay. Well the easy door to take is to respond with a 'yes' or 'no' answer. If your answer is 'yes' it is okay, that on one level is a perfectly appropriate response, but it will not deepen anything. Wondering what has her asking if it's okay can deepen things.*

*CS: Can you do that without saying anything? Can you let her know it's okay without words?*

*MM: Yes, because you are there, evenly attending to her. When someone asks you a 'yes or no' question, pay attention to the unexpected dilemma that it can put you in.*

*Did I tell you about the client who asked me to say the eulogy at his funeral? What a hell of a position to be put in. And what an interesting question! Besides saying to him, 'Why are you dying soon?' What do you do with a question that? Do you see how 'yes' is not the answer, and 'no' is not the answer? That's an interesting process to deepen into. You have to be able to work with moving beyond 'yes or no', and understand what the deeper thing is that question is pointing to.*

*CS: As an interviewer, you never ask a question with a 'yes or no' answer.*

*MM: We need to pay attention to when someone is asking a question that doesn't need answering. It shows that you're wondering, that you're in it with them, that you are curious about their interior world. Ask yourself the question in front of them. I'm thinking this question to myself about you. I am wondering what's really going on, I'm not sure.*

*SD: I was in a workshop with Michael. His speaking harshly to me made such a huge difference it made in my life. Something in me shifted after that. Until you take the risk, you don't know the value it might provide.*

*SM: It also depends on the energy that is behind it. If I feel the positive intent with sharp words, then it is different than if someone is having trouble with my process.*

*MM: We can really work this harshness thing. I'd say if you are too worried about being harsh, you're actually probably more guilty of being passive or being lazy. You're not doing the work of really showing up. If you're doing the work you're in the position of letting the other know you're right in there with them.*

*You'd have the look and feel of someone who wants to genuinely insert himself into somebody's process, so as to work on behalf of their vitality, on behalf of their wholeness. So that's an example of potentially harsh statement that I'm testing out here to see if it's actually harsh or not, or even if it is harsh, if it is useful. If you hearing it's a laziness in terms of your own internal process, where do you go with that?*

*AC: Usually it's like how do I work harder at it? That's not the answer.*

*MM: Yeah but what happens. What happens inside? How do you know if what I said is true?*

*AC: I felt like I was waiting. Waiting for something. Instead of actively engaging.*

*JW: It's feels like not just waiting but a removing of yourself.*

*MM: That's it - that's the key. If you're willing to be there, you can say anything. You can say, 'You know, I think you're an a\*\*\*\*\*.' 'What?! That's so unprofessional!' 'Yeah, I know, I can't believe I said it myself. Now I'm wondering why said it.' You can say anything, as long as you're willing to stay for the outcome.*

*KM: In my experience, you may say something that triggers a client that needs to be triggered. We have to just give them the opportunity to act or be different about it.*

*MM: Transference and countertransference issues will trigger some things you never thought would be triggered. You don't see it coming. You have to be capable of the unexpected. So think about ways you would position yourselves to not defend against unexpected reactions and encounters. They are often doorways to potent and new opportunities for living. You just stand on the edge of your seat and get ready to ride it.*

*Are you willing to stay with what you said? Are you willing to stay interested in the other and stay with the process?*

*JW: There's a waiting that's removing yourself and there's a waiting that's leaning in, engaging on the edge of your seat.*

*JG: The laziness is removing yourself from the active waiting and staying.*

*AC: I had a similar feeling with Denise's process this morning. I didn't know how to actively wait in that either or engage in active waiting in that either.*

*JB: Did you want to be in it?*

*AC: I had empathy and understanding but I didn't know how to engage with that either. I don't feel bad about it. I feel not practiced.*

*MM: I think that's exactly what it is. Sitting in it, just being there, is absorbing the other's experience. It's a learning process.*



### **Teaching Point #8 – Countertransference & Fear of Having Practitioner Judgments**

*FH: I had the dilemma that I didn't want to kill the momentum in my session. I have my countertransference feelings about the client's process. I probably would have said the wrong thing. I'm glad I didn't just say what I felt. But I regret that I didn't find the wording or step in further. I was concerned if I stepped in, I would kill the momentum. But maybe it would have been okay.*

*MM: These countertransference reactions are things that will keep getting in the way, that we have to eventually move beyond. We're going to tend to be overly concerned about our feeling judgmental. So what if we feel a judgment? For God's sake, like this is a new experience for us or something? The important thing to be able to make good use of them when they arise.*

Why do you suppose the fear of our own judgments is such a powerful force, that it can stop everything from moving inside us? Of course, it is inevitable that we're going to be feeling judgmental. We have to normalize this when doing depth work. It's a feeling, not a final fact. The feeling is a communication, it is trying to tell you something. Listen to it closer. What's the judgment trying to convey?

Learn to listen to the thing that is under the judgment, that drives it. Another one is the self-judgment we feel about feeling bored. All right, so we'll make ourselves more interesting, if not the client. Make yourself more interesting, have more interesting thoughts and fantasies about the dullness in the session. Someone is deadening the space, that's why I'm feeling dull. That's the impact of our client's inability to be in a felt exchange – we feel a countertransference reaction because we want connection and flow.

How does a client actively make a deadened space? What do you think is going on in them? That's the hard work. All the work being done is going on internally in the practitioner, and less and less on the client. So when you come out with your experience of the client, you bake their bread a little bit more.

*PC: I always want to be kind and that feels so important to me.*

*MM: It's very important to you to be kind. Yeah, me too. Do you know that you are a kind person? This is the trouble with countertransference. Do we know that we are in general kind and compassionate people? That's our job to know about ourselves.*

*So your fundamental posture is one of kindness. Now you're in a session, feeling unkind. That is data. There is chum in the water. That's what we work with, what we get curious about. If you don't know how to work with that, we go to self-questioning or doubting, which is immobilizing. That's why we're sitting so steadily and slowly, staying grounded, neutral. By knowing our grounded, base position at the start of a session, we can track where we get knocked off course, and lose our ground.*



### **Teaching Point #9 – Countertransference & Working with Hate**

SM's session was a really good illustration of naming the life-negating presence of hate. As a practitioner, if you're not feeling tension in you when your client is expressing hate, you're not paying attention.

We've got to stay in our embodied presence in order to withstand the intensity of affect in another. Otherwise, we won't really be listening to our client's expression of hate. Because there is something palpable in her hating. She is scared shitless of it. She's telling you that upfront. She's worried if she shows it you're going to shun her. How is that not like a loaded gun?

So we pay attention here. Recall to yourself how you know and can own your own ability to hate. Do you know how to hate? As a practitioner, you need know how you can hate, and what that feels like to live with in you, and that should get the string on the bow humming with tension. That's dynamic. If you can't bear that tension with your client, you'll have to make light of it, or make nice, or dismiss it, and tell her she's a lovely person. Not helpful.

*JW: It's interesting to bear the hatred but not become attached to it. So there is still room for what lies beneath it. Because what's essential here, is that there was no relationship happening at first with the hate. I notice for myself I can easily get hung up on holding the space for the tension of hatred, and now I'm missing out on what's there underneath it. It's a subtle awareness that I'm noticing in this moment.*

*SM: It's why the hatred was created in the first place; it was because of the lack of relationship.*

*MM: There would have been nothing wrong with engaging the hatred too. We could've seen where that would go. But that wasn't the fish for me. It wasn't what drew me in, it was the possibility of receiving, that was not on her radar.*

*JW: Eventually it would not go anywhere because of lack of grounding and connection.*

*SM: I would just recreate the same thing the next time.*

*MM: The trouble I'm seeing all of you struggling with, is when a non-relational field is apparent, and the client is not yet ready to connect. How do you not judge the client or yourself for this, or become dulled by their lack of openness, because there is not an exchange able to happen yet. How do you get organized and stay animated in yourself, when your client cannot yet tolerate your presence?*



### **Teaching Point #10 – Vulnerability vs Fragility**

I kind of stepped in with you KP. I would say the word you need to use more in your vocabulary is 'direct'. Maybe get that harsh idea more out of the way. If you can be more direct, you don't have to be so concerned with being harsh. So when you just go straight ahead, and you go directly to your client in a matter of fact way, gently and firmly, without an emotional charge, you can say almost anything to them, and they will consider what you've said.

It's really important not to confuse vulnerability with fragility, as Shanti was very vulnerable, but she is not fragile. Karina was in a place yesterday that was more fragile, than where she is today. You can sense the fragility and walk very gently, and not conflate it with being overly careful with someone who needs you to have a stronger presence.

So we don't go ramming or forcing ourselves on another, of course, but if you are very grounded, you can speak very directly and kindly to Karina in her place of fragility. You can also speak quite matter of factly and directly to Shanti where she is. You can be kind and be gentle and you can be direct. It's often so helpful when you're direct and straightforward. The boundaries are made clearer.

The practitioner's directness with Karina gave her a potential anchoring point. She wasn't quite orienting. She didn't know what to do with it. I was pointing out how she was moving away and withdrawing. She was talking to me and moving away from her practitioner. Yet he was really there, attuned and ready to be there on her behalf. Competently. Firmly. And others were, too.

Sometimes, when we speak something directly to a client, we have to give them the space to take it up and digest it. It's understandable that if they hear something new, that they wouldn't know what to do with it right away.

So hopefully this awareness will help you to linger longer within yourself, and at the edge of the contact boundary with your client, while staying calm and not having to worry at all. I don't know how to say this to you, but you really don't have to worry about your clients so much.

They've been living their whole life up until now. And they've done alright for themselves so far. They now just happen to be front of you, and in their process, and they are considering new ways of being with you. Take all that quiet space to really wonder about them, and to cook yourself, and think about possibilities, and wait it out until they are ready to risk connection.

*JG: Be thoughtful but not careful.*

*MM: Thoughtfully not knowing. I can't tell you how helpful it is been to me to have good consultation. My supervisor doesn't know most of the time. I ask him important questions about dilemmas during my consults. He often wonders and says at first "I don't know". That's how it gets started. It's refreshing. Relax and just stay in there. Stay with the cooking.*

*SM: It's more important for me that somebody is inserted, not how it happens. Because my original wound was that people were there but they weren't actively engaging with me. They didn't care enough. They fed me, sheltered me, they did what parents do. But, they weren't inserting themselves in my life.*

*MM: For example, something says to Alex, 'I want to insert myself'. That stuck with me. It seemed to stick with others, too. So I came back to it. She's resonating with it still, after all this time, right now. You got something out of the unconscious to unconscious transfer to work with, and each of you will pick up on something if you stay tuned.*

*DK: I want to say to Alex in my process, I felt you over there and I would've really welcomed your messy insertion.*

*AC: I was enjoying when all these women came around you and held you. And Kevin too. I like the imagery of that.*

*DK: I would've welcomed your messy insertion.*

*JG: What if you said "I want to insert myself and I don't know how?"*

*MM: In the same way, it's like my supervisor saying to me he didn't know what else to add. At first, it's disappointing. Then it feels like a contribution, by saying that's where he is. It doesn't support infantile demands. Somehow, I end up feeling more competent in my limitations. That's good. We don't know how. We can say that. That is not an indication of incompetence.*





## Teaching Point #11 – The Force of Unconscious Demands

*LL: I'm not sure why I feel so tired right now.*

*MM: Think about the sharing of last night, what's evocative of that content for you personally?*

*LL: There is something that drains me when I feel demanded to connect.*

*MM: Oh, you are feeling something strongly for sure that ends up draining you.*

*LL: I observe my dilemma of really wanting to be the nice person, breathing with the process and the other one really wants to do nothing and be there. I struggle inside. I really like to connect, but only when I want. I can give the best I have from there. But, not the other way around. I give it anyway, but I don't like it so much.*

*MM: I see this happening with a number of you. When you feel a dilemma when someone is saying they want connection, but it feels to you more like a demand, what do you do? What happens inside?*

If you comply with this wish or demand, you feel drained but the client seems happy. Or you set a limit, but feel uneasy because this is a disturbing force for the client to deal with.

Can you feel the potential for a no-win scenario, and what feels like an unrefined connection point still taking shape? There's not really a felt sense of exchange possible yet. You just feel a subtle kind of background demand, so you either go dark by feeling resistant to the client's wish, or you comply but don't feel any life in it.

There is always a lot of work to be doing within your own interior while you are in front of your client. If you're not working with your interior as a real instrument inside, you're passively letting things pass through and effect you. Then you are all getting bogged down. You probably hate it, Loli, when someone makes a demand of you, for example.

*LL: I hate it.*

*MM: But you didn't say it out loud to us, did you? You might hate it. But, you didn't say it for some reason. You'll be drained if you don't really feel how much you hate it. Let yourself feel the hate of it while you sit there.*

*LL: I prefer to leave and feel tired.*

*MM: Many of us do the very same thing. It seems easier to just dissociate. It's certainly more familiar, and perhaps nobody really seems to notice. It's humbling when we get to really see just how dissociative we actually are. Especially when it becomes such a habit, and we then can't really fully be there when we want to be there.*

This becomes a chronic posture with people in our daily lives. We're just a bit out of ourselves half the time to cope, and people don't even notice, and then we don't even notice. You get away with it for a lifetime of not really being there. If you know it's because you hate it, and you can just feel how much you hate it consciously and actively.

You need to be free to feel how much you can really hate, so that your client can be free to feel their hate when they are with you. To feel hate, you don't have to really do anything with it, but to acknowledge that it exists within you. That is a big step. Owning it; having it; not having to disavow it. Do you recognize how quickly you go dark or dulled or drained? As kids that's what we had to do. We sedated ourselves.

*JN: Well you get tired of feeling so much.*

*MM: And you don't want to be punished either for saying what you think. We'll do more of this work in the next training week. We'll get a chance to talk about all this more. We'll have everyone read the written document based on our group dialogue, and see what it re-awakens, and what it animates.*

**NOTE:**

*A word of thanks and appreciation for the effort put forth from PC for the transcription that made this document possible.*