



Heart Wood CPD Courses 2023

Heart Wood is a mental health charity based in Northumberland. We offer Person-Centred group therapy in a nature setting for people with complex and enduring poor mental health. We work with men aged 25+ and young adults aged 16-24.

In 2023 we are offering residential weekend CPD courses for newly qualified / post qualified person-centred / humanistic counsellors who are interested in beginning to work, or in developing their existing practice in nature, either with groups or on a 'one to one' basis.

See www.heartwoodcharity.org/the-heart-wood-approach for further information on the model the Heart Wood has been developing.

The courses will be held at the Burnlaw Centre, Northumberland, set within forty acres of organic pastures, native woodland and gardens in the stunning North Pennine hills.

FACILITATORS



Chip Ponsford (Heart Wood Founder and Lead Facilitator) is a person-centred counsellor and supervisor registered with the National Counselling Society, with particular interest in and experience of working therapeutically with men outdoors. He facilitated a group for men convicted of serious offences at Katherine Price Hughes House in 2012 and has worked with male torture survivors at The Refugee Therapy Centre, London, and with people with psychological distress and diagnoses in a number of settings including at Islington MIND, Highbury Counselling Centre and in private practice in London and Northumberland. Chip undertook a day of CPD in outdoor therapy with Rab Erskine in 2015, as well as training with The Wilderness Foundation, and in facilitating learning with the Forest School. Having relocated to Northumberland in 2015, Chip and Rab ran a pilot project in partnership with NDAS (Northumberland Domestic Abuse Services). The positive outcomes of this project led to the creation of Heart Wood. chipponsfordcounselling.co.uk

Rab Erskine (Heart Wood Mentor and Lead Facilitator) is a person-centred counsellor and a practitioner member of Cosca (Confederation of Scottish Counselling agencies). He has 32 years' experience of working therapeutically outdoors. Alongside providing a counselling service in primary care for twenty-four years (1995-2019), he ran a small company offering short term residential 'Wilderness Based' therapeutic experiences to individuals and groups referred from social work, education and NHS secondary care referrers (1995 to 2005), and from 2005 to 2016 he was commissioned to run a Pre-Therapy orientated, Wilderness Therapy project for the Scottish Borders NHS Adult Mental Health Psychiatric Rehabilitation Service. raberskine.co.uk



The Heart Wood Model

The Heart Wood model is the way that we, as Client-Centred Therapists, offer therapeutic engagement to groups in natural settings. It focuses on the benefits of using a “Contact-Orientated’ approach to working with individuals and groups, who for a number of different reasons may find engagement difficult.

The main strength of this model is the adaptation of the pre-therapy system originally formulated by Garry Prouty, presently continuing to be developed by the Pre-Therapy International Network, alongside the experience of applying this theory to working in a nature setting for both individuals and groups.

Rab uses this very sensitive approach in his private practice and in the Heart Wood groups. In his private practice, he offers one-hour or two-hour sessions either weekly, fortnightly or monthly.

Chip has been involved in developing this approach in his own working private practice in the Heart Wood groups.

Walking, while talking, alongside exploring feelings in natural (normally woodland) settings is a way of engaging therapeutically that seems to be beneficial to all clients. Especially, if there are deep seated feelings or issues around trauma and overwhelm that the client is keen to work with.

Being included as a member of one of the Heart Wood therapy groups, has over the last four years, proven itself to be able to physically and emotionally support individuals who are often feeling fragile about engaging. Alongside this, the activity-focused sessions seem to be foundational in forming connections with self, other and environment

[The Person-Centred Association](#) | [The Pre-Therapy International Network](#)

PROGRAMME OUTLINE

Our aim is to offer training courses in Spring, Summer and Autumn each year (see 2023 Summer and Autumn course dates below). These weekends can be taken as stand-alone CPD experiences or multiple weekends can be attended as a larger more culminative CPD experience.

By the end of the weekend(s), the expectation is that the course members should:

- have a better awareness of their own competences and areas of learning needs in terms of group and individual counselling in natural settings from a client-centred/Contact orientated perspective
- be more aware of, and able to attend to, the therapeutic tasks associated with working in a natural setting
- be more aware of and able to attend to the multiple practical tasks associated with offering therapeutic sessions and working in a natural settings for individuals and groups
- have a better level of awareness of their own strengths and areas of practice that need more growth
- have had an experience of, achieved a level of understanding of and explored the underpinning knowledge base and theory associated with using a pre-therapy, contact-orientated, nature-based way of working



COURSE CONTENTS

The course will include introductions to:

- Person- Centred philosophy, theory and practice
- An introduction and opportunity to practice working in a 'Contact-Orientated' way
- Experiences of being in nature and finding/exploring your own level of contact with nature
- Exploring the more natural pace offered in nature
- Exploring being listened to and talking while outdoors
- Noticing nature and allowing it in (solo time)
- Difference between outdoors and indoors in terms of contract and context in counselling
- Attending to the different boundaries and areas related to confidentiality and the ethics when working in a natural environment
- Activities and their ability to help or intrude
- Conservation issues and tasks including the use of hand tools
- Working with contact reflections
- Risk assessments
- Supervision
- Some of the issues raised by adopting a 'trauma informed' practice
- Fragile process (or how to light a fire by friction)
- Looking at the next steps in terms of professional competences
- Site safety and first aid issues
- Charcoal charcloth making
- Play and the use of humour
- How to make group soup
- An exploration of the evaluation and evaluation tools Heart Wood presently uses

For those taking part in more than one weekend we will invite you to explore ways of continuing the learning experience in-between the weekends.

2023 COURSE DATES & TIMES

Summer Equinox Residential: Friday 16 – Sunday 18 June 2023
Autumnal Equinox Residential: Friday 15 – Sunday 17 September 2023

Session Times

Friday 7pm – 9pm (arrivals from 4pm)
Saturday 8.30am - 5pm
Sunday 8.30am – 1pm

Each course requires a minimum of five participants in order to run.



LOCATION AND TRANSPORT

Burnlaw Centre CIC, Whitfield, Northumberland, NE47 8HF www.burnlaw.org

Burnlaw is about a 30 minute drive from Hexham, which has rail connections to Newcastle (LNER East Coast mainline) and Carlisle (Avanti West Coast mainline).

If you are travelling by rail, we will discuss options for getting from Hexham station to Burnlaw.

ACCESS

Burnlaw is a rural site and is not fully accessible. However, temporary ramps and access routes are in place to enable wheelchair access to and around the buildings. There is an accessible toilet and shower. The majority of the course will take place in the main field which has uneven terrain. Please contact us if you would like to discuss this further.

ACCOMMODATION

Camping – there is a large camping field on site. You will be expected to bring all your camping equipment, however if you would like to camp but don't own a tent we may be able to provide this.

Bunk rooms – there are two rooms with two bunkbeds, and one room with four bunk beds in the main centre building. Depending on the number of people requesting bunk accommodation you may be required to share a room. There is an additional charge of £40 for booking into a bunk room.

FOOD

Vegetarian food will be provided throughout the residential. Participants will prepare the food communally.

COST

Course fees are detailed below. If you are booking for both weekends there is a 10% discount. Early bird bookings receive a 15% discount. Fees include food and camping accommodation. If you would prefer to stay in the bunkhouse there is an additional £40 charge.

Course Date	Early bird fee (15% discount)	Full Fee
16 -18 June 2023	£382.50 (book by Fri 14 April 2023)	£450.00
15 - 17 Sept 2023	£382.50 (book by Fri 14 July 2023)	£450.00
Two weekends	£688.50 (book by Fri 14 April 2023)	£810.00

BOOKINGS AND CONTACT

To book, please complete the online [booking form](#).

For more information or to request a PDF version of the form, please contact:
Emma Ponsford, Project Manager admin@heartwoodcharity.org or tel 07813 814644