



*"A lot of people care, but they don't understand. When I come here, they understand."
(Men's Group Participant)*

Heart Wood Trial Training Course 2021

Heart Wood is a mental health charity based in Northumberland. We offer person-centred group therapy in a natural environment. We have a current focus on working with men including those with complex and enduring psychological distress.

In order to increase Heart Wood's capacity to offer more therapy groups, we need more therapists to join the team.

PROGRAMME OUTLINE

This initial trial CPD training is free of charge for qualified humanistic or person-centred counsellors based in the North East who are interested in potentially working with Heart Wood. The course is being offered free of charge because we want to establish a collaborative group who can offer feedback as Heart Wood develops its own training programme.

The programme is being developed and facilitated by Rab Erskine (Heart Wood co-facilitator and ecotherapy consultant) who has 35 years' experience of working therapeutically outdoors. The course combines person-centred group therapy, Pre-Therapy principles and working in a natural environment. This is not a full ecotherapy training.

Heart Wood's founder co-facilitator and lead therapist, Chip Ponsford will be attending the course as a participant. He has been working as a therapist in nature for ten years and is developing the Heart Wood model. In addition, Heart Wood trustees Sue James, Nancy Rios and Judi Perry - all qualified in person-centred or humanistic psychotherapy - will be part of this group, in order to gain an experiential understanding of the developing model at the core of Heart Wood charity.

The main focus of the model to be explored is Client-Centred Therapy and the adaptation of the Pre-Therapy system originally formulated by Garry Prouty (presently continuing to be developed by the International Pre-Therapy Network), alongside Rab's experience of applying this therapy to working in a nature setting with both individuals and groups.

By the end of the three-weekends, the expectation is that the course members should:

- be more informed about their own competences in terms of co-facilitating a men's group based in a natural setting for Heart Wood
- be more aware of and able to attend to the therapeutic tasks associated with the role of co-facilitator for Heart Wood
- be more aware of and able to attend to the multiple practical tasks associated with running a group for Heart Wood
- 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 underpinned, contact-orientated, nature based way of working

COURSE CONTENTS

The course will include 'bite sized' explorations from the following:

- Person- Centred Philosophy and practice
- An introduction and opportunity to practice working in a 'Contact-Orientated' way
- An introduction to group dynamics and group therapy experience
- Community meetings
- Experiences of being in nature and finding/exploring your own level of contact
- 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
- Exploring the use of metaphors
- First aid and outdoor leadership
- Risk assessments
- Supervision
- Examples of Client-Centred therapy, Relational Depth and Pre-Therapy (evening video sessions)
- Some of the issues raised by adopting a 'trauma informed' practice
- Open ended or relationship led contracts
- Fragile process (or how to light a fire by friction)
- Working with contact reflections and active listening as a model
- Looking at the next steps in terms of professional competences
- Simple safety including phone signal and how to get help
- Charcoal making
- Play and the use of humour
- How to make group soup
- An exploration of the evaluation tools Heart Wood presently uses
- Working with men

Between each residential weekend there will be weekly, home based nature exercise exploring sensory work adding a further five hours to the programme and supporting an ongoing level of connection between the weekends.

PARTICIPANT REQUIREMENTS

Participants should be trained to diploma level in person-centred or other humanistic therapy and a level of post qualifying experience that includes evidence of working with adults with enduring mental health difficulties, alongside a history of spending time in nature and a minimum experience of working with groups in a therapeutic setting.

DATES

Fri 3 – Sun 5 September

Fri 24 – Sun 26 September

Fri 15 – Sun 17 October

Each weekend comprises structured sessions as follows:

Friday: 6-9pm

Saturday: 9am -1pm / 2pm – 6pm

Sunday: 9am -1pm

ACCOMMODATION

Participants are invited to camp or sleep in the Minsteracres Youth Centre which has two dormitories. Everyone will have access to the Youth Centre facilities, which include a kitchen, living/dining area with wood burning stove and shared bathrooms with shower facilities.

During the residencies, participants will also have access to the beautiful Minsteracres grounds which includes extensive woodland, ponds and gardens.

More info about the Youth Centre can be found here:

<https://www.minsteracres.org/rooms-for-hire/self-catering/>

FOOD

Vegetarian food will be provided. Meals will be prepared as a communal activity by the group using the fire site and the kitchen facilities at the Youth Centre.

LOCATION AND TRANSPORT

The course will be based at our woodland site at Minsteracres Retreat Centre, Consett, DH8 9RT. Some of the course will be delivered at our other site at Thorneyford Kirkley, Ponteland NE20 0AJ. Transport will be provided to take participants from site to site.

Travelling by train: The nearest stations are either Riding Mill or Stocksfield, which can be reached from either Newcastle (East Coast) or Carlisle (West Coast) stations. It is a 10 min taxi ride to the site, or we may be able to collect you depending on arrival times.

Travelling by car: Minsteracres is situated off the A68. There is ample parking near the woodland site, or at the youth centre.

CONTACT

For more information, or to express interest in attending this course, please contact:

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