

Discovering Self and Other: Neuroscience and Interpersonal Processes

by Daniel J Sonkin, Ph.D.

Sponsored by American Comprehensive Counseling Services

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Space is limited - please register by calling ACCS at (775) 356-0371

Workshop Overview

Over the past 22 years, imaging technology has improved to such an extent that we are literally able to peak into the brain as it functions in real time. Not only do we now have a better structural understanding the brain, but also we now have a much better understanding of how the various structures function in relation to psychological processes. One of the areas that has enjoyed the greatest growth is the affective neurosciences; the study of emotion. Due to these new insights, emotion has shifted from a back seat or less-important position in neuroscience literature to being in parity with cognition. In fact, research suggests that cognition and emotion are so inextricably entwined that it would be very rare that we would have emotion without a thought or visa versa. This fact suggests that discovering the self is as much an emotional process as a analytic one.

This renaissance of affect has been valuable to clinicians of all orientations. Emotion has for a century been an integral part of psychotherapy. Most clinicians, even those cognitively inclined, will at one point or another help their clients heighten their awareness and identification of emotional processes, as well as finding more adaptive ways of regulating their emotions. Understanding how emotion is behaviorally manifests is critical to developing effective strategies for change in psychotherapy.

This workshop will review some of the recent findings in the affective neurosciences and explore their application to psychotherapy from any clinical orientation. Understanding the brain, and how it experiences the world and affects our experience of the self, can only help in our being more effective therapists. This workshop will also include the discussion of specific case examples and how neuroscience can be utilized on the intervention level.

Workshop Goals

1. To review the recent findings in the affective neurosciences.
2. To identify different categories of emotion and how they apply to the clinical setting
3. To explore the study of mirror neurons and their relevance to psychotherapy
4. To explore the relevance of Von Economo neurons and their relevance to knowing the Self
5. To discuss how to use neuroscience to advance the therapeutic relationship with clients
6. To discuss neuroscience-based interventions with clients

Workshop Outline

9:00-9:15: Workshop overview

9:15-10:00: Neuroscience in your hand

10:00-10:30: Research findings in the affective neuroscience: Linking theory to practice

10:30-10:45: Break

10:45-11:30: Emotion versus feeling: Why they are different and their clinical application

11:30-12:00: The relationship between emotion and cognition

12:00-1:00: Lunch

1:00-1:45: Mirroring in the consulting room: Mirror neurons and their clinical application

1:45-2:30: Von Economo neurons: The link to distinguishing self and other

2:30-2:40: Break

2:40-3:30: Brain asymmetry: Approach versus withdraw emotions

3:30-3:40: Break

3:40-4:30: Change in psychotherapy: A neurobiological perspective

4:30-5:00: Case examples

Instructor Bio

Daniel Jay Sonkin, Ph.D., is a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist in independent practice in Sausalito, California. For the past 30 years he has worked with individuals and couples facing a variety of problems such a childhood and adult trauma, interpersonal conflict and family violence. For the past 17 years has been incorporating attachment theory and neurobiology in his clinical practice. He is an internationally recognized expert in the field of family violence. He has also testified as an expert witness in death penalty, domestic violence and standard of care cases. He is the author of numerous books and articles on domestic violence, child abuse, and incorporating attachment theory and neurobiology into clinical practice. For more information about his work, visit his web site at www.danielsonkin.com.