



Shame, Longing, and Courage

A Conversation with Anne Hallward

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I could listen to Dr. Anne Hallward, psychiatrist and host/founder of Safe Space Radio, all day. Her warm, calming tone not only invites conversation, but also creates an environment in which others feel permission to be vulnerable. Although the purpose of my conversation with Anne was distinct from the ones she conducts on her show, I imagine this is how the guests on Safe Space Radio feel. Anne and I spent an overcast Valentine's Day discussing the intersection of shame, longing, and courage in preparation for her upcoming continuing education workshop with NASW-MA: "Shame, Longing, and Courage in Psychotherapy."

Anne is interested in re-imagining psychotherapy as a relationship to foster emotional courage. As a society that overtly values physical courage and displays of bodily strength, we often undervalue emotional courage and the willingness to grieve, feel deeply, and sit with our pain. According to Anne, courage is the antidote to shame. Her experiences as a therapist and radio show host have led her to the belief that shame is at the heart of most suffering. Shame tells us that we are weak and unlovable. It makes us feel that we have to hide a part of ourselves, for fear that if we shared it, we would be alone. Shame also perpetuates feelings of unmet longing, making it feel unsafe to express our desire for connection. As therapists know, humans are wired for connection.

From the moment a client makes that first phone call to start therapy, their courage is engaged. Many report new feelings of

hope before the first session has even happened. Both the therapist and the client need courage for therapy to be effective. The mutual vulnerability and authenticity in the room create a relationship where courage can grow. When the client is supported to dare to speak what until now they have felt too ashamed to share, healing can take place. It takes courage to face, bear, and address reality.

In addition to exploring what shame, longing, and courage are and how they intersect, participants will be invited to dive into their own experiences of courage and explore what this looks like in psychotherapy. According to Anne, sharing vulnerable stories is the most effective way to build connection. As she demonstrates on her show, inviting people to share their own stories allows us to engage in useful conversations that change hearts and minds, allowing both intellectual and emotional learning to take place at the same time. By sharing experiences of and experiments with courage, attendees will learn from one another.

An important aspect of exploring courage in psychotherapy is examining what it means to be a courageous therapist in the world. Anne is especially excited to share this exploration with social workers. As Anne points out, social workers "get it," and have long been doing the work to understand systems that impact clients and foster a connection between mental health and social justice.

For those interested in attending, "Shame, Longing, and Courage in Psychotherapy" will take place Friday, May 10, 2019, from 9:00 am – 4:30 pm at the Sheraton Framingham Hotel & Conference Center in Framingham, MA. This workshop is worth 6 CEUs. Register by visiting: www.naswma.org/events. 