

# Association of Alberta Sexual Assault Services

## Counselling Adult Survivors of Sexual Violence Course Outline

### COURSE DESCRIPTION

While this course does not provide in-depth training in a specific modality it will introduce and critically consider various modalities, theories, principles and ethics associated with working with survivors of sexual violence. This course offers an integrative, mindfulness-based approach to on-going assessment and interventions with adult survivors (all genders) of sexual assault and childhood sexual abuse. It draws on the most current theory including feminist, attachment, regulation, and interpersonal neurobiology; and evidence-based practices, including mindfulness, cognitive, emotion-centred, somatic, and other emergent approaches for trauma, addiction and mental health. The baseline premise is that the embodied present-moment personhood of the therapist is the primary evidence-based intervention in working with survivors. The course is also situated within an understanding of culturally relevant practice and how multiple identities, social locations and historical contexts inform interventions with survivors; and how counsellor reflection, self-knowledge and self-care form the basis for ethical counsellor praxis. While this course does not provide in-depth training in a specific modality it will introduce and critically consider various modalities, theories, principles and ethics associated with working with survivors of sexual violence. This course is designed for practitioners who are new to regularly working with survivors of sexual violence or who may be already working with survivors and would like to more deeply inform their practice. Participation is open to those in the helping fields (mental health professionals, social workers, etc.) whose scope of practice falls within the code of ethics and standards of practice of the professional body to which they belong.

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

At the completion of this intermediate level 12-week, on-line, integrative course, students will be able to:

1. Discuss evidence-based self-care practices, including building a community of support, to increase resilience and minimize practitioner burnout;
2. Articulate theoretical frameworks for understanding sexual violence and trauma, how they reflect values, worldviews, and interventions;
3. Describe the complexities of responding to the effects and impacts of sexual violence, that there is 'no average client' and to affirm practitioners' capacities to co-create and sustain a therapeutic relationship;
4. Recall the principles, tools, and skills to reduce distress and provide stability (including case work), and to conduct initial and on-going assessment strategies (e.g. feedback informed therapy);
5. Name the basic principles, tools, and skills of a variety of evidence-based approaches to the effects of sexual violence and trauma, including mindfulness, cognitive, emotional, somatic and anti-oppressive approaches;
6. Draw from a number of approaches to work collaboratively with adult survivors of sexual violence, addressing the relationship issues that may be specifically meaningful to them such as: self-advocacy in the legal system, interpersonal boundaries, healthy sexuality, political action;
7. Mindfully bring the therapeutic relationship to closure.

## **COURSE TEXTS**

### **REQUIRED**

Van der Kolk, B.A. (2014). *The body keeps the score: Brain, mind, and body in the healing of trauma*. NY: Viking.

### **HIGHLY RECOMMENDED**

Briere, J.N. & Scott, C. (2014). *Principles of trauma therapy: A guide to symptoms, evaluation and treatment*. 2nd ed. with DSM-5 update. Thousand Oaks CA: Sage.

Herman, J. (1997). *Trauma and recovery: The aftermath of violence from domestic abuse to political terror*. NY: Basic Books.

Lipsky, L.v.D., & Burk, C. (2009). *Trauma stewardship : An everyday guide to caring for self while caring for others* (1st ed.). San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers.

## **ASSIGNMENTS (Requirements to obtain a certificate of completion are underlined)**

### ***On-Line Student Journal***

Keeping a journal will help you get in touch with your personal responses to readings, behaviours, experimentation, cohort dialogue, work experiences, and interpersonal relationships. It will help you “think about the way you think and feel” encourage the integration of theory and practice, and serve as a record of your experiences and learning in the course.

You will be provided a place on the Course Site to keep a personal and confidential on-line journal. The journal is a place for recording personal reflections. This journal is shared with the instructor(s) in order that they can track your progress through the course. Because of the instability of technology, it is a good idea to write your journal entry off-line in a Word document then copy and paste your entry into the on-line journal.

The personal journal requires a minimum of 10 entries in order to receive a certificate of completion for the course. Your journal entry will explore how the course content readings and discussion relate to your practice and what questions may be arising for you.

### ***Case Study Example Discussion***

Each module will address a specific theme. Within each module, two FICTIONALIZED cases examples will be presented in each class (one in Kate’s group and one in Rachael’s). This structure will allow each participant to present at least one case example during the course. Each presentation will align with the module’s topic.

Information for case example discussion:

1. The week before the group discussion you will provide a brief verbal synopsis of the case example with 3 questions for consideration for the upcoming discussion.
2. You will prepare and post a written synopsis with the three questions on the discussion board.
3. The following week you will present the (fictionalized) case example and facilitate discussion with the instructor's support.

4. If you are not the facilitator for that module, you will keep the case example and questions in mind while completing the module's readings, coming to class prepared for an in-depth and reflective discussion (i.e. you do not need to respond on the discussion board).

Some examples of possible questions and question types:

Ethically-based choice points; how do I recognize the choice points; how do I help myself ... ; what am I not seeing; what else could I try; how can I use my connection; how do I repair the rupture; how is the lens that I am looking through helping or hindering us going forward; where do I start; how is this modality helpful or not compared to other modalities; what am I thinking; what does this client need, and how do I find out?

### ***Live Class Attendance***

The personal journal requires a minimum of 10 entries in order to receive a Certificate of Completion for the course. Your journal entry will explore how the course content readings and discussion relate to your practice and what questions may be arising for you. Certificates will be sent via email once these have been submitted.

Class participation is an important component to your learning experience, as well as your peers'. We depend on you to be there!

***ACCREDITATION FOR SOCIAL WORKERS: To receive a Certificate of Continuing Education credit for social workers, full attendance, completion of 12 journal entries, and completion of an evaluation is required. Certificates will be sent via email once these have been submitted.***

