



Spiritual Crisis Network UK Conference 2022



Spiritual Crises: Supporting Positive Transformations

Saturday, 2 April 2022
10:00-16:30 GMT

Location: Online
Free event/ donation

Register at:
<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/spiritual-crises-supporting-positive-transformations-tickets-255657627847>

A conference on spiritual crises as processes of transformation, with a focus on what can help to navigate these sometimes difficult times

We have invited researchers and writers, experiencers, therapists, and clinical psychologists to speak about these questions

There will be interactive discussions and action planning



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About this Event

Spiritual awakening can be turbulent periods of psychological and spiritual transformation leading to spiritual crisis/emergency. These experiences can become difficult to manage for individuals. The concept of spiritual crisis offers a framework through which psychological and mental health difficulties can be understood as deeply transformative, offering the possibility of breakthrough rather than breakdown.

In this one-day conference, we will explore what spiritual crises are and what can trigger them. We will talk about why these transformative experiences are sometimes very difficult. Most importantly, we will focus on the question of how we can support others and ourselves to safely move through these experiences.

We have invited researchers and writers, experiencers, therapists, and clinical psychologists to speak about these questions. There will also be time for interactive discussions and action planning.

The conference is organised by the Spiritual Crisis Network, which is a UK non-profit organisation that provides support and resources to help make meaning of and integrate such an experience, and support positive outcomes www.spiritualcrisisnetwork.uk

The conference is Free but we welcome donations.

There will be an online informal social gathering after the conference at 5pm BST, and all registrants will receive an invitation to take part in a free post-conference workshop led by Catherine Lucas, 6:30pm to 8:30pm on Tuesday 5th April.

Please note that the speakers will be recorded for later viewing but not the Q&A sessions or discussion panel.

We look forward to seeing you at the conference!



Timetable

10am Welcome and Introduction.

10.15 Talk by Steve Taylor on Transformation and Turmoil: When Spiritual Awakening is Sudden and Dramatic.

11am Q & A Session.

11.15 Panel discussion on Spiritual Transformative Experiences, with Alan Foulkes, Neil Robertson, Tricia Cussen and Lewis Mehl-Madrona, facilitated by Isabel Clarke.

12.00 Q and A session.

12.30 Lunch Break.

1:00pm Mike Rush A Service Evaluation of the UK Spiritual Crisis Network.

1:30pm Anna Polemikou Coping with Eco-Anxiety: Climate Change as a Spiritual Emergency.

2:00pm Alina Gaboran The Renewal Process of Spiritual Emergency as a Crisis of Individuation: Navigation through Art and Integration through Art Therapy.

2:30pm Tea & Coffee Break.

3:00pm Marie Brook Evidence-based practices for integrating spiritual emergencies.

3:30pm Discussions in breakout rooms: What actions could you and others take to improve support for people going through spiritual transformative experiences?

3:50pm Plenary Session & Summary.

4:30pm Finish.



Dr Steve Taylor: *Transformation and Turmoil: When Spiritual Awakening is Sudden and Dramatic.*

Steve is a senior lecturer in psychology at Leeds Beckett University, and the author of several best-selling books on psychology and spirituality. He is a past chair of the Transpersonal Psychology Section of the British Psychological Society. His new book is *Extraordinary Awakenings: When Trauma Leads to Transformation*, see www.stevenmtaylor.com Eckhart Tolle has described his work as “ an important contribution to the shift in consciousness which is happening on our planet at present.”

Isabel Clarke

Isabel is a Consultant Clinical Psychologist with the NHS and one of the original founders of the UK Spiritual Crisis Network. She is the author *Psychosis & Spirituality*, and *Madness, Mystery, and the Survival of God*; and her latest book, 2021, *Meeting Mental Breakdown Mindfully. How to help the Comprehend, Cope and Connect Way*. See <http://www.isabelclarke.org> Isabel will be facilitating the panel discussion in the morning session.

Lewis Mehl-Madrona

Lewis Mehl-Madrona, MD, graduated from Stanford University School of Medicine and trained in family medicine, psychiatry, and clinical psychology. He completed his residencies in family medicine and in psychiatry at the University of Vermont College of Medicine. He has been on the faculties of several medical schools, most recently as associate professor of family medicine at the University of New England. He continues to work with aboriginal communities to develop uniquely aboriginal styles of healing and health care for use in those communities. He is interested in the relation of healing through dialogue in community and psychosis. Lewis has been studying traditional healing and healers since his early days and has written about their work and the process of healing.

His primary focus has been upon Cherokee and Lakota traditions, though he has also explored other Plains Cultures and those of Northeastern North America. His goal is to bring the wisdom of indigenous peoples about healing back into mainstream medicine and to transform medicine and psychology through this wisdom coupled with more European derived narrative traditions. He has written scientific papers in these **areas and**



continues to do research. His current interests center around psychosis and its treatment within community and with non-pharmacological means, narrative approaches to chronic pain and its use in primary care, and further developing healing paradigms within a narrative/indigenous framework. "

Mike Rush: *A Service Evaluation of the UK Spiritual Crisis Network.*

Mike is currently undertaking PhD research into spiritual crisis/emergency at Canterbury Christ Church University, supported by the Professional Development Foundation and the Alef Trust. His first study sought to find out if contacting the SCN was helpful or not and, if so, why?

Mike is one of the Directors of the Spiritual Crisis Network, a co-facilitator of the SCN Sheffield Group, and a Spiritual Emergence Coach. He is also a Trustee of the Alister Hardy Trust which supports the work of the Religious experience Research Centre at the University of Wales Trinity Saint Davids.

Dr Anna Polemikou: *Coping with Eco-Anxiety: Climate Change as a Spiritual Emergency.*

Climate change and mental health concerns are both defining issues of the generation of today. A range of disturbing climate-related catastrophes have brought about an emerging psychological phenomenon termed 'eco-anxiety', which has been described as a "chronic fear of environmental doom". As with all individual or collective threats to safety and security, the emotional distress caused by the clear and present danger of global climate change is as much a spiritual crisis as it is an existential crisis. This presentation aims to provide meaningful insights in eco-anxiety and other eco-emotions which are evoked by the environmental crisis. It also aims to explore why these distressing emotional states constitute an ongoing spiritual emergency. Finally, it suggests ways to effectively hear, validate, motivate and support a new generation of eco-anxious youth through the apprehension generated by this uncomfortable and often difficult existential path.

Anna Polemikou is an adjunct lecturer of psychology in the School of Humanities at the University of the Aegean and a client-centered therapist, running a busy private practice in Athens, Greece. Her interdisciplinary research prioritizes neuropsychological and humanistic frameworks to deal with issues related to special education, spiritual



development, trauma, resilience and well-being. After publishing several academic articles and book chapters on the theme, Anna's first book on Childhood Spirituality ("Μεγαλώνοντας Πνευματικά Παιδιά"), which was published in Greek in 2016, raised much public discussion in Greece and is currently in its second edition. She has also co-authored a book on the Psychology of Stress ("Ψυχολογία του Στρες"), published in 2020. Born in New York and raised in the island of Rhodes, Anna spent ten years living in the UK before returning to Greece to settle in Athens. She holds a PhD from Bath University, an MSc from Nottingham University, and a BA from the University of Wales, Cardiff.

Alina Gaboran: *The Renewal Process of Spiritual Emergency as a Crisis of Individuation: Navigation through Art and Integration through Art Therapy.*

This presentation is focused on my process of navigating spiritual emergency experiences through my art-making practice, leading me to my art therapy training, and further explores my integration of spiritual emergency through individual art therapy. This talk presents my meaning-making through visual anchors during my journey through the unknown, where spiritual emergency was experienced as a psycho-spiritual opening to the material surfacing from my personal unconscious and the collective unconscious.

I will explore my renewal process, a type of spiritual emergency unfolding from "ego-death" to "psychological rebirth", revealing the self-healing mechanisms existent in the psyche. The renewal process signifies a major step in the direction of individuation, the psyche's innate process leading to a fuller expression of one's deeper potential.

Art therapy represented the safe container that offered me an experiential and transpersonal framework of the psyche and the world for navigating archetypal realms. My images became mirrors of my soul, leading the process of healing, and art therapy was an invaluable component of exploration of old memories, wounds and self protecting dynamics, which underpinned the experience of integration and emerging, growing through Psyche, by encouraging my experience of the numinous and inspiring me to trust my intuition and the synchronicities. I experienced my spiritual emergencies as gifts that offered me an opportunity to face, hold, integrate soul wounds and reorganize my psyche towards discovering inner resources and strengths. I discovered new ways to return to myself



and to the ordinary reality, on my own at the moment of happening, in a shorter time than previously experienced.

From the literature and personal experience, I will reflect on spiritual emergency as a natural stage of development with positive potential for healing, growth, and personality transformation, and I will share how these will influence my future practice working as an art therapist with clients experiencing spiritual emergencies.

Keywords: spiritual emergency, renewal process, art therapy, analytical psychology, individuation, case study.

Alina graduated with a BA in Psychology from Romania, for which she conducted research to assess the impact of therapeutic art on the emotional well-being and enhanced communication skills of deaf children living in residential care. Alina is currently studying MA Art Therapy at MTU, Cork, Ireland. She is a visual artist, with exhibitions in Romania, UK and Ireland, with some of her works published as illustrations for a book of mystical poetry "A Story Of One: Transcendence" (Golden Dragonfly Press, UK, 2021). Having experienced spiritual emergencies, she recovered using her art therapy practice. These experiences lead her to undertake training with ACISTE as a Spiritual Guidance Counsellor, in preparation to becoming a Spiritual Emergency Coach. She became a volunteer in the Spiritual Crisis Network UK in November 2021, supporting other experiencers through emails. Alina has co-authored a paper published in the Journal of Experiential Psychotherapy: "The Meanings Of Art Therapy For A Patient Diagnosed With Paranoid Schizophrenia"(2012, co-authors: Mihaela Dana Bucuță and Rebeca Toader). She currently works as an Early Childhood Practitioner.

Dr Marie Grace Brooke: *Evidence-based practices for integrating spiritual emergencies.*

Marie's study is based upon a survey of 441 respondents from all continents and all major religions, who stated that their spiritually transformative experience (STE) took months to years to integrate. Findings show strong statistical significance indicating that (1) people integrating different types of STEs answered the questions similarly, (2) people integrating STEs know intuitively what they need, and (3) psychiatry and psychiatric medications are usually not helpful, and often detrimental, to the integration process for STEs.



Marie Grace Brook, PhD, LCSW, CSD worked in diverse fields in between spiritually transformative experiences (STEs) that radically changed her life over several decades. She was a mountain alpine and climbing guide, then a wholistic healing artist and teacher, then a social worker, then a university professor, and eventually felt called to research how people integrate powerful spiritually transformative experiences. After completing a BA from Duke University, she earned certifications from Rocky Mtn. Healing Arts Institute, Rolfing Structural Integration Institute, and Upledger CranioSacral Institute, followed by a Masters of Social Work from Denver University and a PhD from Institute of Transpersonal Psychology. She has served on the boards of American Center for the Integration of Spiritually Transformative Experiences and Spiritual Emergence Anonymous, carries on a private practice and teaches Spiritual Direction, conducts research in related fields, and runs a modest retreat house with her husband in Santa Cruz, CA.

If you feel that you need information or support at any time during the conference, please email spiritualcrisis@gmail.com and one of our volunteers will get back to you as soon as possible.

