

Review of “*Becoming Safely Embodied*” presented by Deirdre Fay, LICSW

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Deirdre Fay, LICSW

Deirdre Fay, LICSW presented to over 100 clinicians on December 6, 2008 at Pine Manor College. Deirdre is the originator of a group method called *Becoming Safely Embodied*. Her method was created from her personal, professional, and spiritual experiences, coupled with an expertise in working with dissociative patients. Deirdre presented her method in a sensitive, funny, warm, and caring manner. She utilized both didactic and experiential methods in her teaching. She states that the intention of *Becoming Safely Embodied* skills is to remember what you already know and that you can trust and be guided by your own wisdom. I found this to be a sensitive and caring approach to working with clients with complicated issues, as well as an encouraging statement to clinicians who can feel quite challenged at times in their work with these clients.

The Principles of Becoming Safely Embodied are as follows:

- ❖ We live *here* – integrating body, mind, spirit
- ❖ There is no right way to do anything
- ❖ We'll create safety – together, and repair what needs to be repaired
- ❖ Choice - You don't have to do the exercise if you don't want to
- ❖ Trust yourself, listen to yourself
- ❖ Ask questions as much as you like, check in during breaks or email afterwards
- ❖ Confidentiality

Deirdre created a group approach because she realized that the antidote for the isolation that so many of our traumatized clients experience is, in fact, community. She credits the poet David Whyte with naming this

process “Belongingness.” Deirdre discussed ways to help clients find connection and ways to help them notice the disconnection in their lives. The group is a way to do both, and to help clients find a safe space to name their experiences with both. I found this to be an important concept in my work with traumatized clients: so much is in clients finding their voice within themselves and with others.

Deirdre is aware, as are we all, that disconnecting is a universal experience. Social Workers, no matter how skilled, available, experienced, and sensitive we are, are also susceptible to disconnection. She encouraged us to take time to relax and to listen to ourselves before we engage in each session or group, as well as in our personal lives. This type of grounding needn't take long, and it is important. During her presentation she discussed some ways to do this.

She also spoke of many aspects of her group, including discussions of trauma, attachment, parts work, cognitions, the therapist's role, triggering (including client A triggering client B during group), some essential skills, mindfulness, differentiating between facts and feelings and the impact of this on clients (as well as on ourselves). All this to say, Deirdre's work has something for everyone. About 10 years into doing this work, Deirdre started doing a blog, initially anonymously, which is now hooked to her website. She is currently trying to put together an online forum in response to many people who have written saying they have no group in their area and would like one. Deirdre's welcoming manner is clear and she is trying to form this forum as a response to the feelings of isolation and disconnection that many

survivors have. She is also looking at doing an ezine online for the same purpose. All of her work seems to be an effort to assist as many survivors as is humanly possible in their healing – and to do so in such a humane way.♦