

Transcript

Impact of Unethical Therapists on Clients

Vancouver Coop Radio CFRO 100.5FM Interview with Amy Avalon and Carolyn Clement

Host: Bernadine Fox

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0:00

[Music] you're listening to vancouver caulk radio cfro 100.5 fm we're coming to you

0:07

from the unseated traditional territory of the squamish musculum and slayway tooth nations

0:12

i'm your host bernadine fox and this is the show that dares to change how we think about mental health welcome to

0:20

rethreading madness [Music]

0:42

it's all you're listening to threading madness on vancouver co-op radio cfro 100.5 fm i'm

0:51

your host bernadine fox and today i'm talking with carolyn clement an award-winning family photographer mother

0:57

of two and a survivor of therapy child and sibling abuse and amy avalon who is

1:04

a retired private practice therapist and a passionate advocate for survivors of sexual and emotional abuse by their

1:11

therapist she helps raise awareness of widespread unethical conduct

1:16

and abuse in psychotherapy field i just want to take a moment to

1:21

let people know that we're going to talk about some difficult material it's about emotional

1:27

sexual and even physical abuse at the hands of one's therapist the content may

1:32

be triggering and we ask folks to do what they need to do to take care of themselves during this hour

1:39

just to sort of introduce this topic i want to go back as far as freud

1:45

because freud started out something that actually has carried on to today that

1:51

causes a lot of problems for people who are being exploited by their therapist and what he did was he claimed that

1:58

sexual abuse survivors were unable to discern between truth and fantasy and appointed therapists to do so on

2:05

their clients behalf and of course freud is long dead and buried but that particular idea has persisted

2:12

so when a client comes forward and complains or discloses an assault by their therapist be it sexual or

2:18

emotional or physical they experience an uphill battle getting police victim services and even sexual

2:25

assault centers to hold the professional accountable because in part the therapist has been given the power to

2:32

define their clients reality so most of us who start therapy are not

2:37

aware when we walk in what ethical boundaries are that our

2:42

therapists must adhere to we are also told to trust the therapist and to tell them our fears and secrets and if we

2:49

have difficulty doing that we're often told to jump out of our comfort zone and that our inability to trust is neurotic

2:56

and thus the therapist is there to help us and while that trust is an absolute necessity within the healing process it

3:03

is also the thing an unethical therapist will take advantage of and exploit

3:09

so the three of us amy carolyn and myself are going to chat about our collective experiences dealing with

3:15

unethical therapists who caused us harm and as amy said there is a widespread

3:22 unethical conduct happening in the psychotherapy field that harm often leaves their clients in
3:29 a worse place than when they started therapy and hopefully in doing this chat
3:34 with all you folks it's our hope that you will gain
3:39 valuable information about what is and isn't okay in therapy and what to do if it is happening to you or someone you
3:45 know and where to go to get support language makes this issue very difficult
3:50 to find information around exploitation by therapists and many people who reach out to tell
3:56 an organization both amy and i are involved in and and volunteer um to
4:02 support other survivors globally um they describe an agonizing process of
4:07 trying to find help for what they are going through so our inadequate language makes it difficult to find help so i'm
4:13 gonna give you resources at the end of this program so when you have a moment go and get your paper and pens so
4:21 welcome amy and caroline thank you hello thank you i just want to make sure caroline i'm saying your name right it's
4:27 not it's lynn or it's caroline it's carolyn carolyn thank you thank you for
4:33 letting us know that so both of you have experienced um exploitation abuse at the hands of your
4:39 therapist um no but for carolyn it is your therapist for myself it was my therapist
4:46 but for amy i believe it was your colleague am i correct yes that's correct it was um a colleague
4:52 that i knew and just really adored and respected for over 15 years i had
4:58 actually even you know been through training with them someone that i thought i knew very very well
5:05 um through the years as we worked together there was a lot of gas lighting going on
5:10 that i couldn't quite put my finger on because i didn't have enough understanding of really what what was
5:16 going on and it was so subtle and uh like like much of therapy abuse it
5:21 happens very subtly like water on a rock so you don't really know um and then i i later discovered that he
5:30 was sexually abusing a patient and so i had to intervene and take the
5:35 steps to try to stop that uh and turn my life upside down
5:41 so how did you find out he was sexually assaulting a client he actually told me
5:47 he told us he actually told me yes um i think that's another part of this is
5:54 i would later find out that this is not this was not his first offense and as the years go by a lot of these
6:01 abusers most of them the vast majority are serial abusers while while the vast
6:07 majority of victims believe that they are the only one that this is happening to that's usually not the case but um
6:14 but there were other victims but he had grown in his arrogance because no one had ever come forward
6:21 no one had ever called it abuse no one had ever held him accountable and so he told me thinking that uh you
6:27 know i'd be maybe i'd even be happy for him that he found someone that he cared about
6:33 um he also you know said that he was helping this client that's that's also very common in
6:40 this in this issue and uh and he was absolutely shocked
6:45 when i immediately said i will be you know i will be taking action immediately and um
6:52 how long how sorry i'm going to interrupt how long do you think he was um abusing his clients over what kind of
6:57

time frame i i mean to answer that question
7:03
in the way that i'd like to is i i don't think that these people ever don't abuse
7:08
in some way in all of their relationship it's sort of like this is the way that they interact
7:15
and so there are different levels of severity and there are different kinds of relationships that he was abusive in
7:22
his relationship with me you know just as a colleague he was abusive in his sibling
7:28
relationships he was abusive in his previous career with his other um business partners
7:34
he was abusive to the person that the par the parking attendant you know subtly and not so subtly but i i really
7:41
think that this was pretty much just how he was oriented to the world and i think that that's true of the vast
7:47
majority of the abusers who are therapists and that's why they don't feel like they need to be held accountable because they
7:53
don't they don't really this is just how they work with people it's always a power differential and it's always a power
8:00
grab for them most of us seek harmony and mutual benefit in our relationships
8:05
the abuser is always seeking power over and taking and it's also interesting when you said
8:12
serial abuser because as you describe that of course i'm thinking child molesters serial rapists
8:19
batterers you know i mean it's not uncommon that people abuse who abuse do
8:24
so in a serial way carolyn what happened for you
8:29
uh well i i decided to go see a therapist um i
8:35
wanted to work on some my childhood issues that were coming up i was a
8:41
mother to a young child and i thought this was a great time for me to
8:47
address some of the the issues that i had had or patterns that were coming up and so i went to therapy and that's
8:54
where um everything started out
9:00
okay until at one point i started having these feelings
9:06
where it was just really nice to be in a space where someone was kind and
9:12
giving me a lot of attention and just very supportive and those that attention and that
9:20
that directed towards me um made me have these warm and fuzzy
9:25
feelings and so i i had gone online and checked what to do about it and everything
9:32
suggested that it could be helpful in therapy and so i even though i was embarrassed and it was
9:38
difficult to bring it up i did tell my therapist that i was having these feelings
9:44
of transference and i believe that from that moment on um
9:49
i was no longer he was pulling the strings at that point i was no longer um
9:55
able to make decisions on my own um [Music]
10:01
so he i was in therapy with him for only four months and i think i started
10:07
mentioning transference within the first two and then he slowly started introducing
10:14
it into every subsequent session so what happened is i had cried i cried in
10:20
a session with him and i became very uncomfortable i do not like showing emotion i don't like being looked at and
10:27
i remember he was just staring at me so intensely and i
10:32
i remember saying well don't just stare at me because i was crying and it didn't felt very awkward

10:38
and and then because i was embarrassed i said something along the lines of
10:44
it's probably um you know it's like a mating thing all right i feel
10:49
uncomfortable like under your gaze while i'm crying like i don't i don't like that and
10:54
so the next time that i had a session with him he said why don't we talk about that let's bring it up and so i
11:00
really was trying to dismiss it and say it's okay i just think it's a really warm and fuzzy place to be here i enjoy
11:05
coming and that's when he started um
11:11
i thought it was subtle at the time now i don't think it was very subtle but he would start disclosing more about
11:17
himself um and telling me that i was objectively attractive um talented creative smart bright so he
11:26
was he was absolutely showing me that he was interested in me and i remember telling
11:32
him um well actually i don't want to get off topic but
11:38
he would ask me at the end of a session um if there was anything that i would do
11:43
with him what i would want to experience with him he told me that he would bring me to pittsburgh which is
11:49
where he was from and the things that he would do with me he would bring me to a museum the andy
11:55
warhol museum because i'm an artist and that he would bring me to a hotel
12:00
and this was all in session and then he asked me what i would want to do with him
12:05
and i remember fumbling through what i would do in my hometown because i have no idea and
12:12
so as the sessions were going on he would move from the therapist chair over to
12:19
his desk chair so it's almost as though he was creating a boundary or making it seem like ah now
12:25
the therapy is over why don't why don't we just talk friend to friend or um and that's when he would extend the
12:32
sessions as well so by the by the last month i remember and it was only once a month
12:39
so it happened really quickly um we were definitely eating into the next session's time
12:45
and eventually he um told me that i was done therapy and this
12:52
was very sudden and abrupt and i did not see it coming because i definitely felt
12:58
like i had more therapy to do still so much more to unpack about
13:03
everything i'd been through and i got really upset with him because i felt like he was
13:09
abandoning me in the same way that i had been abandoned as a child and
13:15
it hurt me so much because again i thought we were having a good rapport in therapy
13:20
and i just felt like what have i done that he suddenly no longer wants to see me even for 50 minutes a week
13:27
so i got really upset and i remember i sent an email and i said um
13:32
that um that he was fired that i couldn't believe that he would do this to me and
13:39
um and he was so tone deaf because it's exactly what i had experienced and he ended up telling me uh to answer
13:47
his call a few days later and when i answered the call
13:54
the first thing that he said to me was i am in love with you and i gasped and i had
14:01
no idea that that's that that's what he was gonna say um and i also feel like at that point
14:08
i i was married i was married i had a child and now i had this
14:15

incredible secret this tremendous pressure on me or burden
14:20
that i either would have to say something to my husband or say something about the
14:26
therapist and get him in trouble and at the same time i also feel like i really am falling in love with this
14:32
person like i i thought if he's a therapist and he's counseled so many relationships
14:39
if he says that this is unlike anything else that he's ever had he must mean it
14:44
and therefore i am willing to take the chance of ending my marriage and and exploring
14:51
that and so everything just went everything just fell apart from that moment and
14:57
so can i just stop you there carolyn are you saying this all happened within a four-month period
15:02
correct wow yeah you also said you met you saw him once a month
15:07
is that what you meant to say or because that would mean four sessions no i'm sorry it was four times in a month four
15:13
times so once a week once a week okay all right so so what i'm getting from that is that he
15:20
brought you along to a certain point and then abandoned you you reacted to the abandonment and then he he sort of came
15:26
back uh you know in a one fell swoop with i'm in love with you and
15:31
and so even you know feeling you know the way to fix not feeling abandoned is by
15:36
engaging with him in this other way um just to keep yourself okay
15:42
oh yes yeah and okay yeah yeah oh and i felt i felt so wanted i felt so
15:48
like he would the fact that he would risk everything he obviously must have
15:54
meant it it had to have been something that was real and not deliberate and now i realize it was
16:00
deliberate so yes we have to take a break i can't believe i have to say that and
16:05
um and and just sort of you know end this part of the conversation right here
16:10
but we just need to take a little break folks so don't go away we'll come right back
16:19
[Music]
16:34
they're [Music]
16:55
hi this is tom laven of the legendary powder blues we'll be appearing live on sunday may 15th at the rio theatre
17:02
broadway and commercial in a benefit concert supporting our great vancouver co-op radio station cfro 100.5 fm for
17:10
tickets go to real theater tickets.ca or powderblues.net
17:15
all proceeds to vancouver co-op radio the legendary powder blues and special
17:20
guests harris and debray be there or be square [Music] [Applause]
17:30
you're listening to rethreading madness on vancouver called radio cfro 100.5 fm
17:35
i'm your host bernadine fox and today we're talking with carolyn clement and amy avalon about the impact of
17:41
exploitation by therapists on their client um so carolyn you were talking about how
17:48
you know you had the warm and fuzzies and and um he was saying all these wonderful things and certainly in my
17:54
case um people know that this has been a part of my experience
18:00
that kind of love bombing happened all the time i was brilliant i was so
18:06
amazing i worked so hard in therapy i was so insightful and in touch and blah
18:12
blah blah and it but for me you're talking four months with me it was eight years before

18:21
um the subtle sexual contact actually ended up with
18:26
sexual intercourse and so up until that point i just thought uh you know so so what that kind of
18:33
happened sexual tension is a part of relationships you know i'll just ignore it doesn't really mean anything
18:38
and i think also because my therapist was female i didn't read the cues in the same way i
18:46
would have had she been male so when she paid for me to go to a conference
18:52
with her in orange county california we traveled from vancouver to there and
18:58
she booked all the travel arrangements and when we got there she had booked one room with one bed in it now she'd have
19:07
been a man i would have gone oh i know what this is you know i can read all of this and and i would have addressed it
19:12
but because she was female i just assumed that you know she was
19:18
you know this is what this is what women do you know they just uh hang out together like this and i shouldn't be
19:25
so um paranoid and uptight about it so i just slept on the couch but
19:30
i also want to go back to that only person thing because certainly i got that message as well that you're the
19:36
only person that i would do this with i've never done this before i've you know that you it's just that you're so
19:42
special and you're so brilliant and you're so blah blah that uh that i'm you
19:47
know willing to uh uh put my own career on the line because
19:53
you're so special and of course that also goes back to child molesters and you know the whole thing they do about
20:00
telling their victims that they are special and they don't do this with anybody else and blah blah blah it's so
20:05
interesting to me the parallels between um the different kinds of people out there who are exploiting people and how
20:11
similar their patterns of grooming are um so amy
20:17
sorry somebody was going to speak oh wait i was just agreeing with you oh
20:24
similarity in the patterns yeah yeah yeah so amy when you finally went and um
20:32
you reported him what what happened you were colleagues
20:38
if i'm right you worked out of the same office we did and i i um
20:43
unfortunately in the ethics codes that govern my license in the in the state um
20:49
we're required to try to intervene this is a code i
20:54
wholly disagree with um we're required to try when there's an ethics breach with a colleague you're
21:00
try you try to intervene with them on a more informal level before it escalates
21:06
and that put me in a really vulnerable position because it shouldn't be my job to decide whether or not this person is
21:13
fit to practice and it shouldn't be my job to you know to try to stop them from doing which
21:19
something that is a felony in half the states you know it wasn't in the state where i was working was strictly prohibited
21:25
and um and so i you know i spoke to my
21:30
supervisors and two attorneys and they gave me a whole script of what to say um
21:36
and i would say that's where you see a lot of that similar grooming happening you know oh
21:42
my gosh i really care about you you're you know i want to make you you know i just want to reassure you you're
21:48
really brilliant you've been such a good friend to me i want to be there you know so he just really worked hard to try to get
21:56

me to believe that i wasn't seeing what i was seeing right
22:01
and um but then you know as as is often the case with abusers once they
22:08
realize that you're not gonna you know that i wasn't going to be silent about this i i remember him saying to me you
22:15
know once when i said i think you should report yourself i think you should go get some help and
22:20
you know report yourself and see what could happen from that and he just yelled at
22:25
me you know amy nobody ever has to find out about this i just said but i already know like i
22:33
can't not take any action on this i just was trying to i mean at that
22:38
point i you know that i still had the cognitive dissonance it's like finding out that your family member is a child
22:44
molester and i'm thinking you know there must be something i don't understand here
22:50
right are you really lonely what's going on you know it was too hard for me to
22:55
take that he was just you know he'd planned this out from the beginning and um and then when i
23:02
i tried to do as much as i could but he just became more and more threatening having lawyers
23:08
sending me you know letter after letter and then i finally you know i finally
23:13
had it um i even had to get the police involved and um and i eventually did
23:19
make my report to the state which i wish i had done right away right um because
23:24
that's i was afraid to make the report but um that's when my healing started
23:29
and that's when my relief started because then i had a board who was validating that what i saw was
23:36
completely wrong that what i was doing of reporting him was completely right and then it protected me from
23:42
retaliation in a way that i wasn't protected before i reported i'm not saying that this is true for everybody
23:48
who reports right um but but at least then it's like the secret's out
23:54
it's gonna be public record you know now he had to contend with a bigger
24:00
um enemy right right and a more important one than little of me can even ask you
24:06
why you were afraid to report him i was afraid that i wouldn't be believed
24:11
wow and you were a therapist reporting your therap another colleague yes and still you had that fear
24:20
yeah and um i was afraid that um it would turn it would backfire in me a lot
24:25
of my colleagues said you know just just get away from this just get as far away from it as you can because this could
24:31
really hurt you and that's true it did i had to move my offices twice um i had to
24:38
there's some unique situations that happened with my uh situation um that aren't important to
24:44
go into right now but it's just you know i lost pretty much everything my husband and i actually moved 500 miles away
24:52
eventually oh my gosh yeah so what i'm also hearing is that a lot of colleagues are
24:58
knowing this about their colleagues and not necessarily reporting them
25:04
absolutely not and you know it's one of the reasons that i left the field as i was i was shocked at how little support
25:10
i got and how much sympathy he got yes yes and i'm thinking you've got to be
25:16
kidding me i mean to me it's the equivalent of rape and um
25:22
i you know and i understand too none of
25:27
them none of us were trained in how to handle this and they were they were struggling with the cognitive dissonance

25:33
too of this person who did you know i mean he was not the type of person you would
25:38
ever imagine would have been doing this right and so i think they just couldn't tolerate it either like this guy that i
25:45
really like who i've been referring to for years you're telling me he's done this you know um and it was one of the worst cases
25:51
that the board had ever seen so so even you know just how sordid it was
25:57
how much he had abused his power how vulnerable the client was um it just was so much to bear so i was
26:04
afraid that like was i overreacting was i oh god too harsh you know there's so
26:09
much self-doubt after all those years of gaslighting yeah and then when your own colleagues are saying you know these i
26:16
had one colleague who said these things happen and i said no they don't
26:22
no they don't i mean they don't just happen it's a series of
26:27
calculated choices on the part of that therapist every time when it happened to me the person that
26:34
was my abusive therapist she was a female which makes it hard to
26:41
begin with but she was also somebody very well known in the city of
26:47
vancouver she was the first director she had been around for eons so she was the
26:52
first director of the first transition house for battered women in vancouver
26:57
she co-founded the first organization to support children who had been sexually
27:03
abused in vancouver she designed and facilitated the first
27:10
sexual abuse courses for therapists and police in vancouver through our justice institute which does
27:18
all the training here she was in car 86 when it started which
27:24
here in vancouver is the combination of a police officer and a mental health worker who go out on mental health calls
27:33
and she was known as an expert on sexual abuse with children
27:38
and started working with people who were severely traumatized and dissociative
27:44
um really early on here and so it was very well known she was um so when it was happening with me it
27:52
was it's kind of the same it was like i don't i don't think i believed it i mean she would she would literally say to me
27:59
and this was the entire conversation she said um well you know we have a dual relationship and i'd say yeah and she
28:05
said well and we know it's transference and you know we can talk about that transference encounter yeah and she said
28:11
okay so then we're all okay we're fine and um you know so in my mind she had covered
28:18
the bases and so we must be fine because she was a therapist and she was making these decisions and it wasn't until i
28:26
you know we we not only went into a committed relationship we bought a house together we bought a house together that
28:32
had three suites we lived in different suites and so we tried to create the illusion that we weren't living together
28:39
even though we were and by the time i separated from her we're still not getting it that this was
28:45
really a bad thing that had happened to me um [Music] you know
28:52
i still didn't really comprehend the importance of how many of her clients and ex-clients were
28:59
coming in and out of this property they were everywhere it was so normalized
29:04
what she had done was so normalized that she had clients coming in and painting for her and another client coming in and
29:11
rewiring parts of her suite and another client coming in and helping to put up a
29:17

fence and and you know another one came and walked her dog and another one it was just it's onslaught of clients
29:25
coming in and out it was so normalized and when i finally sat down and wrote down all the names of her friends every
29:31
one of them was either a client an ex-client or an ex-employee and the only alternative to that was a woman who
29:39
later i found out had been accused of quite legitimately accused of sleeping
29:46
with her son's teenage friends when she was 40. and pam was one of the people
29:53
that supported her during that whole event and so it just was really interesting to see
29:59
that that was her only way of having relationships was where she was in a position of power so
30:06
um if i can just jump in sure it's interesting my therapist um
30:12
he specializes in ethical boundaries in therapy relationships and he has authored books
30:19
and yes i actually reached out to tell uh because i had
30:24
i had wondered if anyone filed a lawsuit against him so i i was googling his name and then law and it came out
30:31
that he had just done a presentation at a law and ethics conference and he's presenting about the same stuff
30:38
that he has been doing like it was so dr jekyll mr hyde i again put
30:44
it together that this man who i thought i thought same thing i allowed it it did go on for
30:50
seven years it wasn't just the four months it ended up okay yeah it ended up going on for a very long time and that's
30:56
when i yeah yes yeah it's interesting isn't it that they
31:01
they will put themselves in that position the thing that i did was i left the
31:07
relationship believing that nobody would believe me i was the client she was this big person and
31:13
and she attacked the moment i started separating from her and moving on with my life she attacked me
31:20
and i still didn't get it that what was going on i just couldn't understand why she i she'd gone from seeing me as this
31:27
brilliant bright amazing incredible person to somebody that it was okay to treat in the way that she was now
31:34
treating me and um and the abuse was so significant i
31:39
eventually did talk to another one of her clients who she started targeting after me
31:45
um and creating that same kind of relationship and she said that when she
31:50
was trying to get away from pam she did it very differently because she saw what pam had done to me and she didn't want
31:56
that to happen to her it was so you know i it literally brought me to
32:03
the point of suicide every day of my life for over a year that i that i just sat with
32:09
the idea of suicide every day for a year because i had no way of understanding what had gone on or why
32:16
and why it was impacting me in such a big way
32:21
but anyway so um but i stayed quiet for um 15 years i think i think it was 15
32:29
years and um it wasn't until they the sexual assault center here in vancouver was
32:35
going to put on an event to honor her as a feminist icon that i i and i saw that
32:42
one of my friends somebody i knew was going to co-sponsor this event that i
32:47
had to call her and say you do not want to do this this is going to bite you
32:53
uh later and um and and i disclosed and it was kind of the first time that i had
32:59
disclosed this to anyone really i had tried before to report her to her

33:04
association mostly because i saw what she was doing with this other client and i knew that
33:10
other client was already suicidal and i i just knew it wasn't okay and um
33:17
they she ended up we have this little glitch here in
33:22
vancouver bc where unless you're with the college of physicians and surgeons or the college
33:28
of psychiatrists or psychologists sorry and you're just with an association a
33:33
professional association there literally is nothing they can do to hold somebody accountable and so once
33:41
i handed in all my evidence of this really inappropriate relationship she all she had to do was resign her
33:49
membership and the file was closed and the investigation was done
33:54
um and so there just didn't seem to be any way to hold her accountable up here at
33:59
all yeah a lot of them just go on for years and years getting away with this and i
34:05
mean it's just the way that you describe pam um and certainly you too carolyn
34:12
it they i i also have observed that a lot of these abusers really work hard to
34:18
cultivate that spotless image and it's like this over compensation so that
34:24
if they were ever to be questioned they have built up this whole
34:29
cushion yes and you know i do think that that is part of the pathology that it is a
34:35
deliberate act and therefore on their part so that people will not um question them when victims come
34:42
forward and also so that victims will not feel like they can yes to to really i think what you're
34:48
saying is to put themselves in a position that they are above suspicion right so that people will just assume
34:56
that that couldn't have happened but of course we're also dealing with the fact that a therapist has the power to define the
35:02
reality of their client and i see that happening over and over and over just on this radio program where
35:09
you know certain people think that um they even you know that people are talking
35:14
about that their therapist will define something for them that they absolutely know is not true but they have no right
35:21
to say differently because nobody's listening we just have to take another break but
35:27
we'll be right back folks
35:32
vancouver cooperative radio is an innovative non-profit community radio station with a mission to produce
35:38
creative and engaging programming for communities whose voices are underrepresented in the mainstream media
35:44
we need your financial support to help us achieve this mission by donating today you will help us to continue to
35:51
provide training and access to equipment for over 300 volunteers who produce 140
35:57
hours of original programming in over 10 languages our radio station is located
36:02
in the heart of the downtown east side and since 1975 we have celebrated the
36:08
rich cultural diversity of the greater vancouver area through our arts music and spoken word programming please
36:15
support alternative community-based radio donate today by visiting coopradio.org
36:21
forward slash donate or calling 604 604-684-8494 [Music]
36:28
at 604-684-8494 [Music]
36:40
fm i'm your host bernadine fox and we're continuing our conversation with carolyn clement and amy avalon about the impact
36:47

of exploitation by therapists on their clients so amy and carolyn let's talk a little bit about ethical boundaries
36:54
can we name a few of them well uh one of the things that carolyn
37:00
brought up and and you as well bernadine is just what i call the gateway to grooming and it's it's the
37:07
therapist self-disclosure and that's something that we learn from our first day of training the therapy is not about
37:12
us it's about the client so we don't disclose anything personal about ourselves and usually
37:18
when the therapist begins talking about himself or herself themselves that's when
37:24
you should really know that there's some red flags right right that was exactly what happened oh
37:31
sorry no no go ahead go ahead so in therapy um as he started
37:37
speaking more about himself and his experience he definitely made sure to let me know that he came from a
37:42
dysfunctional family and that his background um had also been tumultuous like mine and so i i felt a sense of um
37:51
that i could relate to that and that we were on kind of the same level and had a similar understanding because we grew up
37:57
in the same way so at that point i just wanted to protect him and you know take care of him
38:03
i was hoping to take care of me so you became emotionally responsible on some level
38:09
one of the things my therapist did was she um told me she wove it into a session somewhere and
38:16
there was lots of times where um where um the
38:22
the uh session would take a turn that didn't wasn't consistent with where the session
38:28
was going and so i kind of knew it was something she wanted to say and one of the things she said was that
38:34
when she was at um her university course learning to become a social worker and having to go through
38:40
her own counseling as a part of that this was on cold mountain here in bc
38:46
her counselor had to help her deal with her self-image around her own body told her to take off
38:52
all her clothes and lie on the floor and then he commented on her body but she made me promise before telling me the
38:58
story that i could never tell anyone because if i did he would get into a lot of trouble
39:04
and so she told me this really sort of personal story she made it seem okay that this boundary had been violated
39:11
that that it had been an appropriate thing and then led me into a secret and to see whether or not i would keep the
39:17
secret it was it was an incredible form of uh
39:22
grooming and testing but definitely an ethical boundary
39:27
um i was also brought into her personal life so it wasn't just personal stories about herself it was family events and
39:34
uh hanging out with her mother and going on errands doing things outside of
39:40
therapy a lot like going for coffee or dinner um things like that
39:46
also increase in contact um yes that's one thing i mean i think it's important for us to talk about these subtle ways
39:52
that start at the beginning um because an increase in contact could mean you know text and emails really
39:59
email and text should be reserved only for scheduling that's it there should be no clinical exchanges no personal
40:04
exchanges um but there's an increase in that more emails more text coming from the therapist at different hours in
40:10
between sessions and also the sessions extending beyond the allotted time
40:16
and then um and then more frequent contact you know more than once a week more than
40:21
twice a week or you know even more than that that is not clinically relevant obviously give it an acute situation and

40:28
you need to see your therapist a couple times a week but usually you know whenever i would do that with patients it was like we're going to do this just

40:35
for a certain amount of time getting through this and then we'll go back because you're always trying to as a

40:40
therapist we're always trying to get them to the end of therapy when they're well and leaving there yes that is the

40:47
goal of all therapy to leave therapy and not need the therapist and so you

40:52
know that increase of contact is also a red flag yeah and just to make it put it into

40:58
context that increase in contact is it's twofold one it creates a dependency on

41:04
the therapists and and an isolation because the more you're depending on the therapist the more you're not developing

41:11
relationships where you can depend on other people in your lives so that's one thing but the other part of that contact

41:17
is that the therapist can constantly check in and make sure that you're not getting it that maybe

41:23
something is going awry here that they shouldn't be doing but that increasing dependency on the

41:29
therapist like you said amy the goal of therapy is to leave the client

41:35
in their own lives and walk out of it as a therapist so if you're increasing dependency then what you're doing is

41:43
entrenching you in somebody's life in a serious way i would also say that

41:48
creating a situation where um

41:53
the therapist is involving themselves into making decisions about your relationships outside of therapy so

42:00
they should not be telling you who and who you shouldn't be having a relationship with um or impacting i mean

42:07
those things are your decision and so often i see people where they have

42:13
been seriously isolated so by the time the sexual contact goes from

42:19
and this is another sort of red flag as you know sexual contact we sometimes think as just um sexual intercourse but

42:26
sexual contact can be a hand up too high on the leg or hold giving somebody a hug way too long or

42:34
you know all the way up to sexual contact even i think you guys can correct me if you think i'm wrong but i

42:41
think you know making comments about somebody's body or what how they're looking or that has any

42:47
sexual context in it at all is also sexual contact it's just not physical

42:53
right and and hugging nothing hugging or touching just as even friendly hugging and touching really isn't a part of

42:59
therapy and yet my my therapist actually made a point to mention i'm not going to touch

43:06
you i'm keeping my hands to myself when we were in session as if see i'm i'm one of the good ones i'm not

43:12
um and actually another thing that he did with self-disclosure is he he spoke

43:17
about his children a lot he was married and this was the thing it's the back and forth um he just kept promising that in

43:24
the future it's just wait just wait a little longer i'm going to be there i'm going to do this and eventually i

43:31
realized this is just not going to happen and i'm just being being played and that's when it started

43:37
making sense and i wish i don't want to get ahead but

43:42
i wish i had known what um what abuse looked like from

43:47
because i realized that all the relationships that were problematic in my life actually fit the exact same

43:54
pattern and that's why i couldn't recognize it when he did it but as i was doing work with another therapist over

44:00
several years that's when i realized that was exactly the issue i'd had with my mother and with my brother and so

44:06
that's why it felt so familiar yeah it felt it can feel like um
44:12
[Music] you're you're that is just normal i mean if you come from a lifetime of abuse that will feel
44:19
normal what's going on but it will feel like somehow you're you are um
44:25
conquering that issue right that you've you've done well like i always thought well you know if my therapist wants to
44:32
be my friend or my colleague or you know my my in a committed relationship with me it means that i have done great work
44:39
in my healing and that was one of the hardest things for me to come to was recognizing that
44:45
my relationship with her did not mean that i had um done a great job in my healing
44:50
process it only meant that i had continued on being a victim and that was
44:56
really really demoralizing for me to recognize at that point
45:03
but i think a lot of people don't recognize how serious um the impact on clients
45:10
is that's all bad grammar in there um but um the the the impact i mean so often
45:16
people say that i am worse now than when i started therapy and and and that's because the damage done
45:23
by therapists is so incredibly profound they take people and they're vulnerable
45:29
they get them to trust them and then they they do this exploitation which
45:35
is done when the person's defenses are down they're vulnerable they are
45:40
trusting you to help them and instead they get hurt and that damage becomes
45:45
much more profound i always say that my therapist was my worst predator um
45:51
bernadine could i just say two things sure go ahead just about that so number one
45:57
there's a reason that those boundaries are there even from the subtle ones you know not fostering dependency keeping to
46:03
the time and no self-disclosure which seem you know like well what's the big deal about that it is a big deal because
46:10
the harm is significant when therapists do not obey those standards they're there for a reason to protect the client
46:17
and then the other thing is i just really want anyone who's listening to know and um
46:22
the victims of therapy abuse it has nothing it can happen to anybody it often does
46:28
and it's not their own issues or vulnerability that are the reason for this abuse and why it's so hard on them
46:36
everyone's vulnerable when they go into therapy just like everyone's vulnerable on an operating table when they're anesthetized right it is the
abuser that
46:44
is 100 to blame and 100 the cause of the harm because you could
46:49
have all the same issues severe trauma and you go to an ethical therapist and you will heal right and it's it's not
46:56
because of the the client at all i just i think it's so important to keep the focus on
47:01
you know that these people are harmful and they and they will cause these
47:07
symptoms in anybody who is treated this way it doesn't have you know you can be you don't have to have anything wrong in
47:13
your childhood you can have had you know pretty great upbringing but if you get in this tangle with their grooming and
47:19
their abuse you will come out with these symptoms right and i think also it's important to
47:24
say that um because this was one of the things that happened for me as i started to disclose is
47:30
people would say things like um that you know well you had an affair so what or
47:35
you're sounding like a scorned lover or and and it was really hard for me to

47:42
turn that language around yeah victim blaming but this isn't an affair and
47:48
that person is not the lover these are sexual assaults um and those people are
47:54
rapists and when it comes to sexual assault emotional impact or the emotional exploitation may be a
48:01
different thing but for me my abusive therapist
48:06
was a was a rapist in my opinion i agree
48:11
oh absolutely that's what i started realizing at the end was i never i never gave consent it was at the very
48:17
end i remember at one point i said no to him i absolutely very clearly said no and he didn't care
48:24
and um and that's when i realized all along he just took whatever he wanted and he
48:30
never was asking for consent and then i thought how can i consent to any of this relationship considering i didn't
48:36
enter it really with a clear state of mind so the
48:42
seven years was just a mess i think there are states and amy you can correct me if i'm wrong but i believe
48:47
there are states in the u.s where consent is not a defense
48:52
right that's correct and in fact i mean i think it's pretty much in all of the
48:57
states it um in terms of board and licensure um you know in terms of the
49:03
criminal criminal that's different state of state but no matter what license you have
49:09
um any sexual relationship is is prohibited and there isn't
49:14
um it doesn't matter if the client says you know i consented in my case the client tried to defend
49:20
my colleague to the board saying you know no i i initiated this i wanted this he was the best therapist i ever had
49:26
like it doesn't matter right um so right that's pretty much across the board in the u.s yeah and in canada it is in our
49:34
criminal code that a doctor um somebody in that position of authority cannot have sex with a client
49:40
um that that is considered abuse college of psychiatrists which is
49:47
the physicians and surgeons here they cover psychiatrists um say you can never
49:52
have sexual contact with a client a former client regardless of time i think
49:58
in the psychology college it's two years or something like that it
50:04
starts to become a gray area but it really does need to be never because the relationship between
50:10
therapists and clients when you factor in transference etc it really mirrors
50:15
that of parent and child so um so let's talk a little bit about
50:22
resources i'm kind of running out of time um carolyn um you have developed a resource for
50:29
survivors of exploitation by therapists can you tell folks about that right absolutely yes so once i reached out to
50:37
tell and started gathering information and realized that it was language that i had been missing out on
50:44
um i really thought how do i how can i help other how do i prevent it from happening
50:50
to other people and i have children so i have decided to create a website that i
50:55
would have wanted to have um when i was first trying to make sense of everything and
51:01
it's called it's www.unethicalboundaries.com
51:07
and um it's it's still an ongoing process but i want to be able to share
51:13

what my experience has been like and also connect with other um potential victims and then find ways
51:19
that we can heal and pass a message on to others so right thank you so that's
51:25
www.unethicalboundariesalloneword.com did i get that right okay great and amy
51:32
you and i both volunteer our time for chow maybe you can tell folks what tell is
51:37
so it's the therapy exploitation link line and intel has been around for decades it's an email support service as
51:44
well as a website at www.therapyabuse.org
51:50
where you can go you don't have to reach out to us you can get a lot of information just coming to our website
51:55
alone in fact i didn't reach out to tell for a year and a half but i went to the website frequently
52:01
just to get validation from all the the great articles and resources there um and then
52:07
of course you can uh certainly send us an email there's there are about 12 volunteers with us and we will
52:14
do our best to respond to your unique situation with the resources that we feel can help and the nice thing about
52:21
having so many people who do respond to emails that are coming in is that each one of us has a wealth of information
52:28
and we come at it from a different perspective or have had a different experience and can offer a great deal
52:35
from a wide range of people and of course people can reach me here at rethreading madness at coopradio.org
52:43
i have created my own checklist it was one of the things that i did on tel's website
52:52
that was a pivotal moment in my life i actually went on tell to
52:57
do the checklist to prove to myself that even though my relationship had toasted and was
53:03
a nightmare it had been special that what we had was unique and different and
53:09
one-of-a-kind and and and and i remember doing that checklist and box after box
53:15
after box after box i was like checking them off until i literally had
53:20
practically checked off everything on the checklist um and had to recognize
53:26
that you know what what had you know thrilled me about how my therapist was
53:32
with me that whole gaslighting not gaslighting but love bombing and everything was really
53:37
grooming and the grooming process for these folks is so similar so i actually
53:43
recreated the checklist and i have it and i can send it out to anybody it's free um just like all the resources on
53:49
tell are there's one article after another after another and a free ebook for people so so um
53:57
thank you both of you for um having this conversa i feel like we just touched on
54:03
it like the tip of the surface in this hour thank you so much
54:08
thank you so much oh you're welcome thank you for coming and having this conversation with me
54:15
so um just hang on folks we'll be right back um and thank you to carolyn clement
54:20
and amy amivan for having this conversation
54:26
you're listening to vancouver co-op radio 100.5 cfro we are a non-commercial
54:31
station bringing you voices and stories and perspectives you probably won't hear elsewhere
54:36
we are supported by members and by donations you can become a member by going to our website at
54:41
www.coopradio.org if you like what you hear but don't want to be a member that's cool too you can
54:47
still help by clicking on the donate arrow at the top right of the website co-op radio thank you for listening and

54:53
for helping build our community of listeners [Music]
55:12
i had no doubt in my mind
55:17
[Music]
55:22
do you feel unsafe in your home you are not alone
55:28
transition houses offer free support and shelter for women and children
55:33
we are here for you we are here for you we are here for you
55:38
make the call 1-800 victim link 1-800-563-0808
55:46
bcsch you're listening to rethreading madness
55:52
on vancouver co-op radio cfro 100.5 fm i'm your host bernardine fox and that's
55:58
our show for this week if you find yourself needing resources at this point don't hesitate to look any
56:05
of us up given the contact information that we are already provided i will also be
56:10
posting this information on our website under resources we will be happy to assist you in any way we can again my
56:17
thanks to carolyn clement and amy avalon for sharing their stories with me and you all but most importantly and as
56:25
always my thanks goes out to you for joining us today stay safe out there
56:31
[Music] if you have questions or feedback about this program or want to share your story
56:37
or have something to say to us we want to hear from you you can reach us by email
56:43
madness co-op radio dot org this is bernadine fox we'll be back next
56:48
week until then [Music]
57:10
sorry [Music]
57:25
everything's gonna be all right [Music]
57:36
why don't i wonder how you know well surely you don't have all of the
57:43
facts you could be just
57:48
making it up why don't i ever think of that
57:56
it's some kind of magic in the words that you breathe
58:02
saying baby take it from me it's all right
58:08
it's all [Music] right it'll be
58:13
all right [Music]
58:34
it's such a cliché just words people say to be nice
58:44
[Music]
59:12
when i'm wearing so tired
59:17
when i'm worn out and done
59:22
when i fall off the wire again with no more strength to get back on
59:34
[Music]
59:44
it's all right [Music]