

TRAUMA AND WHAT IT MEANS TO BE HUMAN

CONFERENCE PROGRAM
28-29 APRIL

Webster
UNIVERSITY



15 RUE DE COLLEX, 1293 BELLEVUE
GENEVA, SWITZERLAND



A BRIEF INTRODUCTION

Emotional trauma is an inherent part of human existence. The fact that we are all mortal means that the possibility of pain and suffering is ever present. And yet with this comes the potential for forming bonds of deep emotional connection within which our pain and suffering can be transformed. Our kinship in the same darkness is what offers us hope and healing.

The aim of this conference is to consider what may be the most important challenge of our times: how can we retain our humanity in the face of devastating and sometimes even dehumanising experiences, as well as how best to protect and promote the human dignity of the devastated Other.

There are no easy answers and, perhaps reflecting the charged nature of the subject matter, the field of trauma is not without its own controversies. Indeed, how we conceptualise trauma has an impact not only on individuals but on wider communities and can become politicised. This conference therefore seeks to open a dialogue for exploring the contested narratives about trauma, as well as to consider what those narratives reveal about a core issue of our lives: **what it means to be human.**



SATURDAY

MORNING

8:30-9:00

Registration

9:00-9:30

Introductions

9:30-10:30

Keynote Speaker - Pat Bracken
Why the Current Concept of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is Unhelpful

10:30-11:00

Coffee break

11:00-12:30

Panel Discussion
Pat Bracken, Joan Giller, Gina Ross, Ros Thomas

12:30-14:00

Lunch

SATURDAY

AFTERNOON

14:00-15:00

Keynote Speaker - Gina Ross

The Ross Model: Healing the Collective Nervous System

15:00-15:30

Coffee break

15:30-17:30

Workshops

Collective Trauma - Vive Zene (Augustina Rahmanović-Koning and Selma Bajramović) and Roy Tamashiro

Treating Anger, Resentment and Revenge from a Trauma Perspective - Herman Veerbeek

The Genesis of Health - Giselle Genillard

Trauma and Imagination - Tania Zittoun and Gail Womersly

The Visual Correspondence - Francesco Visconti

17:30-20:00

Drinks



SUNDAY

MORNING

9:00-10:00

Keynote Speakers - Vlad Glaveanu and
Cara Perrett
Trauma and What it Means to be Human

10:00-10:30

Coffee break

10:30-12:30

Workshops

**The Transformative Power of the 'Healing
Vortex'** - Gina Ross

**War, Displacement and Gender Based
Violence** - Common Threads Project (Rachel
Cohen, Cynthia Uccello, Catherine Butterly) and
GIST-T (Gail Womersly) and Joan Giller

Trauma in Dreams - Betty Sacco German and
Neil German

**Trauma Therapy in Threes: An Approach to
Trauma Therapy Adapted from EMDR** - Tim
Dunne

12:30-14:00

Lunch

SUNDAY

AFTERNOON

14:00-15:00

Keynote Speaker - Donna Orange
Accompanying Witness to Trauma

15:00-15:30

Coffee Break

15:30-17:00

Panel Discussion

Abdelhak Elghezouan, Liza Jachens, Donna
Orange, Hermann Veerbeek, Barbara
Whitaker

17:00-17:30

Closing Remarks



KEYNOTE

SPEAKERS



Pat Bracken will argue that the concept of PTSD is limited by a number of inbuilt assumptions, which hinder our quest to understand and respond appropriately to the psychological and social effects of violence and other forms of trauma. He will argue against the cognitivist epistemology that is dominant at present and in favour of a hermeneutic approach that has, in his opinion, the potential to be considerably more helpful.



Donna Orange will speak about the isolating experience of trauma and how, by offering oneself as an accompanying witness, we can help the traumatised person to regain not only some sense of dignity, but some sense of belonging among humans. Yet accompanying trauma demands more than what most of us can do and so she will speak about how we might accomplish the paradoxical task of both keeping ourselves strong and yet vulnerable enough for the work of compassion.

KEYNOTE

SPEAKERS



Gina Ross will speak about trauma as a root cause of conflict and violence and how it impacts relationships and impedes conflict resolution. She will also address the role and importance of self-regulation at national levels for conflict resolution and introduce tools and models for promoting resiliency and peace.



Cara Perrett will speak from the perspective of someone who has overcome trauma and through doing so has discovered a new way of experiencing and making sense of life. She will argue that facing up to the reality of trauma – the fact that it exists and has a damaging effect on us, both as individuals and as a species – is not only a moral imperative of our times, but can help restore our faith in what it means to be human.

