



### **Abstract 318**

#### **Finding agency amidst all the voices - Open Dialogue and the reweaving of social fabric**

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Abstract:

The Open Dialogue approach from Western Lapland is now being developed in as many as twenty countries. Though the approach is not focused primarily on people diagnosed with psychosis (as it is used with all those presenting to services in Western Lapland), the research in Western Lapland has focused on first episode psychosis, and shows by far better outcomes than we tend to see in public mental health services. This alone could account for the growing interest in the approach, and the investment in new research in a variety of international settings in recent years. And yet, at least as significant is the passion with which professionals speak and write about their experience of working dialogically with families and networks, not to mention the growing number of service users and family members advocating for the use/development of the approach.

In an Open Dialogue service, family/network members have the opportunity to express themselves in a supportive setting, and to address issues that they have been facing, including traumatic experiences, such that they can start to experience their agency more fully as well as a greater sense of connectedness. This is not easy work, and yet it holds much promise - the potential for finding meaning in so-called 'madness', but also for a reweaving of social fabric, such that those involved can move forward individually and collectively. The Open Dialogue approach, a fine blend of common sense and skilful presence/practice, rooted in human relations, has the potential to transform our mental health services. As a need-adapted approach, it is naturally inclusive of a wide variety of professionals and practices, and so it also has the potential to address the divisiveness that too often affects the possibilities for collaborative practice.

In this presentation Nick Putman will briefly introduce the approach, including related theory/philosophy, and the research that has been undertaken to date. He will argue that, if we comprehensively develop the approach in our services, they should be cheaper to run than conventional services, leading to less reliance on public services in the long-run. He will share something of his experience of developing the approach over the last six years, largely through co-ordinating/running training programmes, both in terms of the current politics, but also the possibilities for developing the approach in services/practice.

Nick is the founder of Open Dialogue UK. He is a psychotherapist and Open Dialogue practitioner and trainer who specialises in working with people experiencing psychosis and their families.

**ON THE HEALING POWER  
OF HUMAN RECONNECTION**