

My Psychotherapy Career: Diversifying your psychotherapeutic work

With UKCP psychotherapist Lorna Evans

Jenna:

Hello and welcome to My Psychotherapy Career, a podcast where we explore the different therapeutic settings our members work in and how they came into their career. I am Jenna Rachid, the Digital Engagement Officer at UKCP. Our host Helen Willingham is the Head of Content and Engagement at UKCP, overseeing all our communications to members and the public as well as our policy and research work. In this episode, Helen speaks to UKCP psychotherapists Lorna Evans. Prior to training as a psychotherapist, Lorna worked in video games, technology and television for 20 years. Now working as a psychotherapist and trauma-informed yoga teacher, Lorna seeks to integrate psychotherapy, the body, breathing and movement to help people experiencing trauma, anxiety and depression. Lorna is often featured in the media and has worked with MTV, the Discovery Channel, the BBC, Yahoo, and Sky. She also regularly uploads to her YouTube channel, offering advice and helpful tips. You can find her videos by searching The Mind Movement on YouTube. In this episode, Lorna sits down with Helen to talk about her psychotherapeutic career, seeking to integrate the body and the mind. Stay tuned to find out about how she diversifies her income and work.

Helen:

Thank you for joining me today as well. It's great to talk to you.

Lorna:

Thank you for asking me. It's good to spend some time together today.

Helen:

Definitely. And my first question: what drew you to working with the mind and body in your psychotherapeutic work?

Lorna:

So, good question. So, what drew me to work with mind and body is, before I was a psychotherapist, I was a yoga teacher. And before I was a yoga teacher, I was someone doing yoga. And before I was someone doing yoga, I was someone who probably didn't look after myself very well. And my mind and body was out of whack and out of sync. So, if you follow that journey forward, I wanted to bring knowledge of the body and how movement, yoga, exercise had made me well. I wanted to take that in and more people. It's the same path, me being a psychotherapist as it is me being a yoga teacher. I was looking for a space where they would integrate to have mind and body. However, when I got to the training level, and I understand I had to train to be clinical, there wasn't much mention of the body. In fact, there was no mention of the body. So, that's been really interesting, where I've have had to do a lot of my own research and make this information more available to people who are studying now, people who are interested in the area of mind-body

connection, because it really wasn't there in the training. But for me, I'm dyslexic as well, so I've always had a, I'm very visual. So, the mind-body connection was always very strong in how I communicate.

Helen:

And where did you start with that research then, so to be able to connect that mind and body piece?

Lorna:

In terms of connecting the mind and body in therapy and research, it really started in my master's. So, my master's was on body awareness in psychotherapy. And that was my first deep dive into the literature. So, really looking at going back to phenomenology, Freud, Wilhelm Reich, working with Gestalt, that's where the research started, but it's only been in the last, I'd say a year and a half, when I've been researching a lot deeper for my book that I'm writing. I've had to really spend a lot of time digging to find women, mention of people of colour rather than just what was sort of the first level of research. And it's far more interesting, the deeper you go, it's far more interesting, but I had to do that work myself. And also, what has been useful on this journey is Bessel van der Kolk's book *Body Keeps the Score*, which I know has been out for some time now. However, it has taken that length of time for it to filter through to actually the public. Clients now speak to me, and clients have read the book, clients have listened to the audiobook. And actually, Babette Rothschild says that until Bessel brought that book out, people working with the body, therapist, body psychotherapist were it's seen as a bit of a bunch of hippies. They weren't taken seriously because there was no neuroscience, there wasn't a lot around the nervous system bringing it together, clinically. So, we're in a really great space today because it's really popular, people want to know more about mind-body connection. It's taken a long time, it's taken, you know, 150 years and that's just the first part of the conversation.

Helen:

Yeah, that's fascinating. Thank you, Lorna. And you now have multiple areas which you work in. Alongside psychotherapy, you do trauma-informed yoga, media work, writing, teaching and you inform the creation of health games. Why has it been important for you to have a diverse workload?

Lorna:

So, where I am today and what I know around workload, I did not know when I started training. Was I naive? Yes, I was naive, but I didn't have anyone else to check this out with at the time. So, I thought when I started, I would just be a therapist all the time, that would be my new career. That's what I thought would happen. However, especially with my knowledge of the body, and the mind-body connection, and the impact that the work has on the therapist. So, I'm really wanting the people listening to this podcast to hear this. The impact of our work, it's heavy work, it's somebody else's trauma, it's a lot of death, grief, sex, messy stuff, in our work. We can't do that 40 hours a week. And I didn't know that at the beginning. And it's taken for me on my journey with my research, you know, looking at countertransference and body countertransference. So, that is why over time, and falling down several times on the journey, that I've realised, oh, I have to flex a bit here, I have to have interests, I have to do work with different energy, I have to work with people, otherwise I'm going to be too isolated. So, there's been a lot of hustling along the way, and really having to notice, okay, what environment feels right for me to be in. And I have to switch it up. Too much therapy, wonderful though it is, the therapist will end up getting sick and needing therapy and getting ill. So that's why it's so important that we keep interests that we look at other lines of work. Please do not let go of that first career, there will be something in that first career that will give you some respite from therapy. But they can merge it can integrate with the therapy, there'll be something that will give you other options.

Helen:

How has your psychotherapeutic knowledge helped in aspects of your different work?

Lorna:

Yeah. So, how the psychotherapeutic knowledge helps when I'm working in different spaces, is well really in business, and if I'm working with tech people or in teams, I'm very much aware of all the games that go on and all the gameplay that goes on. But also, you are able to hold a level of integrity and bring experience. I've been able to work with companies like Ubisoft, a really big gaming company, I've worked with them for a long time, to work on their strategy around mental health to support members of their team. And also, because I've worked in tech and the creative industries for a long time, I was very aware of how poorly perceived mental health has been. And also, these industries are really, especially video games, is really famous for burnout and they call it crunch in video games. And also, how real the shame that was wrapped around it, especially for creatives, you know, like artists, writers, programmers, and how mental health was perceived in that industry. So, I'm really happy to have been part of the wave, especially in the video games industry, around mental health. So, people don't just get successions. They're going to access as much therapy as they want. And know there's clear boundaries in place, that there's confidentiality going to be kept, that it's not going to impact people's careers, they won't be seen as weak. It's actually seen now much more as nurturing. Especially in the games industry, neurodiversity is the new hot topic. And I'd say about 98% of people working in the games industry are neurodiverse, which is a really comfortable space for me. So yeah, it's really great that I can bring some wisdom to people who have been able to make change, especially with artists and creatives and young people. It's very important to me.

Helen:

Yeah, thanks, Lorna, because I know you started working in the gaming industry and that's where you worked previously, as well as in media. But just going back to that, do you think there was a particular point in that shift and what kind of set that off? And how did you become involved in some of those projects?

Lorna:

What may seem normal now really wasn't about six years ago. So, before any of the Mental Health First Aid started in workplaces, especially in the creative industries, I was working with some really large studios because I knew the people, and I was educating them around, really, what good therapy would look like, what burnout looks like, how people can stay well, and there was a real tipping point that happened with mental health. Really what happened, it was around the time when the royals got involved, they started speaking out about mental health challenging stigma in the workplace. So, yeah, I was really happy to be involved and I was running trainings for people. However, there was a point where, for me, it wasn't the right space to be in, I thought, oh it was great, this is another revenue for me. I realised it's all about the business and the business comes first and that may jeopardise boundaries. I'm on the side of the artist, the programmer, the person who's going for therapy, less on the sort of business side. And interestingly, now, in the games industry, they lead with talking about mental health, and how many people in their studios are in therapy, where it's not long ago that was really shamed. And a lot of the time, why they're in therapy is because they've got a bad boss. And they've got poor managers. And so, there was just a little bit of an ethical issue for me there that I chose to step away from. I still give consultancy with people, especially around the neurodiversity angle now and I'm really glad I've made an impact.

Helen:

Following on from, a slightly different aspects of your work. Can you tell us about your trauma-informed yoga as well?

Lorna:

Yes, I'd love to tell you about it. So, I've been teaching yoga since about 2006, I've have been doing it from about 98. And I just thought yoga is great. Yoga is this wonderful thing. And then as I began to train, because I use it as my medicine, it keeps me well. However, in my training as a therapist, some things would come up around boundaries, around visualisations that we would use in yoga, and I would literally just cringe and I thought, oh, that's not safe. That's not great. And I'm really talking about here people who are survivors, people with anxiety, depression, people who are vulnerable, that a lot of what I'd been taught and I was teaching really wasn't safe. So, I went to do some training with the guy who worked with Bessel van der Kolk, and his trauma-sensitive yoga. And it was a real eye opener for me, really just how unsafe a lot of mainstream yoga is. And if regular people want to go and do that stuff, that's great. But for vulnerable people and people whose mental health isn't great, and let's face it, people go to yoga because of their vulnerable and their mental health isn't great. There are a lot of issues there, especially around touch, the power of breath. So, like if you're breathing a lot, like high up breathing through the nose, that are really trigger the sympathetic nervous system. A lot of disassociations, some people just leave at the end because they can't tolerate, I just thought they got bored. But you do something called savasana at the end, which might be a 15-minute relaxation, you just completely disassociate. So, if people are struggling anyway, and this would be the point as a yoga teacher, where people start crying, people literally just break down crying in a yoga class. So, there was no knowledge of disassociation, even down to what people wore, like baggy clothing, revealing clothing. So, I became very uncomfortable with that. And then, I call it trauma-informed yoga because I'm a therapist. And yeah, I'm now able to work with that in the room more with people, with gentle movement as a therapist. And also, I work with charities like Changing Lives, the NHS, the Recovery College, working with people in recovery, and putting this learning into place and the safety boundaries with clients who would never normally be able to access safe tools. And I just absolutely love it, it's wonderful. And I also train other therapists and yoga teachers around being trauma-informed in their practice, and I find that hugely rewarding.

Helen:

Your online workshops then led to you getting a book deal, which is a new side of the work for you. Can you tell us about the book and how the deal came about?

Lorna:

Yeah, absolutely. Thank you for asking about the book. So, I was always doing workshops in person and going to London and Manchester, or wherever, all these places and the people would come, and I really enjoyed it. And I'd been doing that for a long time. And really, that was the work of my masters that I was putting out there. And when lockdown hit, I thought, oh, my goodness, this is all gone to the wall. And then a lady rang me up from Ireland, and she said, 'I was going to fly over to your workshop, but now COVID is here, could you just do it online?' And I did. That was the push I needed, and I just did it. So, over time, whereas in-person workshops, I might have been getting ten, 15, 20 people, suddenly, it was sort of 20, 30, 40, 60, 80 people. I couldn't believe how popular they were. We were getting people from Australia, New Zealand, Malta, the US, middle of the night people, you know. This is because of the popularity of the mind-body connection. And yes, I integrate the yoga into this. But I'm pulling apart and sharing the history. And this is where the

book deal came from. Because I just put this stuff out, I'd designed workshops because I'm really interested in the subject and I'm really passionate about it, and I'll design something and put it out there. And then one day, I got the email that is sort of the email of your dreams, saying, 'hi, this is Phoenix Publishing, we'd love your work, we'd love to publish your book.' It's sort of the stuff of dreams. However, when you're dyslexic, it's also the stuff of nightmares. So, there's a flip side to it, where it's also been very hard. However, what I do bring into the book is - and it's been very important to me on that deep dive of research - is about finding the women, where were the women in history. So, we're not just quoting, and I want people who are listening to this, if they're writing an essay, and all of their references are men, that didn't even cross my mind ten-15 years ago. Now, look. Go and find some women, it cannot be all white men who are the references. Challenge it, look at it, look at the lack of women, find the women, people of colour. And also, the misogyny when we look at the theory, that it was all men, and that men didn't mention periods or hormones. And yeah so, it's so interesting to dive a little bit deeper. And also weave into the book, politics, opinions now, that hopefully will help inspire support and give people some threads to pick up and get curious about in their own essays when their studying to be therapists on the UKCP approved course. I really just want to get people getting curious and questioning and things, because it makes it a lot more interesting.

Helen:

Yeah, I think that curiosity as well is a big one, it's come up a few times in this podcast actually, about being curious is always a way to develop, but then also why people often get into psychotherapy as well.

Lorna:

Okay, in what way? What do you mean?

Helen:

Curious about people and stories and motivations, I guess.

Lorna:

Yeah. And this is where the whole 'what you did before, what your childhood was like, what your parents were like, what your passions are' will all shape you as a therapist, and it's really important that you bring your whole self into that space. Yes, I know, when you train at first, sort of 'am I dressing like a therapist, have I got a white shirt, have I got a scarf on?' But how can we now starting to bring ourselves, not the cookie cutter of what a therapist should be like.

Helen:

We touched earlier on your diverse workload, and you mentioned about kind of knowing when things get too much as well. Can you talk us through the importance of creating balance and how you manage that as well?

Lorna:

Thanks for asking about that and balance is really important. And it's also important to remember that as therapists, we're not really very good at doing that, we're good at suggesting other people do it, but often, we're not very good at it ourselves. Because of what I know about the countertransference, the power of the work, and yes, it's very rewarding, but it does make people sick. And there's like this conveyor belt of new therapists who are going to come in, they are frontline, it's a cannon fodder because there's little understanding of the impact of trauma. The balance is really important. I'd say if you're going to go and work

for the NHS or other large mental health charities, do it for the experience, but also know that a lot of them are systemically broken, and the staff are traumatised because of the work. So, the balance is really important. I really am concerned when therapists telling me, 'oh, I see 20 clients in four days,' or 'I see 35 clients a week,' it's not going to last. No one person is stronger, better, more resilient than another. The work is heavy, and it will come and get you. Having balance, having your own life, having fun. And yes, also, we have to pay the bills, I have to pay the mortgage, the car, everything that we have to pay. So, I wish I had known that at the beginning that I needed to keep more balance in there. And that I can't just work 40 hours a week, charging a high rate. That would be great, but I would be very, very ill.

Helen:

Why did you become a psychotherapist?

Lorna:

I am a psychotherapist because probably when I was younger, I wanted to see a therapist. And I'm probably the therapist that I wanted to see. So, I had to go and learn all that stuff. I know that's a bigger answer, but that's the truth. Some of the other answers I could give you are, I did meet some very cool women in my life who were psychotherapists, and I thought, oh, I'd like to be a bit like you. Yeah, but I think the true answer is I'm the therapist that I wish I'd had when I was younger.

Helen:

It's quite powerful.

Lorna:

Yeah. You know, and that's taken a lot of training and therapy to be able to speak that. But it's the truth. And I would actually say that applies to a lot of people. We wouldn't be in this line of work, we wouldn't be doing it unless we had our own wounds that we've healed from, that we've learned from, and that we have to also look after ourselves constantly with. And that is why it's so important that we have awareness of the work that we're doing, and that we find some balance. Because we probably, like a plate that is smashed and been glued back together, we have our own weaknesses and strengths. But too much on one side can cause problems in our own life. So, we also have to look after ourselves.

Helen:

Yeah, it's really important. And who is your psychotherapy or counselling hero?

Lorna:

Ooh, well, there is only one and only one book that I do recommend, and it's Clarissa Pinkola Estés. She's a female voice as well, when all of the other voices have been men, white men, and her book, women who, I'll probably get the title wrong now, but *Women Who Run With the Wolves*, that's the only book I'd recommend to anyone. And I wouldn't be doing any of my work, taking these risks I'm taking, doing a book, doing all this stuff, basically, walking into failure, and every time thinking it's going to go wrong, if it wasn't for that book and hearing her words.

Helen:

Thank you. And then a slightly different question, but one that I ask everyone on the podcast. What does being a UKCP member mean to you?

Lorna:

Being a UKCP member to me is important. And I didn't know why at the beginning, I was just aware that I was working towards and studying. So, this might be interesting for people who are studying now and are maybe on dual registered courses. So, I didn't understand if I had to be in this club or that club. But I seemed to have ended up paying for both of them. But what I realised is that UKCP is more of a gold badge and I work very, very hard to get that badge. Spent a lot of money to get that badge. And I'm very happy to have that badge. And what motivates me even more to maintain that badge is there are a lot of people out there who are not fully trained, who have got qualifications off the internet, who are not safe to be working with people who are not well. People who are coaches, who are saying that they're working in mental health or they're working with trauma. They're not trained. They're not members of the UKCP. It terrifies me and also it motivates me further to do work like this to promote the UKCP.

Helen:

Yeah, thank you, Lorna. And slightly connected, but I'm going to take you back to training.

Lorna:

Yeah.

Helen:

Looking back now is there anything you wish you knew before you entered the training? So, I know we've talked about you saying 'I wish I knew about kind of the balance,' but is there anything you wish you kind of knew before you went into the training side of things?

Lorna:

One thing I wish I had known about before I went into the training, aside from the balance of work, really where were the women? I wasn't questioning where the women were, we were just given these lists of books by men, maybe the odd woman. It was never questioned. Where were the women? Why was there silence from the women? Why is nobody mentioned periods? Why is nobody mentioned menopause? Why is nobody mentioning birth? Why is nobody mentioned in nepotism? In a room that your training is like, usually 95% women, there was no space to talk about that as well as people of colour. So, it motivates me and that's why I put it in my book. So, people now will be questioning that. And it really motivated me to question that, because of all of the spaces. And hopefully in my book, you'll see I've found these women, I've found these people and these voices, and they just weren't given space, they weren't published, they were silenced. So yeah, I'd really wish I had known that.

Helen:

You kind of just towards the end you answer my question which was, you know, where were they and like you said they were silenced. Do you think that's changing there? Do you think there's there is a shift in that voice, not just from yourself, but from others as well?

Lorna:

It's changing, as is the world changing, but not fast enough and it's nowhere near okay. It's nowhere near ok. So really, even when events are being put on, I questioned someone recently about, why is it all men and a female host? By me speaking up, I'm potentially going to get cancelled, I'm potentially going to be perceived

as a challenge. So, I have to encourage other people to speak up. Yes, it's changing. But if you look at who's probably getting paid the big bucks and who was on the top when you look at these big conferences or these people, it's white men. So, we need to be encouraging other people from diverse groups, not just women. And yeah, this is actually only the start of that. And I'm encouraging people to call it out and question it if it comes in front of them.

Helen:

When it came to training, how did you manage the logistics of that? Obviously, there's cost implication, there's the time to train. How did you manage that at the time?

Lorna:

So, managing the logistics of training is something if you ask somebody afterwards, they'll say, I have no idea. But the reality is, I was working a full-time job and doing the training, worked at weekends writing all the essays. It was really hard, and it is really hard. And it also costs a lot of money that I had to, of course, earn to pay for it. You know, I added it up and it's 50 grand. When you add in supervision and therapy, that's a lot of money. And there you go; I didn't know that at the beginning either. So, you push through, and people do push through. I work with a lot of people, and they'll say, 'I don't know how I did it.' Yeah, it's hard work. It is hard work. And hopefully, that's a space that I'd like to see change again, to attract people from more diverse backgrounds. So, it's less elitist. Yeah, it was really hard. And it pays off. I've been able to follow my interest and that continues because we wouldn't be doing it if we didn't know that what we were doing worked and it does work.

Helen:

Yeah. And what advice would you give to someone considering training as a psychotherapist or a psychotherapeutic counsellor?

Lorna:

Really do your homework around UKCP, BACP, where you want to go in the future. My trajectory has been UKCP because I was training towards being a psychotherapist. I would also say keep your interest in other stuff. If you are into fishing, keep your interest in fishing. If you're interested in playing the piano, keep that interest going. Do not lose you in the process of training as a therapist. There's never been a better time for you to show up as your authentic self. It's going to be hard, but please keep you in that space. Also be mindful from the beginning about multiple lines of income. Very important that you start thinking about that earlier on. Potentially again, what I've said about mind-body connection, the power of the work, it's heavy work. I mentioned this earlier, that if you aren't going to work in the NHS or another charity, go in there and get your experience, get some great supervision, get some friends, get some peers. But know there'll be a time when you have to sharply turn around and get out of there. It's not for the long-term, they burn people in those places. So really hold in mind, you know, where you want to get to and why you are doing this. Why are you wanting to be a psychotherapist? And what can you integrate of your whole self into that work? And really bring that into the space.

Helen:

Thank you, and how has training changed you?

Lorna:

Oh, God, I had a sleepless night on this one. I thought that must be the simplest question and I just don't, my tongue is just like, how's it changed me? How it's changed me is I probably have a lot less drama in my life. You really, in terms of the relationships that you have, and this is happens to most therapists, a lot of people you will sort of move away from. I have a lot more fun in my life than I used to. Because it's very important that we're able to access our child. So, I know what's fun. You know what, the training is so hard, it is really, really hard. And where I am right now, is that it has given me opportunities to put my stamp on things, to speak out about what is important to me. Yeah, so it's a really hard question to answer. If you start this training, it will probably turn your life upside down. But you'll be left with the people around you in a space that is authentic to you at the end. And hopefully that you have a bit more fun.

Helen:

Yeah, it was that bit that caught me, when you said you have a lot more fun, I thought that's a really good one, and a good one to end on as well. So, thank you.

Lorna:

You're welcome, Helen, and thank you for your time today and being interested in my work. I really appreciate it.

Jenna:

That was UKCP psychotherapist Lorna Evans speaking to Helen Willingham, our Head of Content and Engagement. If you're interested in exploring training, then you can visit our psychotherapy training page where you can find information on psychotherapy as a career, as well as the different training pathways available to you. Just go to www.psychotherapy.org.uk/psychotherapy-training. All episodes of My Psychotherapy Career are available on our website, psychotherapy.org.uk. You can also subscribe to our channel, UKCP, on your favourite streaming platform. Do you have any feedback you'd like to share with us on this episode or any from our series? Get in touch with us at communications@ukcp.org.uk. Join us again next month. Till then, thank you for listening and take good care of yourselves.