

Introduction to Ecopsychology - Information for Participants

Ecopsychology is concerned with the relationship between us (humans) and the rest of life on our beautiful planet, Earth. As such, it is developing as a powerful, relational therapeutic response to climate change and the associated divisions, conflict and widespread violence. The recent World Economic Forum Global Risk Report identifies nuclear war, extreme weather and natural disasters as the biggest threats in 2018; further evidence that it is imperative we re-think what it means to be human and that we (re)locate human health and wellbeing where it properly belongs - within the other-than-human (natural) world. These introductory workshops explore the reciprocal therapeutic power of ecopsychology. Each workshop can serve as a stand alone 'taster' or, for those wanting to deepen their awareness, the second workshop can be used to build upon the first.

Who are these workshops for?

The workshops might be of specific interest as CPD hours for qualified or student psychotherapists, counsellors, alternative & complimentary therapists, psychologists, coaches, etc. My approach is inclusive and anyone who is interested in learning about ecopsychology is welcome to attend. The only requirements are some previous experience of personal development in a group context, the ability to engage in group process and an understanding of - and willingness to uphold - basic group rules, such as confidentiality and respect. An open heart, open mind and willingness to be both supported and challenged is an advantage.

Structure and training methods

We will learn about ecopsychology by practising it, in solo reflection, pairs, small groups and whole group. The emphasis will be on *being-with*: ourselves, each other and the other-than-human & more-than-human. This, along with both traditional western psychology and indigenous wisdom, will form the basis for integrating theory, skills and personal development. Precisely what shape the weekends take will be influenced by the needs of the group and what emerges spontaneously. I will approach you as a capable, responsible adult, with personal agency for your own wellbeing and learning needs. I aim to facilitate a safe, supportive and challenging learning environment. Reading and resource lists will be made available. The workshops will start at 6pm on Friday with an evening meal, and will close at midday on Sunday with lunch.

Location

The workshops take place in the stunning residential setting of Sherwood Retreat Centre, which is dedicated to holistic healing and idyllically located between Mallabracka Forest and Coolsnaghtig Mountain. The cottage and surrounding woodland areas afford a perfect balance of domestic and wild spaces. The Centre is easily accessible by car. Car sharing is encouraged and lifts can be arranged to and from Dunmanway. Further details will be sent before the workshops.

Practicalities

The full rate of each workshop, including camping and all meals, is €190 (early bird €170 if booked before 30 March for May weekend and 02 August for September weekend). Camping is in your own tent. One double room and a limited number of dormitory beds are available at a small extra cost. These are allocated on a first come first served basis. Please liaise with the Centre directly to book indoor sleeping space: freya.asherlock@gmail.com. Weather permitting, we will work both indoors and outside, with the option of time around the campfire. Please bring appropriate warm/dry clothing, sturdy boots/shoes, extra blankets, sun protection, insect protection, etc. Meals (breakfast, lunch and dinner) will be vegetarian with vegan option. I will take responsibility for the meal on Friday. Then we cook, eat and clean up together as a community. Please advise of any food allergies at least two weeks in advance. Feel free to bring wine/beer and any treats you might want for yourself and/or to share. Creative expression is encouraged. Please do bring any musical instruments you have to hand.

About me, Matthew Henson

Like many of my generation, I first became active about environmental concerns as a teenager. I then lost my way a little during my early adult life, before finding ecopsychology about 10 years ago through my practice as an existential psychotherapist. I have been learning about, practising and teaching ecopsychology since then. I am qualified in psychotherapy to very high standards and appropriately registered, both in Ireland (ICP/IAHIP) and the UK (UKCP/SEA). I am also a certified wild therapist and a qualified psychotherapy & counselling trainer. I have been a regular contributor to the annual Edge of the Wild ecopsychology gathering in Worcestershire, both as workshop leader and organising group member. I have also had work published on the subject. I am particularly interested in how the complexities and tensions of environmental concerns become embodied and in the application of existential-phenomenology as a pragmatic therapeutic response. Full biographical details are available on the 'about matthew' page of my website. I really look forward to meeting you, either for the first time or to work together again.

Matthew