

Canberra & Region Self Psychology Community

February 2026 Conference

Beneath the Surface:

Configurations & Treatment of Narcissism: a somatic intersubjective Self Psychological approach

Featuring

- Keynote talk by Dr. Dan Perlitz, psychoanalyst, Canada
- Tribute to Dr. Ron Lee whose ideas inspired the conference
- Discussion of past, present, and popular views of Narcissism
- Clinical case studies of different narcissistic configurations
- Optional clinical case supervision sessions led by Dr. Perlitz



Denman Village Community Centre, Bugang Room

Denman Prospect ACT Australia

February 20 – 5:30 to 9pm,

February 21: 9am to 6pm,

February 22: 9am to 5pm,

Optional February 23: 9am to 12noon or
2pm to 5pm

Info@selfnmotion.com.au

www.canberraselfpsychology.org



Held on the traditional lands of the Ngunnawal People who maintain a deeply felt sense of intersubjective relationship with all expressions of Country, of which human intersubjectivity is one. This conference acknowledges the exploration of the nature of Country through the language of psychoanalytic theory.

2026 CRSPC Conference

Beneath the Surface: Configurations and Treatment of Narcissism

A somatic intersubjective Self Psychological approach

Friday, February 20, 2026

Conference Registration

5:30 pm to 6:00pm

Bugang Room

6:00pm

Acknowledgement of Country—Matt Hynes

6:10pm to 7:00pm

Conference Welcome & Introduction to
Configurations and Treatment of Narcissism

Sandra Lauffenburger, Conference Convener

7:00pm to 8:00pm

Just WHAT IS Narcissism?

Dr. Stephen Tang, Clinical Psychologist

8:00pm to 8:30pm

Tribute to Dr. Ron Lee and Australian Self
Psychology - Various speakers

8:30pm to 8:40pm

Land People Meditation— Matt Hynes

8:40pm to 9:00pm

Networking

9:00pm

Conference Centre closes



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Saturday, February 21, 2026 Morning Session

- 8:30 to 9:00am Conference Registration
- 9:00 to 9:10am SKY People Meditation— Matt Hynes
- 9:10 to 9:40am Conference Welcome & Information
Sandra Lauffenburger, Conference Convener
- 9:40 to 11:00am Before Empathy and Selfobject Experience: Traits & Attitudes of the Analyst/Therapist (part 1)
Dr. Dan Perlitz, Psychoanalyst, Toronto Canada
- 11:00 to 11:30am MORNING TEA
- 11:30 to 1:00pm Before Empathy and Selfobject Experience: Traits & Attitudes of the Analyst/Therapist (part 2)
- 1:00 to 2:30pm LUNCH

Saturday, February 21, 2026 Afternoon Session

Moderator, Sandra Lauffenburger, Respondent, Dr. Dan Perlitz

- 2:30 to 2:40pm WATER People Meditation— Matt Hynes
- 2:40 to 4:05pm The Ache of Invisibility and the Long Hunger for Self
Mirror Hungry Narcissism
Hollie Wildethorn, psychotherapist
- 4:05 to 4:30pm AFTERNOON TEA
- 4:30pm to 6:00pm Walking the Tightrope, Grandiose Narcissism
Karen Stewart, psychodynamic psychotherapist
- 6:00pm Close of Day



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Sunday, February 22, 2026

Moderator, Enzo Tieppo

Morning Session

Respondent, Dan Perlitz

9:00 to 9:10am LIFE People Meditation—Matt Hynes

9:10 to 10:40am The Alternating States of Mara, Hostile Desperate Narcissism

10:40 to 11:05am MORNING TEA

11:05 to 12:30pm Bringing Bella into View, Constricted Narcissism
Susi West, clinical counsellor

12:30 to 2:00pm LUNCH

Sunday, February 22, 2026

Moderator, Sandra Lauffenburger

Afternoon Session

2:00 to 3:30pm Expressions of Narcissistic Needs in Children,
An Intersubjective, developmental discussion
Matt Hynes, psychotherapist & psychologist

3:30 to 4:00pm AFTERNOON TEA

4:00pm to 5:00pm Closing Thoughts
Dan Perlitz with Sandra Lauffenburger

5:00pm Close of Conference



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Monday, February 23, 2026 Morning Session

- 9:00 to 9:45am Clinical Case Presentation for Supervision
Mick Haines, Social Worker/psychotherapist
- 9:45 to 10:30 Initial Response
Dan Perlitz
- 10:30 to 11:00am MORNING TEA
- 11:00 to 12:00pm Group Discussion of Case and Q & A
- 12:00 to 2:00pm LUNCH

Monday, February 23, 2026 Afternoon Session

- 2:00 to 2:45pm Clinical Case Presentation for Supervision
Dr. Rachelle Dawson, clinical psychologist
- 2:45 to 3:30pm Initial Response
Dan Perlitz
- 3:30 to 4:00pm MORNING TEA
- 4:00 to 5:00pm Group Discussion of Case and Q & A



2026 CRSPC Conference

Presentation Abstracts (in order of presentation)

Dr. Stephen Tang Just WHAT IS Narcissism??

Narcissism has become an overused or misused word. The deeper significance of narcissistic needs – looking beneath the surface of narcissism – can therefore be difficult to grasp. This exploratory presentation will unfold over three parts. Firstly, we will briefly revisit the original myth of Narcissus and Echo, attending to the movement and relational interactions in how the story is told. The idea of narcissism as transformation emerges from a more dynamic reading of the myth and takes us beyond the still life scene of Narcissus staring at his own reflection. We will then feel into the way in which narcissism has been imagined and explained in the history of psychoanalysis. We will notice the different metaphors which have been used to explain how narcissism behaves, how it works, and what it is. Rather than trying to reinvent a theory of narcissism, we will ponder the diversity of metaphors to begin to formulate how different human needs and experiences are refracted through the lens of narcissism.

Finally, the richness of these images will be contrasted with the symbolic barrenness surrounding narcissistic formulation in mainstream mental health practice and theory. In the biomedical world as well as popular consciousness, the status of narcissism as a disorder is, in fact, highly contested and often oversimplified as a fixed pathology. This presentation ultimately invites us to consider how our understanding of narcissism itself may need to be transformed through the reclaiming of the diverse, animated and relational glimpses into narcissism as a dynamic process shaped by relationships, tensions and powerful human needs.

Dr. Dan Perlitz

Before Empathy and Selfobject Experience: Traits & Attitudes of the Therapist

“An analyst, --- may be said to have become a true master in his field --- when his learning (i.e., his theoretical knowledge and his clinical experience) has become so thoroughly integrated with his total personality that he has ceased to be aware of it,” (Kohut, 1984, P.170). This implies that we not only think based on our theoretical orientation, but are also transformed emotionally by it.

In this paper I describe nine sets of traits and attitudes which are the necessary emotional foundation for empathy and selfobject experience, the core concepts of self psychology. The thorough integration referenced by Kohut was reflected by Nacht more than 60 years ago: “the person of the analyst in so far as he represents and *embodies* a certain deep inner attitude – is a decisive factor and that is why I have often maintained that it is what the analyst *is* rather than what he says that matters,” (1962, italics his). Upon first encountering a new theory, the analyst cognitively considers the rightness of its constructs but, I believe, also intuitively, generally at a non-conscious level, the kinds of changes in their emotional makeup which adopting that theory will generate. In great part, what we need for our ongoing vitality and our own self-repair is what draws us to the theories we hold dear. Thinking and practising self psychologically, we have the opportunity to develop relational systems with our patients of the kind we wish had been our lot with our own caregivers, a forward edge hope, and to more capably prevail against injurious ways of being which we adopted of necessity, the trailing edge which haunts us. They are also the hoped for elements for our ongoing vitality and our own self-repair which are created by self psychology.

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Presentation Abstracts

Karen Stewart

Walking the tightrope : Grandiose Narcissism

Approach carefully the client for whom being seen truly is a threatening experience. Perhaps instead sit side by side, when they let you. Travel along with them while gently making safe observations about the distance, the divide and include your knowing that they do have a wholeness which they could be in a complete felt way were they to have safe access to all of it. This case outlines some of the experiences of working with a person who lives with split off affect (a vertical split) that has previously kept them safe and successful through childhood but which no longer serves them. The presence of a nuclear self that is enfeebled may look like an overly capable exterior, with celebrated genius skills that have enhanced the focus on external validation and which is relied upon almost entirely by the person to sustain and 'succeed' in life. This exterior remains merely an unstructured facade which, if damaged via a narcissistic wounding may cause them to seek out therapy which otherwise they are certain is not needed.

Hollie Wildethorn

The Ache of Invisibility and the Long Hunger for Self: Mirror Hungry Narcissism

Exploring the mirror-hungry configuration through the lens of long-term relational therapy with a client whose eating disorder masked a deeper, unspoken ache to be seen. This discussion traces the interplay of shame, dissociation, and self-erasure — and the slow emergence of a self-made possible through attuned, experience-near presence. This session invites all therapists to a reimagining of therapeutic success as the quiet moment when a client begins to believe they exist. This is a story of hunger, not for food, but for reflection, recognition, and repair.

Sandra Lauffenburger

The Alternating States of Mara : Hostile Aggressive Desperate Narcissism

No clinical case is ever easy. All clients, if truly understood, are complex. However, some get the label of difficult, borderline, or 'refer onward'. Mara and I worked together for over ten years. During many of the early sessions, I felt attacked, abused, humiliated, and lost, as well as delighted and amused. Mara's behaviours began to make sense, using Lee's model for narcissistic configurations where Mara's emotional and behavioural fluctuations might fit an HAD Configuration. Thus I formulated my responsiveness using the concept of vertical split, her specific selfobject needs, as well as using a transitional object/cohesion function. These along with Mara's creative endeavours provided sufficient cohesiveness to develop Mara's ability to regulate her fluctuating self-states. Despite challenging and complex therapeutic interactions, Mara and I navigated an ultimately useful psychotherapeutic experience for her.

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Presentation Abstracts

Susi West

Bringing Bella into View: Constricted Deflecting Narcissism

This paper will explore key characteristics of a client presenting with the Constricted-Deflecting configuration of Narcissism. Among these features are suicidality, unspoken, somatised distress, relationship difficulties and OCD. In this presentation, the client tries to keep the therapist focused on symptoms. This protective strategy is an attempt to deflect attention from greater awareness of and the possibility of working with the subjectivity of their nuclear self. In order to effectively, though empathically, disrupt the endless repetition of symptomatic deflection, the therapist had to grow their own capacity to conceptualise the case, meet the client's self-object needs and tolerate intense affects such as hopelessness, distress and terror.

Matt Hynes

Expressions of Narcissistic Needs in Children:

An Intersubjective Developmental Perspective

This presentation will offer vignettes from clinical interactions the therapist has encountered in his practice with children. The audience will be invited to analyse these with a partner becoming curious about the relational needs for which each child is yearning. Exploration and speculations about how Matt might have met that need will be invited and discussed. Finally, you will be encouraged to think about how these children might present as adults if their relational needs are never adequately met in childhood.



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Presenters Biographies

Dr. Dan Perlitz

Daniel Perlitz MD is a psychoanalyst in private practice in Toronto, Canada. He completed his psychoanalytic training at IASP (Institute for the Advancement of Self-Psychology) in Toronto, Canada in 2014. Perlitz is on the board of directors and faculty of IASP, an Adjunct Lecturer at University of Toronto, and a supervisor of psychiatric residents in psychotherapy at St. Joseph's Hospital in Toronto. He is also on the board of directors and is treasurer of IAPSP (International Association of Psychoanalytic Self Psychology). His first published article, "Beyond Kohut – from Empathy to Affection," appeared in the International Journal of Psychoanalytic Self-Psychology in 2016. Subsequently he has published five additional articles in the same journal in 2017, 2019, and 2021.

Sandra Kay Lauffenburger M.Sc., B.Soc.Sci.(Hons Psych)

PACFA Clinical Psychotherapist & Supervisor Reg 20209

Sandra maintains a clinical practice in psychodynamic self psychological psychotherapy and somatic movement psychotherapy in Canberra, Australia. She works with a spectrum of presentations from complex trauma through to psychosomatic issues. Over thirty-five years of exploring body and movement therapies as well as clinical training in psychoanalytic self-psychology inform her work. Sandra is an Associate Editor for *Psychoanalysis, Self and Context* (IAPSP journal) as well as the *Journal of Body, Movement and Dance in Psychotherapy*. She has published a number of articles and book chapters on self psychology, somatic psychotherapy, affect theory, and dance movement therapy. She works with the *Canberra & Region Self Psychology Community* to hold regular conferences on Self Psychology. Sandra offers supervision, study groups, and is co-director of the three-year training program, Somatic Intersubjective Self Psychology.

Dr. Stephen Tang PhD (Clin Psych), LLM, MAPS FCCLP

Stephen is a clinical psychologist, psychotherapist and board-approved supervisor working in private practice. He practises primarily from a self psychological perspective and provides longer-term psychotherapy with adults, but also has an interest in collaborative/therapeutic psychological assessment. Stephen is also a senior policy advisor with the Australian Psychological Society and has previously worked as a legal academic, lawyer and public servant. Shaped by these experiences, he maintains an ongoing involvement in advocacy, research and praxis at the intersection of psychoanalysis, psychology, social policy, and the forward edge of people and their communities.

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Presenters Biographies

Karen Stewart M.A. Counselling, PACFA Clinical reg 24364.

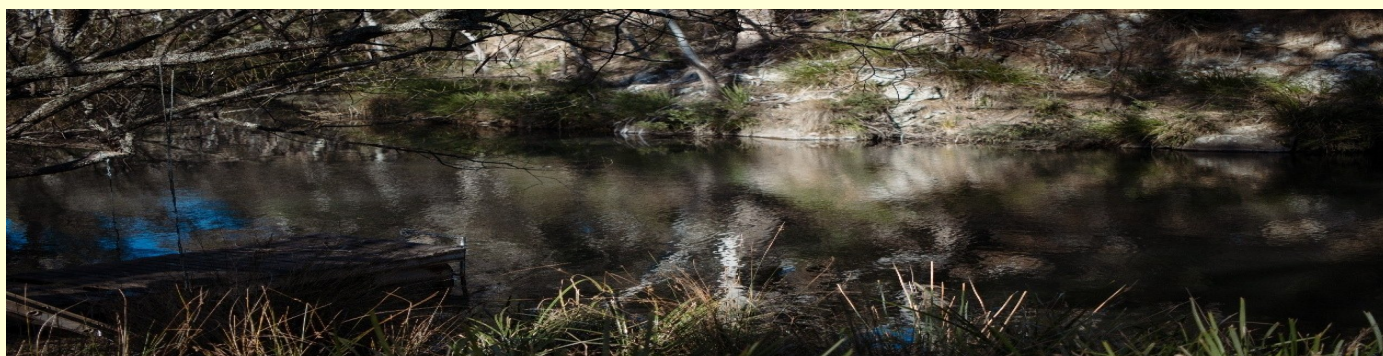
Karen is a white woman born in the 1970's in Australia, currently living and working on Ngannawal and Ngambri land in Canberra. Karen is a Clinical Counsellor with her own private practice and works with people in a psychodynamic psychotherapeutic way to create change and bring a sense of freedom to their experience of being alive. Karen's professional background includes working with people of all abilities who have experienced trauma and mental ill health, with offenders in the justice system, people in crisis due to family violence or loss, people with disordered eating and as a couples and relationship therapist. Her work is infused with a somatic orientation and informed by self psychology and affect theory.

Hollie Wildethorn PACFA Clin. Reg. 25488

Hollie is a psychotherapist, supervisor, and educator with a background in trauma-informed care, relational practice, and feminine rites of passage. She brings over 15 years of experience working at the intersection of depth psychology, embodiment, and spiritual inquiry. Hollie specialises in long-term therapeutic work with clients navigating early attachment wounds, dissociation, and narcissistic configurations. Alongside her clinical work, she facilitates supervision grounded in Self Psychology and intersubjectivity, and runs community-based programs that honour seasonal rhythms, internal archetypes, and the sacred in the everyday.

Susi West B.A. (Political Science) PACFA Clin Reg. 23625

With training in Holistic Counseling and Psychotherapy and Level 3 Gottman Method Couples Therapy, Susi is a Clinical Counsellor in private practice in Canberra, Australia. Heavily influenced by Somatic Intersubjective Self Psychology and Inner Relationship Focusing. She works to combat shame and promote love, freedom and self-agency for those who have suffered the relational trauma that results in people pleasing, perfectionism, loneliness and other relationship issues. She offers relational trauma healing through one-on-one psychotherapy sessions, and relationship counselling for romantic couples, mothers & daughters and business partners, along with psycho-education through her teaching, writing and speaking.



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Presenters Biographies

Matt Hynes

Matt Hynes is a psychologist who works with children outside in his garden. He began exploring somatic intersubjective Self Psychology eight years ago and has found it to be a rich and useful framework for his style of work. Matt was previously trained in the Circle of Security (Intensive) intervention (attachment psychology) and is a senior mentor at the Bluegum Bushcraft family camps (using the Coyote Nature-Mentoring model). Matt also works with a therapy dog, fire, bird language and basic tracking. All of these gain explanatory power from the theories and practices explored by the Canberra and Region Self Psychology Community (CRSPC).

Dr. Enzo Tieppo

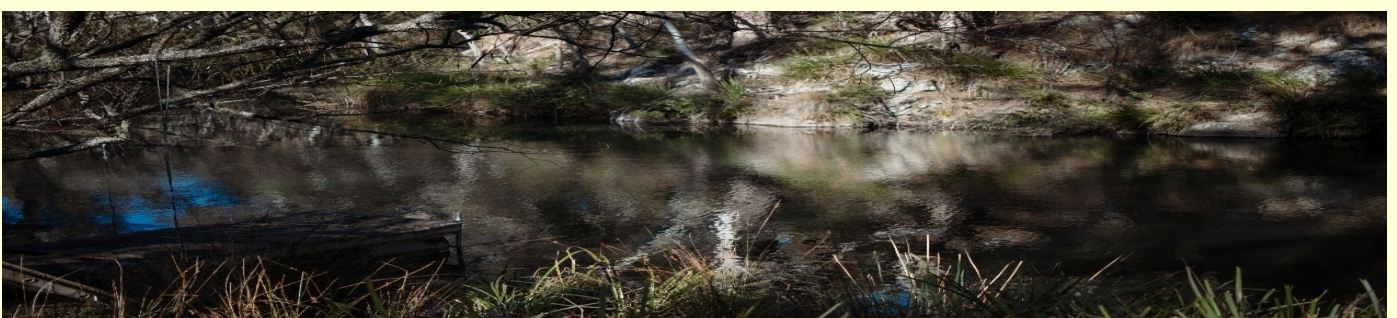
Enzo is a psychiatrist working in private practice in Melbourne. He has had a long-term interest in psychoanalytic psychotherapy, having had the good fortune to be exposed from early in his psychiatric training to various psychoanalytically trained mentors. He was subsequently introduced to Psychoanalytic Self Psychology and undertook training in the Self Psychology model through the Melbourne College of Contemporary Psychotherapy. He is a current member of IAPSP and Training and Research in Intersubjective Self Psychology.

Dr. Rachelle Dawson

Rachelle is a clinical psychologist, psychotherapist and research associate in an interdisciplinary private practice in Canberra. As a research associate, she is involved in the coordination of two research projects exploring ketamine infusion therapy and adjunctive psychotherapy for posttraumatic stress and depression. As a psychologist, she works primarily from a relational psychodynamic approach, but also draws from her training in cognitive behavioural therapies (CBT, ACT, DBT) and EMDR. Rachelle provides supervision to prov. psychologists and registrars.

Mick Haines

Mick is a Accredited Mental Health Social worker and Psychotherapist in his private practice, Speakeasy Canberra. He has extensive training in the addiction field, and has trained in delivering psychedelic psychotherapies, as well as in the conversational model of psychodynamic psychotherapy. He works with a spectrum of presentations, specialising in addiction, disorders of self, and complex trauma.



2026 CRSPC Conference Acknowledgements

The CRSPC would like to offer our deep and sincere gratitude to the following people and organisations who have supported this conference.

Steve Rohan-Jones— logistical and technical support

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Stephen Tang—loan and set up of audio, visual, online technology

Karen Stewart—transportation support

Mrs Margaret Lee—gift of Dr. Ron Lee's texts and pictures

EAPSP (Empathink Assoc for Psychoanalytic Self Psych) - financial support

Twenty Four Patisserie—delicious pastries and savouries

Denman Community Centre—excellent location and facilities

