



# The Resurrection of Agency from the Ashes of War:

## A Son as Therapist to his Father

**Jonathan H. Slavin, Ph.D., ABPP**

Saturday, September 6, 2014 from 9:15 - 12:15

University of Toronto, Victoria College VIC211

75 Queen's Park Crescent 9:15 a.m.—12:15 p.m.

### Summary

*"I've always felt that a crisis was necessary to shake off a dead, shallow, wasteful, debilitating relationship with my parents,"* Kurt wrote, in introducing himself to his soon-to-be therapist. And he was having a crisis. Thirty-one years old, the ruins of many failed relationships strewn about him, his life adrift, Kurt was drowning in an existential morass.

Kurt had no idea what was wrong nor how to rescue himself. He had no childhood trauma. Perhaps the most outstanding memory of childhood was after he went into the basement workshop to make some things. Dad came down to see what was happening. The next day there was a padlock on the door. There was no explanation. It was never removed. Such was Kurt's experience of his father. The way in to a relationship was locked, and it seared his soul. Kurt longed to feel, "two men together, engaging the world." But it was two men apart.

### Format

In this program, Kurt's treatment will be presented through audio excerpts from recorded sessions, used with permission. During the course of this 18 month treatment the frozen father-son relationship transformed in the unexpected and dramatic recognition of the father's trauma and its effects upon his son.

Discussion of this treatment will focus on the way in which trauma is conveyed and constructed within families in the interpersonal transactions that suffocate agency, and how these frozen pathways may be unlocked in treatment. In this context we will explain and examine the concept of personal agency as it emerges in development (in the context of a brief video that will be shown entitled "Mama why you crying"), and how it may be disrupted in trauma and in other developmental difficulties. From this perspective we will look at the challenge to therapists in negotiating their own and their patients' agency in treatment.

It is expected that the detailed clinical nature of the presentation will foster considerable discussion.

### Learning Objectives:

1. Participants will learn some of the specific mechanisms by which trauma is constructed and transmitted intergenerationally, in interpersonal transactions in the family, and how these may be addressed in treatment.
2. Participants will learn to recognize the signs that indicate that unacknowledged trauma may be deeply affecting the lives, work, and relational functioning of patients.
3. Participants will learn about the critical role of a sense of personal agency in development, treatment and clinical supervision.

### About the Presenter

**Jonathan H. Slavin, Ph.D., ABPP**, is Clinical Instructor, Dept. of Psychiatry, Harvard Medical School; he is Former President of the Division of Psychoanalysis (39), American Psychological Association and Founding President, Massachusetts Institute for Psychoanalysis. He was the founding director of the Tufts University Counseling Center (1970-2006). Dr. Slavin's published work has focused on fundamental human elements in the psychoanalytic relationship including love, sexuality, desire, truthfulness, and personal agency, and their role in the repair of the mind.

### REGISTRATION DETAILS

Participation is FREE to members and guests of TSCP. To check your membership status, please contact the administration office.

RSVPs are required; please call **416.288.8060** or email [info@tscp.on.ca](mailto:info@tscp.on.ca)

RSVP deadline is  
August 29, 2014