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MEET OUR SPEAKERS

TREE OF LIFE 20TH CELEBRATION

20NOVEMBER2026

IndianYMCA – Mahatma GandhiHall:41 Fitzroy Square,Fitzrovia,London, W1T 6AQ, United Kingdom

9:30am – 17:00pm

The Institute of Narrative Therapy

ROOTS AND GROUND

The Tree of Life methodology was developed by Ncazelo Ncube-Mlilo in collaboration with David Denborough in 2006. It is often desrcibed a as a culturally sensitive narrative therapy methodology that helps people to tell their stories in ways that make them stronger and more hopeful about life and the future. It helps children, families, and communities affected by trauma to reconnect with their strengths, identities, values, hopes and dreams. Now used in more than 60 countries, the Tree of Life is internationally recognised as an innovative approach to healing and psychosocial support.



Ncazelo Ncube-Mlilo is an internationally renowned narrative therapist, psychologist, and psychosocial specialist based in Johannesburg, best known for co-developing the globally recognised Tree of Life methodology with David Denborough in 2006. The Tree of Life approach is now used in more than 30 countries to support communities affected by trauma, violence, poverty, HIV and AIDS, and conflict. She is the founder of PHOLA and is widely recognised for her work in trauma-informed care, community healing, and culturally grounded mental health interventions.



David Denborough works as a community worker, teacher and writer/editor for Dulwich Centre and is particularly interested in cross-cultural partnerships which limit the chances of psychological colonization and create possibilities for cross-cultural inventions, such as the Team of Life Narrative Approach and Tree of Life (with Ncazelo Ncube-Mlilo). These collective narrative methodologies seek to assist people to address the effects of traumatic experiences without having to speak directly about them. dd is also vitally interested in how collective narrative practices can spark and/or sustain social movement and in projects that respond to racism and seek to strengthen social cohesion/inclusion. Dd is an Associate Professor at the University of Melbourne, coordinates the Master of Narrative Therapy and Community Work and supports graduate researchers to generate innovative methodologies.

ROOTS IN THE UK

The following people have contributedto entrenchingthe Tree of Life inmental healthservices in the UK. They have been inspired by the Tree of Life and havebeen planting Trees of Life across variousUK services. These individuals include Glenda Fredman, Georgia Illiopoulou, Heleni Andreadi, Isabelle Ekdawi, and Angela Bryne in adult services; Eleanor Martin in older adult services; and Gillian Hughes, Lucy Casdagli, Sara Portnoy in children's services.



Dr Angela Byrne is a consultant clinical psychologist at Central and Northwest London NHS Trust, where she leads on the development of community psychology approaches. She also works in the Voluntary and Community Sector with a number of organisations, mainly in East London. She has a passion for improving services for communities who have been historically marginalised and she has been working with the Tree of Life since 2008.



Heleni Georgia Andreadi is a systemic psychotherapist, supervisor, and trainer with over twenty years of experience in adult mental health and children's social care. She currently serves as Head of Family Therapy and Courses Director at the Prudence Skynner Family & Couple Therapy Clinic, SWLSTG NHS Trust. Her work is driven by a commitment to anti-oppressive and anti-stigmatizing practices, focusing on how they shape responsibilities and responses to adversity in public services. She values collaborating with consultants by experience in her clinical practice, training, and writing, and has been using the Tree of Life methodology.



Georgia Iliopoulou is a Systemic & Family Psychotherapist with a strong interest in Narrative Therapy and in people's responses to trauma. She has worked with adults affected by HIV, with foster carers, social workers, and with children and families struggling with the effects of life adversities, power imbalances, and social injustices. She currently works in a CAMHS team based in Merton Children Social Care. She's used the Tree of Life in various contexts. Today, she will interview some participants from the Tree of Life workshop that took place about 20 years ago.

ROOTS IN THE UK



Sara Portnoy is a consultant clinical psychologist with over 30 years of experience working with young people with significant health conditions and their families. For the past 20 years, she has worked at University College Hospital in London. In 2012, Sara, together with Dr. Glenda Fredman, began to create the Beads of Life, which is a metaphorical practice inspired by the Tree of Life and uses beads as hooks to hang the many stories in a person's life. She has been running Beads of Life Groups with young people who have a diagnosis of Cancer for over 12 years. These groups are heavily dependent on our wonderful Peer Mentors who co-facilitate the groups. Some of our Peer Mentors will be joining us to talk about their experiences of having been part of this project.



Lucy Casdagli is a Consultant Clinical Psychologist and Clinical Lead for the paediatric psychology team at University College London Hospital (UCLH), working with children and young people who live with health conditions and their families. Narrative Practices have been embedded in the team at UCLH for the past 25 years. Lucy joined the service in 2010 and, with Glenda Fredman, began offering Tree of Life groups to children and young people living with type 1 diabetes. These groups have continued to run in the service for over 16 years and are heavily dependent on our wonderful Peer Mentors who co-facilitate the groups. Some of our Peer Mentors will be joining us to talk about their experiences of having been part of this project

TESTIMONIES



Working in mental health within the NHS for over two decades, Jenny Chigwende has seen the impact of stigma and psychosocial pressures that can have devastating impacts on adults, children and families. Through Co-chairing the board of the charity 'W12 Together Please' she was excited to have the opportunity to serve the community and to support them to find health and wellbeing solutions that are self-sustaining. She is passionate about Community Psychology, Liberation Psychology and Social Justice. In both the NHS and through the 'W12 Together Please' charity, Jenny has co-produced Tree of Life, COURRAGE and O.U.T.T.R.A.G.E.D groups with communities and seen the powerful impact this has had.



Tanya-Louise Graham Matt is a mother, wife, community cultivator, and committed antiracist activist. As a systemic family, couples, and individual therapy practitioner, she has worked extensively with diverse groups, specializing in the Tree of Life methodology for nearly a decade. Her practice focuses on reaching, connecting, and supporting marginalized, racialized, and minoritized communities in both inpatient and outpatient settings across the UK. Through her work, Tanya-Louise fosters resilience, empowerment, and inclusion, ensuring that voices often silenced are heard and valued.



Deji Adeoshun is a dedicated youth development leader and Co-Founder of Change in Youth CIC with over 20 years of experience in the voluntary sector and a strong commitment to youth empowerment and systemic change. He is also the Founder and Director of Account Hackney and played a key role in the award-winning Tree of Life workshops supporting the mental health of young people from the African Caribbean community. He is passionate about mentorship, authenticity, and creating meaningful opportunities for young people.

TESTIMONIES

Change In Youth (CIC) Peer Leaders

The Tree of life award-winning strength based programmeis delivered by peer leaders from African, Caribbean and mixed heritage backgrounds in schools in London. The Change In Youth (CIC) Peer leaders have been delivering this programme in Hackney over the last 3 years to great success. They have reached 12/14 secondary schools in the Borough and in 2023-2024 won 5 awards for its impact on the community. These awards include; Most impactful project addressing health inequalities, Mental health and wellbeing gold award and Mental health and well being children and young people now award, to name a few.



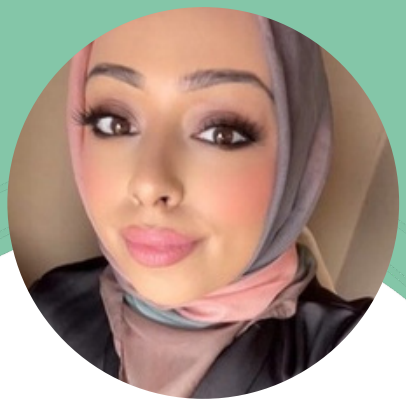
FLOWERS AND FRUITS



Dr Gillian Hughes is a Systemic Family Therapist at the Prudence Skynner Family and Couple Clinic, where she offers therapy, training, and supervision. Her work focuses on narrative practices, liberation approaches to psychology, and supporting marginalised communities through socially and culturally informed methods. She has developed Tree of Life programmes with refugee communities and completed a PhD in 2024 based on this work. Gillian also co-edited the book Liberation Practices: Towards Emotional Wellbeing through Dialogue with Taiwo Afuape.



Dr Kirsty Stubbs is a UK trained Clinical Psychologist passionate about community approaches, collective narrative practice and social justice. Her doctoral research explored Tree of Life facilitators' experiences of using the ToL methodology, across global community contexts, contributing to the growing base of knowledges that highlight the power, impact and uniqueness of the methodology. Kirsty will present the themes and implications of this research, with time to consider the use of narrative questioning and ToL as a research method as well as a research subject.



Dr Binish Khatoon is a qualitative methodologist at University of Manchester with over 10 years of experience in health research, specialising in exploratory qualitative studies focused on understanding lived experiences. Her research approach centres on creating culturally tailored, safe, and empowering spaces through creative arts and narrative therapy methods such as Tree of Life. She is passionate about engaging ethnically minoritised communities in research and building empathetic, non-oppressive relationships with participants throughout the research process.