



**2019 CULTURE OF GENTLENESS CONFERENCE**  
***STAYING STRONG IN THE BROKEN PLACES***

**AUGUST 22-23 2019**  
**WEBER'S INN – ANN ARBOR**

**REGISTER AT:**

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/2019-culture-of-gentleness-conference-tickets-58000702663>

## 2019 Culture of Gentleness Schedule of Events

### Thursday, August 22nd

**8:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m. – Breakfast**

**9:00 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. – Keynote Presentation – Trauma Informed Support for People with Intellectual Disabilities**

***Presenter: Karyn Harvey, Ph.D., Director of Programs and Development, Park Avenue Group***

This presentation will provide an overview of the sources of trauma in the lives of people with intellectual disabilities, the biological and psychological effects of this trauma and the key ingredients for healing. It will also emphasize the programmatic factors critical to post traumatic recovery. Finally, elements of positive psychology critical to recovery will also be discussed.

Dr. Karyn Harvey has worked in the field of intellectual disabilities for over 25 years. In that time she's published two books, as well as numerous articles, on therapeutic interventions for individuals with IDD. *Positive Identity Development: An Alternative Treatment Approach for Individuals with Mild and Moderate Intellectual Disabilities* (2009) covers topics on theory and guidance for clinicians utilizing therapy for individuals with ID. *Trauma-Informed Behavioral Interventions: What Works and What Doesn't* (2012) presents a trauma-informed care approach to working with individuals with ID both programmatically and clinically. In addition to her published research, Karyn works as the Assistant Executive Director of Quality Supports for the Arc of Baltimore and as an adjunct professor at the University of Baltimore's graduate psychology program.

**10:30 a.m. to 10:45 a.m. -- Break**

**10:45 a.m. to 11:45 a.m. – Concurrent Sessions**

**Where Do We Get Our Needs Met?**

***Presenter: Jen Haak, LBSW, Healthwest***

Working in the helping profession requires a tremendous amount of giving to others. In some situations, the care that is given is not always appreciated or wanted. When we as caregivers are hard-wired for connectedness and companionship and we experience rejection, disrespect and in some cases, verbal/physical aggression by the individuals we are trying to support, our ability to regulate our own emotions/actions can become increasingly more difficult. This presentation will target ways to get our needs met as caregivers so that when providing care we increase our ability to give what is needed more effectively when times are tough.

**Person-Centered Planning in a Culture of Gentleness**

***Presenter: Sheldon Schwitek, Consultant and Founder, In the Company of Others***

As a system, we have been talking about person-centered planning for over 30 years and its influence on the system of care is becoming more obvious. With the implementation of the

Home Based Community Waiver and the need to find alternative ways to provide community based supports in places other than sheltered workshops and programs; we are being called to re-examine the philosophy of Person-Centered concepts. In this re-examination, we must have a clearer understanding of its purpose in supporting people to have lives full of connections and contribution. A Culture of Gentleness is a perfect framework to facilitate our ongoing Person-Centered work. Through conversation, videos and group activities we will explore the concepts of person-centeredness. We all benefit from looking through a lens that holds people and their dreams at the center of ALL of the relationships and levels of participation they wish to have in their lives.

### **Greeting the Autism Spectrum with an Array of Services in a Residential Setting**

***Presenters: Dave Simpson, Erin Eickhoff, Robert Ordiway, LLPC, Northern Lakes Community Mental Health***

Join us to explore how the cultures of Autism, gentleness and specialized residential services can thrive in a multidisciplinary residential environment. Northern Lakes CMHA opened a directly operated home dedicated to persons living on the Autism Spectrum in 2015. Successfully serving persons aged 18-53 in a community-based home has resulted in many lessons learned for the agency, home staff and clinical practitioners. All 4 residents teach us daily how to hone our practices. Presenters will include an administrator, clinician and home supervisor. Presenters will share and consult regarding pre-placement transition planning, communication devices, environmental modifications as well as operational and staffing innovations. This visually exciting presentation will provide a road map to agencies considering a similar journey.

### **Diversity of Lifestyle in the Community**

***Presenters: Ray Schuhholz and Andre Robinson, Certified Peer Mentors, Community Living Services***

A brief history of mental health from the perspective of two individuals who receive services. This presentation will be led by two individuals who had very different early-life experiences but were able to navigate the system toward successful lives.

**11:45 a.m. to 12:45 p.m. – Lunch**

**12:45 p.m. to 1:45 p.m. – Concurrent Sessions**

### **Positive Identity Development**

***Presenter: Karyn Harvey, Ph.D., Director of Programs and Development, Park Avenue Group***

This presentation will discuss the process of identity development in the lives of individuals with intellectual disabilities. It will explore the process of development and the ways in which positive identity can be enhanced and supported. It will also discuss the key elements of happiness critical in the lives of people with intellectual disabilities.

### **The Power to Inspire**

**Presenter: Michael A. Vincent, B.A., Master Mentor in Gentle Teaching**

Over the past several years I have recognized an increasing importance to myself of the value and power of moral themes. These brief messages of word and of action serve to communicate and reinforce the goodness of the other and the meaning of being a caring and participating individual. The intentional application of the moral themes model can inspire persons supported, care givers and ourselves in the deep meaning of the 4 pillars of gentleness and concrete power of our use of the 4 tools of gentleness.

### **Understanding the Parent Perspective**

**Presenter: Midge Appel, M.A., RTS, CSA, CCDP**

This presentation will share the difficulties many families face is in letting go of the care of your loved one. From a parent's perspective, Midge will share how special it is for family to be able to walk away and know their loved one is safe, cared for, and loved. Both the challenges and successes will be shared to inspire hope for both those facing similar experiences and for those caring for someone else's loved one.

### **A Culture of Gentleness Beyond Our Walls**

**Presenter: Carolynne VanderVeen, LMSW, QIDP and Stephanie Blaszyck, LMSW, QIDP, MORC, Inc.**

We know the impact a Culture of Gentleness has on the individuals we serve and the positive impact it has on all of our daily lives. Unfortunately, not all areas we interact with are aware of a Culture of Gentleness. Even a little introduction to using a Culture of Gentleness and a short training for these other areas can create not only a more positive experience for our individuals, but can also produce better outcomes. Some areas of special interest would be doctor's offices, dental offices, hospitals, and schools.

**1:45 p.m. to 2:00 p.m. – Break**

**2:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. – Concurrent Sessions**

### **Three Simple Words**

**Presenter: Deirdre Mercer, LBSW, QIDP, Board Member, Third Circle, Inc.**

The road to happiness is not an easy journey. The road is filled with twists and turns and a few Michigan sized pot holes. A solid, well poured foundation can provide the support needed to navigate this road. For three years I have been sharing my life with the person who laid the earliest foundation of trust for me, who patched the pot holes that disappointment and heartbreak created, and poured a fresh layer of hope for me each and every year. The opportunity to pave a new road each day building on the very same foundation she built for me has awakened in me a new understanding. Perhaps navigating this road doesn't have to be difficult at all. Perhaps we can navigate this journey with Three Simple Words.

### **Embracing Humor as the Fifth Tool**

***Presenter: Jeff Whitcher, LBSW, QIDP, MORC, Inc.***

Laughter truly is the best medicine and its benefits extend far beyond providing levity in an otherwise stressful workday. This fun, engaging presentation will focus on harnessing the power of humor to enhance our roles as caregivers and as a tool to develop meaningful connections with others while sustaining positivity and calmness within ourselves.

### **The Power of Play Throughout the Lifespan**

***Presenter: Karen Harris, MS, BS, ORT/L, Founder and CEO, Integrated Living, Inc.***

The importance of play throughout the lifespan has become a frequent topic in the literature, social media discussions, conference topics, and in discussions regarding mental health, physical well-being, social relationships, and skill development across several areas. Play is a natural means to bring people together, promote increased bonding, joyful interactions, as well as a means of reducing anxiety and stress. This presentation will discuss some of the science of play from a cognitive, motor, and psychological perspective, discuss how play can transform environments into more joyful and fulfilling places for people with developmental disabilities, and promote bonding between caregivers and persons served as well as persons served with each other.

### **Shaping a Culture of Equality**

***Presenters: Aaron Bakken, Residential Coordinator, Drew Kersjes, LLMSW, Leslie Bartlett, MA, LLP, Residential Coordinator, and Victoria Thomas-Boyd, Residential Coordinator, CMHA of Clinton-Eaton-Ingham***

This training will connect how implicit bias affects our ability to create environments that promote the equal treatment of individuals supported. This training will utilize an array of activities to assist the learner in not only defining equality but also identifying bias. We also endeavor to facilitate conversation in a way that connects individuals from various backgrounds. This format would allow for a sense of connectedness to our joint responsibility to not only advocate but ultimately teach our community.

**3:00 p.m. to 3:15 p.m. – Break**

**3:15 p.m. to 4:15 p.m. – World Café**

## **Friday, August 23rd**

**8:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m. – Breakfast**

**9:00 a.m. to 10:15 a.m. – Key Note Presentation**

**Where Do Caregivers Come From?**

***Ann Liesen, Ph.D., LPC, NCC, LBSW, QIDP***

What makes a caregiver a caregiver? What draws a person to want to reach out and help others heal during moments of fear, anguish, and suffering? Current research on caregiving focuses on negative mental health outcomes for the caregiver; compassion fatigue, vicarious trauma, and burn out. These are very real phenomena's that demand our time and attention. And still, there are greater forces at play that call people to the helping profession and affords caregivers the strength to endure. Standing so close to other's emotional battle fields is often scary, sad, and tiresome. Yet, we stay committed to the cause of helping others overcome pain, oppression and marginalization. Sharing and reflecting on her own Journey, Dr. Liesen will invite you to explore how the caregiver's own experience with trauma exposure, victimization, and loss produces altruistic drives that allow us to connect deeply with the suffering of others and produce intrinsic motivation to heal.

Dr. Ann Liesen is a Licensed Professional Counselor with a Ph.D. in Counseling Education. She started her journey supporting individuals with developmental disabilities and mental illness over 30 years ago as a direct care worker, home manger, support coordinator and mental health counselor. In addition to her 22 years of service at MORC, she is an adjunct professor for the Counseling Department at Oakland University, and an international caregiver consultant.

**10:15 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. -- Break**

**10:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. – Concurrent Sessions**

**One Person's Dream Narrated the Social Story**

***Presenter: Anthony McCrovitz, Ph.D., LMHC, BCPC, IMH-E, DAPA***

Gentle Teaching initiatives at Globe Star cultivate self-determination and social well-being, using a quality of life model of services. A quality of life model raises a platform of companionship and community to expand the foundation of safe, loved, loving, and engaged with nine 'safe and loved' destinations that expand opportunities for social-emotional growth. Assessment tools and a Personal Teaching Planner (PTP) increase skillful and cultural competence in the role of the engaged professional, for navigating mentoring goals and developing a practical and sustainable narrative for one's authentic voice and their unfolding story.

## **Beyond Schedule Boards**

***Presenter: Andy Sonntag, Program Coordinator, Life Centers Wayne County Residential Program***

"Beyond 'Schedule Boards' -Beefing-up Structure's Weight Bearing Ability" presentation will highlight areas of Structure available during personal interactions, and provide insight to ways Structure can be better used to bear the demands instead of taxing the relationship. It will also highlight the interaction between Structure and the other Elements.

## **That Gentle Caregiver's "Attitude" that Heals and Builds Positive Relationships**

***Presenter: Grace Nelson-Odinma, M.Ed., QIDP, PGC-H, QMHP***

This training will focus on caregivers approach to caregiving and how the caregiver's attitude can make a difference in the way support is received by the individual with disability and those with challenging behaviors.

## **Moving from Awareness to Acceptance: Celebrating Neurodiversity**

***Presenter: Alex Kimmel, Owner, The Self-Determinator; Certified Peer Mentor***

Acceptance is where trust is present and success can thrive! Neurodiversity is the acceptance and celebration of those that operate other than what most of the world considers to be normal and to help society to realize no one really has the right to name what someone else's normal should be. Acceptance celebrates our differences. Moving away from awareness to moves us from talk to action. Acceptance comes about when each person's individual wiring is respected. To me, the only way to be able to accept me is to respect my needs to feel safe and loved. The Culture of Gentleness is a philosophy I embrace because it lets ME decide what I view as safe and loved. This workshop is interactive with participant involvement, humor, video clips and take homes.

**11:45 p.m. to 1:00 p.m. – Lunch**

**1:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m. – Concurrent Sessions**

## **Caring for the Caregiver**

***Presenter: Ann Liesen Ph.D., LPC, NCC, LCSW, QIPD, MORC, Inc.***

During this seminar, participants will journey into the everyday life experience of families caring for children with complex special needs and challenging behaviors. Using stories from the field and qualitative research, participants will develop an understanding of common strains on the parent-child relationship and barriers to family unity. Participants will learn the definition of "helping" professionals from the parents' perspectives. Participants will discover the value of applying gentle teaching principles of safe, loved, engaged and loving when working with parents and family members as a necessary condition for promoting the wellbeing of the child.

### **Immediate Recovery**

***Presenters: Tree Lipar, Director of Training, Connie Sawtell, and Morgan Cook, Spectrum Community Services***

Immediate Recovery was developed to support management in maintaining a Culture of Gentleness while addressing job performance concerns as they occur. When job performance needs to be discussed many times it is avoided, because there was not a quick and efficient way to discuss concerns without offending or creating feelings within the individual of not being safe and valued. At Spectrum Community Services, we have written and implemented an innovative way to address job performance concerns immediately using an approach that maintains a safe and valued healthy work environment for all. The best part of immediate recovery is it is done immediately, creating positive teachable moments and correcting concerns before they become habits.

### **Redefining Independence**

***Presenter: James Abid, LBSW, Certified Gentle Teaching Mentor***

This session will explore current Social Work practices related to Person Centered Planning, goal writing and futures planning. We will challenge our current beliefs revolving around assisting people to gain skills, increase abilities and the idea that a person has to earn the right to live independently. We will look at documentation from the Medicaid Manual, Person Centered Planning and real life examples that support ideas put forth by John McGee in an effort to promote Interdependence and self-determined lives through creating Community, Companionship and Connectedness.

### **Culture of Gentleness in Kansas City**

***Presenters: Tracy Mauk, Agency Relations Supervisor, Master Mentor and Sarah Vallandingham, Agency Relations Specialist, Gentle Teaching Educator, Eitas***

In Kansas City Missouri, we have been creating a Culture of Gentleness for the past 11 years in an effort to change the system of care in Jackson County. Eitas has trained approximately 1500 people as well as guided local agencies to develop and train direct care professionals. Nearly 100 local and regional providers have participated in training and mentoring to change the culture and become a more trauma informed system. By integrating new, best practice information around being trauma informed into our trainings, change is happening! Staff turnover and burnout are being reduced. Person Centered plans reflect what makes people feel safe and have a strong focus on building relationships. We have moved into a phase of creating processes that will develop gentle teachers beyond what they learn in training and grow mentors in an effort to spread our message of compassion to a greater number of people. Through this journey, we have developed practical tools, a system of support, processes and structure, all of which we will share with you.

**2:00 p.m. – Conference Adjourns**