

The Therapists Subjectivity



with Yael Shahar

Weekly Warm Soup

On the Street

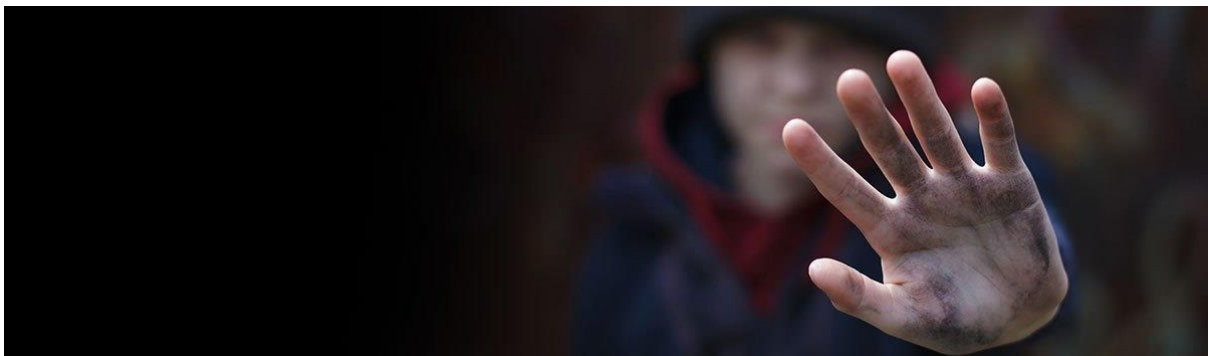
If you look for Chris, most likely you'll find him at the street corner between the candy store and the barber. For Chris, who is eighteen, the street has been a familiar place for quite a while. His late home, where he lived, he can barely remember. He is a slim and flexy boy, who knows the street game well. If you meet him, you won't feel threatened but you wouldn't want to stay around him for too long either. It has been a while since he has had a proper shower and washed his clothes. Chris gets his meals from other homeless lads in exchange for cigarettes. He gets the cigarettes by begging and by other questionable ways. He uses the bench in the park to have some rest at night, in the cold wintery nights he might find a shelter among his lads from the street.



I see Chris and my heart shrinks and expands. I wish I could adopt him but all I can offer him is one home-made meal a week. At first, getting my invitation, Chris hesitates. A warm meal? Sitting by a table to dine? It has been a long time since he had a proper meal with other people. Chris arrives. You can tell that it's uncomfortable for him to be in my presence and at my home. Chris sits with me, and we eat. Sometimes it's a stew, other times it's a warm soup. He likes the food and leaves full and satisfied back to the street, back to his spot. After a few hours, the memory of the warm soup fades and in couple of days is forgotten.

Every Monday at 2:00 pm he arrives for our shared meal. Until one day he stopped coming. I was worried at first, then felt hurt. I went out to look for him. It wasn't that hard. Chris sat at his regular street corner, between the candy shop and the barber.

"Chris," I say as I approach him. "I missed you. You hadn't come for few weeks. Is everything ok?"



Chris stands up. I see how his eyes are filling with rage.

"Who do you think you are?" he protests. "You are coming here, offering me your home, serving me a free meal. What did you think would happen? Have you ever thought what happens after I leave your home? Have you thought, where am I returning to? Until we met I knew exactly the worth of my life, I knew the price I'm paying by being a lonely homeless child. But since you showed up in my life I can feel each achy bone in my body; I feel my tensed muscles; I notice the cold wind on my bare face. Since you reminded me what a warm meal is, I am cold. Every day I'm cold. You brought me to your home, thinking that you are saving me. Just so you know," Chris raises his voice, "I

don't forgive you. I can't forgive you for putting my lame reality in front of me. I rather forget you and your warm meals. If I want to survive my life here, I need all my resources available. If you care about me, leave me and never come back. Never offer a homeless guy only one warm meal a week."

In My Office

Every Monday at 2:00 pm I open my clinic to Paul, a young man who came to see me dealing with depression, following a breakup. Paul tells me about his loneliness, his depression and his pain of looking for a home. He can't feel belonged in this world and he feels miserable. And I'm there. I offer him my heart and my time. I want to believe that if he finds a loving and supporting place he will internalise it and get resources to find his way to his heart again; to find meaning to his existence and find somehow inside of him a sense of a home that he longs for so much.

One evening I get a message from him. "I am miserable and all alone. Even with people I'm alone. It doesn't help that I'm getting an hour a week of your time. I feel better for an hour but then I go back to my empty flat. No one is waiting for me there. I see no point of coming back to therapy. I prefer my loneliness without illusion and pretence. I'm alone and you can do nothing about it. And no it doesn't help me that you think of me during the week."



Reflection

Immediately I think about Chris and ask myself, *does one warm meal a week have any meaning? What benefits does it offer if after eating there's only a cold*

street waiting for him? I think about clients who don't know a secure attachment, about clients in crisis with no family or social support. How beneficial is a weekly session after all?

Bigger and wiser people than me have examined the benefit of the therapeutic frame and the value that a weekly session has. They understand that a generative relationship can heal and create intra-psychic and interpersonal connections. Nevertheless, I sometimes feel uncomfortable. I think about all the 'homeless' people who come to see me. I think about all those people who had no stable and loving mother; who have not learned about relationships. That weren't taught to open their heart. I think of all the girls and women who don't know that touch can be also pleasurable; that touch doesn't have to hurt, wound or penetrate.

And here they are, coming to see me every week asking for more and more. But all I can give is one hour a week; an hour that belongs to them; that I'm fully present for them. An hour that I try being a container for their unlimited hunger, a container for the pain and suffering they went through. And the kitchen is busy, producing warm meals. Some come in the following week sharing about the tasty meal they had, some return, their faces drooping over a week of feeling homeless, a cold and rainy week of wandering. They suffer and they blame. What's the point of you opening the knowledge for something that is unreachable? What is the value of you teaching us about loving touch, when after the session we are going back to the rough hand, back to drama called life?

Is it responsible of me offering such a limited space? What's the point in one warm soup a week?

My name is Yael Shahar. I've had intensive training in relational body psychotherapy, following my core training at the London School of Biodynamic Psychotherapy in the UK. I have also trained in early intervention for infants and young children on the autism spectrum, a job that relies on the attachment theory and therapy through interplay—Reciprocal Play Therapy. I'm currently building my clinical practice and learning to deal with new dynamics that this place provides me. I believe that part of the therapeutic process is to offer a safe place where we can find our voice, the credo of our individual and personal commitment to act accordingly. I offer the space between us as a non-

judgmental place of investigation and search for the truth that everyone holds in their heart.

I feel committed to the profession, and I find that hope and faith motivate me in my work.

For more information please visit my website:

