



*Group Learning and Interactive Modules  
Promoting Self Awareness and Education about Sight Loss*



#### **AWARENESS RAISING CPD WORKSHOPS FOR COUNSELLORS AND PSYCHOTHERAPISTS**

- **The Experiences of A Visually Impaired Counsellor in Training**
- **Seeing Ability: Working with Diversity in Private Practice**
- **On Becoming A Blind Researcher: A Blind Student's Personal Journey through his Masters in Counselling**

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## ABOUT ME

My name is Martin Rigby. I am a qualified, registered and experienced person-centred counsellor working in private practice in Preston, Leigh and across North West England.

I provide face-to-face, telephone, online and email counselling to clients of all ages, cultures and social backgrounds on a wide range of issues including anxiety, bereavement, depression, disability, eating disorders, low self-esteem, mental health issues, relationship difficulties, self-harm and sexuality. In particular I specialise in counselling clients with disabilities or longterm health conditions, carers, students and parents with young families.

On a personal level I am also registered blind and this is an integral part of who I am, what I do and everything I stand for. I am totally blind in my right eye and have a small amount of useful vision in my left eye. Over the years my sight has gradually deteriorated meaning I have continually had to adjust, adapt and learn to cope with life's daily challenges and understand how my visual impairment impacts on my life, work and relationships.

'Throughout my life I have found that being blind has given me a unique insight into my abilities and how I view the world around me. Now through my GLIMPSES workshops I want to share my journey with others and give you the opportunity to ask the questions that often don't get asked on many therapy training courses.'



*PHOTO TAKEN WITH WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS AT UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK (FEBRUARY 2016)*

LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION

March 2016

To Whom it May Concern,

Martin Rigby

*I am pleased to be able to provide a reference for Martin and a recommendation for his professional services. I have worked with Martin since September 2012 mainly as his supervisor on his MSc studies at University of Central Lancashire (UCLan). More recently, since I took up my post in the Centre for Lifelong Learning, Warwick University, I invited him to offer his workshop on Visual Impairment and Counselling which he duly completed to very good effect on February 5th 2016. The feedback from students for these workshops was consistently positive, with students remarking how much they had learned about the experiences of people with visual impairments and the possible impacts of this in the counselling room.*

*While at UCLan I always found Martin to be a thoroughly reliable and committed student who produced a valuable and innovative piece of research on the experiences of students on counselling training who have visual impairment which he is now putting to good use to inform the design and delivery of his workshops. These heighten awareness, and promote understanding, of the needs of people who have visual impairments – an invaluable asset for the knowledge base of counseling students, including those on the Foundation Degree Counselling and Psychotherapy at Warwick (BACP accredited professional training).*

*I recommend Martin to your organization without reservation.*

Yours sincerely,



Dr Phil Goss

*Director Counselling & Psychotherapy, Centre for Lifelong Learning, University of Warwick*

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## ABOUT GLIMPSES WORKSHOPS FOR THERAPISTS

'I hope that my GLIMPSES workshops will help to open people's eyes, change attitudes and inspire others to experience the difference'

Thank you for reading my GLIMPSES workshop booklet. Perhaps you are reading this as a course leader who would like to offer your counselling students more coverage of difference and diversity issues in the course curriculum. Maybe you are a counselling trainee who is keen to enhance your counselling skills and self-awareness before you start your counselling placement. Or alternatively you could be a qualified therapist working in private practice or clinical supervisor who is keen to gain CPD on a topic that often doesn't get included or may only be a small part of many therapy training programmes

Whatever your needs, whatever your experience, GLIMPSES can offer something different for you.

GLIMPSES Workshops for Therapists are specifically designed to meet the training and professional development needs of trainee and qualified counsellors and psychotherapists, counselling tutors and supervisors. Delivered in an informal, relaxed and student-centred way, these experiential, interactive and awareness raising modules are suitable both for the novice trainee therapist who is just setting out on a journey of self-discovery and for the more experienced practitioner who will be able to integrate new learning and self-awareness into their everyday life and work.



**Group Learning and Interactive Modules Promoting Self Awareness and Education about Sight Loss (G.L.I.M.P.S.E.S.)**

GLIMPSES are stimulating and thought-provoking workshops which are different to many other disability awareness courses in that each workshop aims to offer a unique personal insight into the challenges and opportunities of living, studying and working with sight loss and training to be a professional therapist when you have a disability. Delivered by Martin Rigby, an experienced, qualified and registered counsellor, who has lived with sight loss for his whole life, all activities are thoughtfully designed to be student-centred and involve a healthy mix of self-reflection, small group interaction and whole group discussion.

*'Catch a glimpse....experience the difference'*

## BACKGROUND TO MASTERS RESEARCH

Throughout my early education I found that as a blind student I was able to flourish academically, develop my independent living and social skills and become more confident as a person due to experiencing a fully inclusive learning environment. I attended a number of special schools for blind and partially sighted children and my experiences of such inclusion consisted of learning in small groups, having regular access to specialist equipment and resources for visually impaired people and being taught by teachers with many years of experience of sight loss and disability.

However when I left school, went to university and became more aware of the sighted world I found I experienced a wider range of social attitudes towards my sight loss. I met some wonderful people who were very caring, supportive and understanding. But sometimes I also came across attitudes which could be negative, even hurtful, and often left me feeling excluded or discriminated against in some way. I recall, for example, how I was forced to leave my first paid job because the computers could not be adapted with the speech software I use to suit my needs. I also remember how during my counselling training I would sometimes receive course handouts from tutors that were not accessible to me. On another occasion during one of my counselling courses I was shocked when I asked one of my peers for assistance and they turned round to me and told me quite bluntly that they were “not just on the course to be my carer!”

During my Masters in Counselling I started to read more in depth books, journals and articles about the experiences of people living with sight loss and disability and the history of the disability movement. I found out that there is to date not a lot that has actually been written or research undertaken about the experiences of people who are blind receiving counselling or even working as professional therapist themselves. I discovered claims in the literature that counsellors and psychotherapists can and do sometimes hold negative or disabilist attitudes towards people with disabilities and these prejudices can manifest themselves in the counselling room or training environment. I was curious to investigate these claims further and to discover if other visually impaired trainee therapists had similar or different experiences to my own during their counselling training.

For my MSC dissertation I decided to conduct a small-scale qualitative study where I asked nine visually impaired trainee counsellors and psychotherapists about situations when they felt either included or excluded during their training. Through audio-recorded interviews I invited research participants to tell me what it was like applying for training, the quality of learning support they received, the nature of relationships with peers and tutors and what individual needs they felt they had from their training. The study produced some interesting and thought-provoking findings. Through my GLIMPSES workshops I hope to bring the themes of my research to life through sharing my own experiences, raising awareness among counsellors and psychotherapists (as well as other professionals) about the diverse needs and experiences of people living with sight loss and disability.

## THE EXPERIENCES OF A VISUALLY IMPAIRED COUNSELLOR IN TRAINING

This GLIMPSES CPD workshop is suitable for trainee counsellors and psychotherapists at all levels of training. It may also be of interest to counselling tutors and supervisors. It can be offered either as a half day or full day module to colleges and universities, private training organisations as well as groups of individual private practitioners.

During the workshop participants will:

- Hear about the life, work and training experiences of a counsellor who is blind.
- Discuss common myths and stereotypes about sight loss.
- Increase self-awareness of their thoughts, feelings and attitudes to sight loss.
- Use a video case study to consider how counselling training/work environments could be made more accessible for people experiencing sight loss and disability.

In the first part of the workshop I share some of my personal history and sight loss journey, describing some of the main challenges and opportunities I face in my daily life and work as a blind person. Workshop participants will be given the chance to try out for themselves some of the daily living aids, gadgets and technology I find essential to live independently. I also discuss my developing counselling work and give a brief overview of my Masters research, focusing on the experiences of visually impaired counsellors in training.

During an initial activity of self-reflection, workshop participants are given time to imagine a personal loss, invited to reflect upon their feelings about the loss and identify individual coping strategies. Working in small groups participants will then be asked to identify common thoughts, feelings and behaviours about sight loss from the perspective of self and others and discuss the potential impact upon relationships and the family system.

In other group activities workshop participants will watch a short clip from a video in which I talk to other therapists experiencing sight loss and disability about their training experiences and subsequent career. Workshop participants will then be asked to become aware of their own training experiences of working with issues of disability and diversity and will be invited to consider and share what they could do right now to make their own practice and training environment more accessible for people with sight loss and other disabilities.

## SEEING ABILITY: WORKING WITH DIVERSITY IN PRIVATE PRACTICE

This GLIMPSES CPD workshop is suitable for trainee counsellors and psychotherapists at all levels of training. It may also be of interest to counselling tutors and supervisors. It can be offered either as a half day or full day module to colleges and universities, private training organisations as well as individual private practitioners. During the workshop participants will:

- Hear about the life, work and training experiences of a counsellor who is blind.
- Gain greater self-awareness about common disability myths and stereotypes
- Share personal experiences of prejudice and discrimination.
- Consider different attitudes, prejudices and barriers which may arise at all stages of therapy.
- Discuss how to make counselling more accessible for people with disabilities, including such areas as marketing, website design, premises, service delivery and pricing.

In the first part of the workshop I share some of my personal history and sight loss journey. I talk about why I became a counsellor, how I found setting up my private practice and in what ways I would like to develop my work now. How do I find practising as a counsellor who is blind? What aspects do I need to consider to make my practice more accessible to people with disabilities? In sharing my own experiences I demonstrate to the group some daily living aids which I find essential both at home and at work.

Workshop participants are also introduced to a brief history of sight loss and disability in the UK, including key figures, important dates and the legislation that matters for providing a service to people with disabilities. The first small group activity of the workshop is a short awareness raising quiz in which participants will be asked to decide which statements about sight loss are true or false, thus distinguishing between some actual facts or popular myths. This leads into some personal self-reflection work during which attendees will be invited to recall a time or situation when they may have felt discriminated against in some way.

Working in small groups workshop participants will then look at a case study of a therapist in private practice counselling a client who is experiencing sight loss. Each group will be invited to consider the case study from the point of view of both therapist and client, paying particular attention to the range of attitudes, prejudices and barriers. In the final small group activity a video of me in discussion with other therapists experiencing sight loss and disability will be shown to attendees and then each group will be invited to focus on specific areas of working in private practice including marketing, website design, premises, service delivery and pricing. Workshop participants will share ideas about what they could do right now and in the future to make their private practice and therapeutic work more accessible for people with sight loss and disabilities.



# ON BECOMING A RESEARCHER: A BLIND STUDENT'S PERSONAL JOURNEY THROUGH HIS MASTERS IN COUNSELLING

This GLIMPSES CPD workshop is suitable for trainee counsellors and psychotherapists at all levels of training. It may also be of interest to counselling tutors and supervisors. It can be offered either as a half day or full day module to colleges and universities, private training organisations as well as individual private practitioners. During the workshop participants will:

- Hear about the life, work and training experiences of a counsellor who is blind.
- Share their own experiences of counselling training and get tips for managing the demands of postgraduate study.
- Learn about a Masters research study focusing on the experiences of visually impaired counsellors and psychotherapists in training.
- Use quotes from the literature as a starting point for discussing societal attitudes towards sight loss and disability.
- Explore how therapy training and client work could be made more accessible from the perspective of both course tutor and trainee therapists.

In the first part of the workshop I share some of my personal history and sight loss journey. I talk about why I became a counsellor, how I found setting up my private practice and in what ways I would like to develop my work further. I then deliver a short presentation on my MSC research study into the experiences of visually impaired counsellors in training. In this interactive presentation, delivered through a number of learning styles, I discuss the background to my research, why I chose my topic, how I carried out the study and what I found. In doing this I will reflect upon my amazing journey through postgraduate study, what I learnt about myself and what I would perhaps have done differently.

Workshop participants will have the opportunity to critically examine, discuss and experience my study findings (consisting of three master themes) through a variety of small group discussions, role plays and case studies.

In the final small group activity a video of me in discussion with other therapists experiencing sight loss and disability will be shown to attendees and then each group will be invited to consider how different aspects of training, including course delivery, client work, placements and supervision, could be made more accessible for therapists or clients experiencing sight loss and disability. Finally I will share my research recommendations with the whole group and workshop participants will be given further information about follow-up opportunities after the workshop and how they may continue to gain CPD in this area.

## Testimonials

Here are some comments and feedback given by therapists who have previously attended one of my GLIMPSES workshops:

*"Thank you. The course was fantastic. You are very inspiring with the challenges you have faced and how you have overcome them/dealt with them and what you have achieved."*

*"I thoroughly enjoyed listening to Martin's own experiences."*

*"I think the training was excellent and very relevant. It really opened my eyes to experiencing the challenges for blind people."*

*"As I'm currently working with a partially sighted person so this has been extremely beneficial to my training, giving me a great insight into understanding disability in counselling."*

*"I really enjoyed the workshop. It made me think/reflect deeply about the experiences of people with disabilities and impairments."*

*"The personal experiences of Martin really brought the subject to life for me. I'm also very interested in the research."*

*"The workshop was very well presented in a humorous and well-informed way. You have really widened my knowledge and understanding. Thank you."*

*"I enjoyed the personal experiences and links with how sight loss and disability can affect the whole family."*

# WORKSHOP RESOURCES AND NETWORKING

When you book to attend one of my GLIMPSES for Therapists workshops you will receive:

- A welcome letter confirming your payment, place at the workshop and venue information.
- A course brochure with details of all GLIMPSES for Therapists workshops.
- Suggested reading prior to the workshop.
- At the workshop itself all participants will be given:
- A workshop booklet including the workshop programme, activity descriptions, case studies and recommended reading list
- A CPD certificate.
- A copy of my quarterly Newsletter “Catch A Glimpse” and free subscription to future issues.

All course information is designed to be accessible and is available in a variety of formats including print, large print, audio CD and via email. If you have any specific accessibility requirements from the workshops then please make this clear at the time of booking. Please be aware that workshop venues are chosen with the aims of being accessible, convenient and comfortable for participants. All rooms are downstairs or with lift access, have disabled facilities and access to free parking. Light refreshments will be provided for each workshop and during full day events there will be a range of nearby places where participants can choose to eat or have lunch.

## Networking

One of the main benefits of attending my GLIMPSES workshops is that the learning doesn't stop there. During the workshop all participants will be invited to join my GLIMPSES Facebook Group. This is a private Facebook group specifically set up for people who have attended any of my workshops and is an interactive and supportive online community of like-minded people. GLIMPSES Workshops Facebook Group offers members the opportunity to share ideas, continue to discuss themes raised at the workshop and talk about personal and professional experiences. Furthermore, workshop attendees will continue to have a range of opportunities for learning and networking after the workshop through numerous facebook live videos, webinars and other online events held throughout the year. For those participants who don't use Facebook or social media there will also be the option to join and contribute regularly to the GLIMPSES email discussion list.

## BOOKING INFORMATION

If you wish to book a place on one of my GLIMPSES workshops or to find out more please:

- Call me on 07399 051697 • Email: [glimpseshowshops@gmail.com](mailto:glimpseshowshops@gmail.com)

## Prices

Prices for all **GLIMPSES** for Therapists workshops:

**Practitioners:** Half Day (3 hours) £45; Full Day (6 hours) £70

**Organisations:** Negotiable depending on workshop location, group size and learning needs.

**Concessionary fee:** Half Day (3 hours) £40.50; Full Day (6 hours) £63

## Concessions

To make events fully accessible, affordable and available to counsellors and psychotherapists at all levels of training and from all backgrounds, each GLIMPSES workshop has a reduced fee and concessionary rate available to participants. This is normally set at 10% of the standard price and is available to participants with disabilities, people who book more than one workshop in advance or attendees who book the special promotional prices advertised throughout the year.

All workshop prices listed are correct at the time of publication of this booklet. Prices may be subject to change from time to time so it is recommended to check out the very latest course information published on my website and the GLIMPSES Facebook page. I accept payment by cash, cheque, Paypal or bank transfer. Please also be aware that in order to secure your place on any of the workshops mentioned above I would require a non-refundable deposit of £10 at the time of booking and full payment at least two weeks prior to the date of the workshop. Due to the practicalities and time involved in organising these events I am unfortunately unable to offer any refunds of payments received if you find out later you are unable to attend the workshop on the day. For full booking terms and conditions please visit the Events and Workshops page on my website: <http://www.mrcounselling.co.uk/events-and-workshops.html>



**MARTIN  
RIGBY**

**COUNSELLING**

*Opening the door to accessible, confidential and person centred counselling*



*Group Learning and Interactive Modules  
Promoting Self Awareness and Education about Sight Loss*

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