

August 14 & 15, 2025 (two-day workshop),

Robert T. Muller, PhD



Relational Approaches to Treating Trauma: Building safety, giving space, and helping clients in their struggle with forgiveness

This practical workshop, led by Dr. Robert T. Muller, author of psychotherapy bestseller: [Trauma and the Avoidant Client](#), builds our understanding of the therapeutic relationship with challenging trauma clients.

As therapists, we try to maintain a strong therapeutic relationship, but this can be easier said than done. Drawing on attachment theory and research, and using a relational, integrative approach, Dr. Muller follows the ups and downs of the therapy relationship in trauma work. He points to choices therapists make in navigating the process, examining how they affect outcome.

Specifically, we look at relationship patterns in trauma work, and how these can lead to troubling therapist-client enactments. When left unchecked, such patterns lead to ruptures in the relationship. In trauma work, how do we repair a ruptured alliance? And how can we help clients grow from the experience? This workshop looks at such issues in detail.

We also examine the therapeutic attitudes and strategies that give rise to safety in the therapeutic relationship, and the ways in which this can help us when clients are struggling with the pressure to forgive those who have harmed them. Forgiveness can be very challenging for people who, on the one hand are still suffering with memories from the past, and on the other hand, want to “move on” and leave the past behind.

Theory is complemented by case examples and therapy segments. We draw from Dr. Muller's most recent therapy book, [Trauma and the Struggle to Open Up](#), winner of the 2019 ISSTD award for the year's best written work on trauma.

Day One:

1. Safety in the therapeutic relationship with trauma clients (3 hours)
2. Forgiveness: The double-edged sword of trauma therapy (3 hours)

Day Two:

1. Therapist feelings in the treatment: Navigating countertransference and relational ruptures in trauma work (3 hours)
2. Working with emotion and loss in trauma (3 hours)

Participants will be able to:

1. Understand ways to establish safety in the trauma-therapy relationship
 2. Help clients bring emotion into trauma work, and face feelings of loss
 3. Navigate the pressure to forgive, when forgiveness raises difficult feelings
 4. Consider their own (therapist's) feelings in the therapeutic process
 5. Recognise problematic therapist-client relationship patterns in trauma treatment
 6. Navigate conflicts and relational ruptures to get treatment back on track
 7. Use conflicts and relational ruptures to bring about posttraumatic growth
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New Zealand College
of Clinical Psychologists
Te Whare Wānanga o te Mātauranga Hinongaro

Ōtākou Murihiku (Otago-Southland) branch

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Robert T. Muller, Ph.D. trained at Harvard, was on faculty at the University of Massachusetts, and is currently at York University in Toronto. Dr. Muller is a Fellow of the International Society for the Study of Trauma & Dissociation (ISSTD), where he is the 2024 winner of the Pierre Janet Award for his work in the field. His newest therapy book, [Trauma and the Struggle to Open Up](#), was awarded the 2019 ISSTD award for the year's best written work on trauma. And his award-winning bestseller, "Trauma & the Avoidant Client" has been translated widely. As lead investigator on several multi-site programs to treat interpersonal trauma, Dr. Muller has lectured internationally (USA, Australia, UK, China, Europe), and has been keynote speaker at mental health conferences globally. He founded an online magazine, "The Trauma & Mental Health Report," that is now visited by over 100,000 readers a year. With over 30 years in the field, he practices in Toronto.

Dates: August 14 & 15, 2025, registration from 8.30am, workshop 9am-4pm

Venue: Dunedin Centre (Town Hall), Conference Room 2, entry on 1 Harrop Street. This event will also be offered online.

Prices (early bird rates available until July 3rd 2025):

Early bird rates for members: \$699/student members \$350

Standard rates for members: \$799/student members \$400

Early bird rates for non-members: \$729/student non-members \$380

Standard rates for non-members: \$829/ student non-members \$430

Catering included. Please include any food allergies/preferences in your registration email.

A small number of copies of Rob's book "[Trauma and the Struggle to Open Up](#)" will be available to purchase at the workshop (\$50, cash only). Contact Pene at pene.muir@dunedinpsychology.co.nz to discuss receiving the copy prior to attending. For any other enquiries about the workshop please email otakoumurihiku@nzccp.co.nz.

[Click here to pre-register for the two-day workshop](#)