



The Presence and Practice of Collaborative Psychotherapy: Applications of “Beyond the Clinical Hour”

Session 1: June 12, 2026

8:30 am-10 am

James Sells, Ph.D.

The services rendered in the name of human care are in constant transition. We know these services to be called “therapy.” What was the work of pastors and spiritual leaders became the work of professional clinicians within the culture. Psychologists, social workers, counselors and marriage/family therapists offer excellent care to people with mental illness, trauma, addictions and developmental or circumstantial adjustments.

Currently, the demand for therapeutic services outpaces the capacity to render treatment. Many empirical measures suggest the people with unmet needs are in the 10s of millions every year. A plurality of non-clinical and non-licensing graduate programs have emerged in recent years. This is seen in many contexts but is particularly prominent in the Church. For example, ATS estimates about 25,000 students enrolled in non-clinical counseling ministry programs, compared to 75,000 CACREP enrolled students. In addition, there are now estimated to be more than 100,000 certified peer specialists paid through Medicaid, Veterans Affairs and some private insurance carriers.

The rise of non-professional, non-clinical care gives INCREASES, not diminishes the opportunity for the professional clinician. This is perhaps particularly true for those therapists equipped to collaborate with churches. Come learn how. . .

Learning Objectives

- Understand the current mental health crisis and emerging provisions to address that mental health need within culture.
- Identify skill sets needed in the current role expansion of licensed clinicians.
- Strategize towards innovative directions for therapists to interface with social institutions, particularly the church to address changes in the mental health field.

Speaker Bio

James Sells, Ph.D. is a psychologist, a counseling professor, the Hughes Endowed Chair of Mental Health and Christian Thought and Co-Director of the Charis Institute, Regent University, Virginia Beach, VA where his team creates resources for the church to relieve suffering. He is the author/co-author of many books, including: *Family Therapies: A Comprehensive Christian Appraisal*, *Counseling Couples in Conflict: A Relational Restoration Model*, *Beyond the Clinical Hour: How Counselors can Partner with the Church to Address the Mental Health Crisis*, and *Ministering to Families in Crisis: The Essential Guide for Nurturing Mental and Emotional Health* and, *When Hurting People Come to Church: How People of Faith Can Help Solve the Mental Health Crisis*. His research focuses on creating effective care ministries, marital restoration and family therapy, and forgiveness and reconciliation.





Therapy in the Age of the Algorithm

Session 2: August 21, 2026

8:30 am-10 am

Katherine Strong Woods, Psy.D.

As social media platforms increasingly shape how people understand mental health, therapists are finding that many clients enter the therapy room with preconceived language, frameworks, and self-concepts formed from online content. Let's explore both the benefits and the limitations of these narratives, highlighting how "therapy speak" and algorithm-driven content impact clients in both therapeutic and destructive ways. We will provide clinicians with a framework that facilitates practical, clinically grounded interventions that engage clients' social media content as opportunities for deeper collaboration, psychoeducation, and meaningful change.

Learning Objectives

- Identify common themes in social media–driven mental health messages and how they show up in clinical work.
- Discuss the benefits and risks associated with clients' unlimited access to unvetted mental health resources.
- Develop a collaborative framework for integrating and challenging clients' social media insights into treatment in ways that support clinical goals, strengthen the therapeutic alliance, and promote psychological flexibility.

Speaker Bio

Katherine Strong Woods, Psy.D. is a licensed Psychologist. She received her doctorate in Clinical psychology from Fuller Theological Seminary and has clinical experience in a number of different settings, including: a homeless shelter, in-patient hospitals, out-patient clinics, and university/college counseling centers. She has experience providing individual, group, and couples psychotherapy. When she's not working, Katherine loves having dance parties with her young children, fixing up her home with her husband, and eating new and interesting kinds of foods.





From Awareness to Access: The Gap Between Mental Health Needs and System Capacity *and* Integrative Beneficence: Ethics and Professional Responsibilities Beyond Therapy Culture

Session 3: September 25, 2026

8:30 am – Noon

Jennifer Erisime, LCSW-S & Nathaniel R. Strenger, Psy.D.

Presentation 1 | From Awareness to Access: The Gap Between Mental Health Needs and System Capacity *Jennifer Erisime, LCSW-S, Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute*

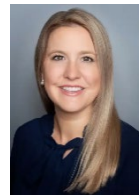
Mental health awareness has expanded, yet the infrastructure to meet rising demand has not kept pace. As a result, many individuals still first enter care during moments of crisis, often through fragmented systems that are not designed to provide continuity or connection to ongoing care. This session will focus on the role of clinicians working in community settings and how they are positioned at the intersection of early identification, crisis response, and ongoing care. Then we will examine how these challenges are being addressed through current behavioral health policy efforts, including initiatives aimed at improving access, strengthening coordination across systems, and building a more sustainable continuum of care.

Learning Objectives

- Describe how and when individuals typically first enter the mental health system.
- Explore how different care settings shape early identification and treatment of mental health needs.
- Examine current behavioral health policy efforts aimed at improving access, coordination, and system alignment.

Speaker Bio

Jennifer Erasime, LCSW-S, brings over a decade of clinical and leadership experience at the Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute across community and inpatient settings. She specializes in program development, service expansion, and systems integration to improve access to care for underserved populations across Texas. Jennifer serves as Executive Director of the Meadows Institute — Dallas and oversees the Meadows Institutes’ regional initiatives. Nationally, she has led clinical integration and mental health system assessments to expand access, improve quality, and implement best practices. Her work focuses on recovery-oriented, person-centered care for individuals with serious mental illness, co-occurring substance use disorders, and complex medical needs.



Presentation 2 | From Integrative Beneficence: Ethics and Professional Responsibilities Beyond Therapy Culture

Nathaniel R. Strenger, Psy.D., Staff Psychologist, The Center

Perhaps in the “therapy culture” era, while the influence that therapeutic language has over public life skyrockets, mental health care providers need to revisit the meanings of their ethical principles. Drawing from cultural psychology, relational models, and integrative approaches to human flourishing,



participants will explore how clinicians' understandings of beneficence, autonomy, validation, and responsibility shape assessment, treatment planning, psychoeducation, and therapeutic influence. The presentation will address ethical considerations related to therapist authority, pathology and the ordinary, relational harm, and the social consequences of clinical framing.

Learning Objectives

- Identify ethical responsibilities and potential risks associated with therapist influence, psychoeducation, and the use of popularized psychological concepts in clinical practice.
- Apply ethical principles related to beneficence, nonmaleficence, professional responsibility, and respect for persons to complex relational and cultural issues encountered in contemporary psychotherapy.
- Evaluate how assumptions regarding autonomy, validation, diagnosis, and relational functioning may influence clinical judgment, treatment planning, and ethical decision-making.

Speaker Bio

Nathaniel R. Strenger, Psy.D. is a licensed psychologist and the Director of Clinical Advancement at The Center. As such he provides a variety of clinical services, supervises training therapists, and develops continuing education opportunities for clinicians and the broader public alike.

In addition to his work at The Center, Dr. Strenger is also a past president to the APA's Dallas Division 39 chapter, the Dallas Society for Psychoanalytic Psychology (DSPP). He visits undergraduate and graduate classrooms as a guest lecturer and has held faculty appointments. He frequently publishes essays spanning civic psychology, culture, and faith in the Dallas Morning News and other popular outlets. And scholarly contributions appear in journals like the *Psychology of Religion and Spirituality* and the *International Journal of Applied Psychoanalytic Studies*. He recently submitted a chapter on religion and moral development for a forthcoming book, edited by the psychoanalyst Dr. Salman Akhtar.

