

Analyse me

Cleandra Waldron speaks for herself

What is the meaning of life?

The meaning of life is connection - within and between.

What motivated you to become a therapist?

I have always been drawn to personal reflection, human connection and asking why. After living in New York during the 9/11 attacks, I was completely overwhelmed and struggling. A therapist gave me the tools to begin healing from that trauma and understand why my childhood had primed me for being so deeply affected by that experience. After having my son, I was inspired to go back to college and retrain.

Do you have a specialist field of practice?

I am drawn to working with those affected by nervous system dysregulation and attachment destabilisation - essentially, people who are surviving pain and loss, and are healing from trauma - big Ts, little Ts and everything in between.

How has being a therapist changed you?

It has changed me in every way, helping me to be kinder to myself, more consistent with my self-care and a better mother and partner, and dedicating my life to walking my talk. I also have more hope than ever before. I am reminded every day how amazing and resilient we are.

Where do you see yourself in five years' time?

I'm a firm believer in manifestation through visualisation, so I would hope the book is finally finished, the podcast recorded, the YouTube channel filled with helpful mindfulness practices and I will be beginning my PhD programme.

What do you find challenging about being a therapist?

Letting go. As a recovering perfectionist, I constantly remind myself that I have done the best I can and that is good enough. Oh, and all the note-writing.

And rewarding?

It is the greatest privilege to witness people's journeys, struggles and abilities to survive and thrive despite experiencing unthinkable pain and loss. I love what I do and end every day feeling grateful for the opportunity to practise.

What is the most recent CPD you've undertaken? Was it worthwhile?

An online training, 'Expert strategies for working with traumatic memory', with speakers including Ruth Buczynski, Peter Levine, Bessel van der Kolk, Pat Ogden and many more. If you see clients who have experienced trauma, this kind of training is essential.

What book/blog/podcast do you recommend most often?

The book I recommend most often is *What Happened To You?* by Bruce Perry and Oprah Winfrey - an incredibly helpful, accessible and understandable explanation of the nervous system response to trauma. The podcast is Brené Brown's *The Power of Vulnerability* - it hit me to my core, and I go back to it again and again. I'm currently following Glennon Doyle on social media after reading her memoir *Untamed*, because I enjoy a daily dose of her unbridled passion and curiosity.

What is your favourite piece of music and why?

'You Are Enough (Meditation)' by the poet and musician Londrelle. The lyrics include: 'Take your time, free your mind, you can find peace of mind.' It soothes my soul.

What do you do for self-care/to relax?

I walk, read, eat good food, practise mindfulness, do yoga and make sure I have enough professional supervision and time with friends. If I don't take care of myself, I cannot effectively hold space. My self-care is essential to meeting others with compassion and empathy when I work.

What would people be surprised to find out about you?

I find it hard to practise the empathy and compassion towards myself that I invite my clients to have for themselves. Because my harsh critic is also my best survival technique, we're learning to live together peacefully and without too much judgment.

Who is your counselling/psychotherapy hero(ine)?

I have so many! I was turned on my head by Dan Siegel's work with integration using a neurobiological lens, Bessel van der Kolk on how trauma shows up physically, Gabor Maté's work on ADHD, Bruce Perry's explanations of the nervous system's response to trauma, Sue Johnson's EFT model, Irvin Yalom's insight into the inner critic, Virginia Satir's family dynamic model and Esther Perel's non-pathologising relationship work. I use their wisdom in my work every day. ■



About Cleandra

Now: Working remotely and in person for City Psychology Group in London, Healista Holistic in Los Angeles and volunteering at the Balham Community Centre.

Once was: Yoga and meditation teacher trainer in Los Angeles and New York.

First paid job: Working for the Edinburgh Puppet Company travelling around Scotland in a puppet van.



Who would you like to answer the questionnaire? Email your suggestions to therapytoday@thinkpublishing.co.uk